

The Front Porch

*Where The Tea is Sweet
And the Talks are Long*

Inside the Crescent

Life and Excitement
on the Grounds

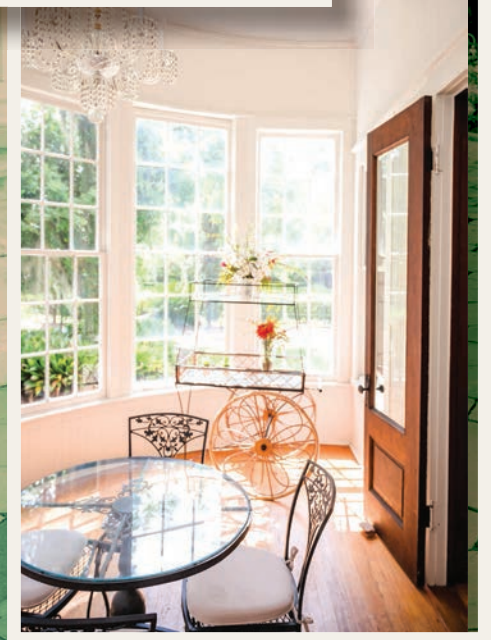
On the Gridiron

The Story of Four
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The Fateful No-Name Storm

Fall
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Publisher

Emerald Greene Parsons
General Manager
Chelsie Holbrook

Editor-in-Chief

John Willoughby

Staff Writers

John Willoughby

Rick Patrick

Mickey Starling

Kathrine Alderman

Contributing Writer

Cole Davis

Cover Photography

Shane Mathews Photography

Advertising Specialists

Emerald Greene Parsons

Jeanette Dunn

Justice Barrington

John Willoughby

Advertisement Design

Dona Gilbert

Mark Estefan

Finance

Amber Albritton

Layout

Maine St. Media, Inc.

www.mainestmedia.com

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Meet Our Staff



Emerald Greene Parsons
Publisher
emerald@greenepublishing.com



Cheltsie Holbrook
General Manager
cheltsie@greenepublishing.com



John Willoughby
Editor-in-Chief
reporter2@greenepublishing.com



Amber Albritton
Bookkeeper
classifieds@greenepublishing.com



Rick Patrick
Staff Writer
rick@greenepublishing.com



Mickey Starling
Staff Writer
reporter3@greenepublishing.com



Kathrine Alderman
Staff Writer
reporter1@ecbpublishing.com



Shane Mathews
Graphic Designer
news@greenepublishing.com



Dona Gilbert
Advertisement Designer
ads@greenepublishing.com



Mark Estefan
Advertisement Designer
monticelloads@embarqmail.com



Jeanette Dunn
Advertising Specialist
jeanette@greenepublishing.com



Justice Barrington
Advertising Specialist
adrep@ecbpublishing.com

I Want to Change My Corner of the World

As children grow up, they always have something they want to grow up to be/do: nurse/doctor, veterinarian, policeman, fireman, and the list goes on. My father had big dreams for me; he always told me the world was at my fingertips and I could be, and do anything I wanted to do.

I wanted to grow up to be the President of the United States of America.

(He actually wanted to name me Keep Florida Greene, because back in 1969 (the year I was born) all the billboards up and down the interstates said "Keep Florida Green." He had told my mother that when I grew up, I could run for governor of the state of Florida and have free advertisement all over the state – but that's a whole different story!)

As I grew up, however, and grew up in the newspaper business, it didn't take me long to realize that what I really wanted to do was to stay in the newspaper business. I have loved it my entire life. It's all I've ever done.

People sometimes ask why I love the newspaper business so much; why do I push so hard at this job and work so many hours. My answer is simple.

"I want to change the world. Or, at least my corner of it."

One of the greatest rewards, about being in the newspaper business, has been giving back to the community and keeping all the local citizens informed of what's happening in their corner of the world. It was with that same love, desire and passion, that Greene Publishing, Inc. started The Front Porch magazine, featuring stories and spotlights about your neighbors in Madison, Jefferson, Taylor, Suwannee, Hamilton, Lafayette and Lowndes Counties.

Newspapers are important; they give information, they educate people, they create jobs for people, they help improve the levels of literacy, and they offer some form of entertainment. Newspapers help bridge the gap between the public and government. Without the newspaper reporting about the local government happenings, the citizens would be left in the dark and the government agencies would remain oblivious to the wishes of their constituents.

With our Front Porch magazine, our main objective is still to inform, educate and entertain, but in a different fashion. We can bring of a variety of stories, from different cultures, backgrounds and counties together, under one cover, in a style that will surely keep you wanting more. We want to bring our readers the pleasure of being able



to read about folks they know ... or folks they might not know but sure wish they did! It is our desire to help all of you learn more about your own individual small town and the other small towns around you; we want you, our readers, to get to know your neighbors and the amazing stories that are here, in North Florida and South Georgia!

"I want to change the world. Or, at least my corner of it."

It truly gives me great pleasure, and honor, to feature stories on our hometown businesses and business owners. Small businesses and local businesses are still the backbone of our economy. I strongly encourage everyone to shop locally and support your neighbors, which in turn supports our economy. By shopping locally, you will also save time and gas and will have personal service from people you know and from people who care about you! By shopping locally ... you are helping your friends and neighbors put food on their table, at the end of the day, instead of helping some multi-millionaire who owns huge corporations.

"I want to change the world. Or, at least my corner of it."

I want to tell YOUR story – for the rest of our corner of the world to read. I want everyone who reads the Front Porch magazine to be able to behold what great things are happening right around them. The stories about the aviation search team that helps in times of great need, the family of six who singtogether, the history behind the old haunted jail, the local hospital and the doctors that walk the halls, the local artists, the local farmers and the local business owners. THAT is the reason I love the life I have chosen!

"I want to change the world. Or, at least my corner of it."

Community newspapers and magazines, are a part of all of us. They tell our stories. They shape our community. They record our community's history for people to read years from now.

The community newspaper/magazine business gives our hometown readers insight into their community and the opportunity to learn about the fascinating people around them. It is my goal to share with you heartwarming stories as well as important business and economic affairs in our corner of the world.

I was born and raised in Madison County and have been in the newspaper business my entire 51 years of life, in Madison County, with my two newspapers. Thirteen years ago, I embraced Jefferson County's hometown news when I purchased the Monticello News newspaper. A year and a half ago, we founded the Front Porch magazine. And now, just last July, we have added Suwannee County, Lafayette County and Hamilton County into our life, with the brand-new Riverbend News newspaper.

This isn't just a job – this is my passion!

I want to change the world. Or, at least my little corner of it.

"Bringing Local News Home"

Emerald Greene Parsons, Publisher

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Emerald Greene Parsons". The signature is fluid and cursive, matching the color of her top in the portrait above.

The Season of Healing

I'm not far removed from my childhood. At only 26 years of age, some would still consider me to be "just a baby," but bills say otherwise. Nap time doesn't exist anymore, unless I sneak a rare ten-minute shut-eye session during my daily lunch break, and a solid night of sleep is becoming less and less common. Despite growing older, one thing I still cherish is my childhood memories and the holiday season.



As a kid, November and December were arguably the best months of the year. My family would gather for a hearty Thanksgiving meal, with leftover meals leaving no space for new groceries in the refrigerator in the coming days. The Christmas tree would go up that evening, and so go the plans for the next holiday which would follow just a month later.

The second Saturday in December meant seeing Santa (who was – unbeknownst to me at that time – my uncle) at the local Shriners club at 11 a.m., and then to my Uncle Jim's home in Greenville for a Christmas celebration, which was more or less a family reunion. These were just a few things that lit up my world, aside from the many vacations to the Smoky Mountains and my birthday celebrations earlier in the month.

I would often enjoy the Christmas lights that were put up around the community celebrating the season. I'd try and go out nightly to find more homes lit up brightly until it all came to a close for the year at 6

a.m. on Christmas Day. Wrapping paper would litter the floor until Dad would pack the shreds into a newly-flared trash bag, and we'd play until we could play no more.

Despite having lived in two major cities for short periods through the course of my 26 years of life, I've come to understand that there's no place like home during the holiday season. There's just something about North Florida, the quietness that surrounds the neighborhoods and the warmth and love emanating from the homes giving thanks for one another and Christ's virgin birth.

COVID-19 has been around locally since the end of winter as I've been stuck at home, around my family and closest friends. But, if there is one thing this pandemic has taught every one of us, it is to cherish our time with one another and time spent. Individuals have said goodbye to this world without saying goodbye to their world of close family and friends, and I would never want to be in that position – which is why I'm sure to enjoy the important moments with those I love the most – more so in the coming months than ever before.

This holiday season, tell your spouse and children you love them, be sure to hug mom and dad one more time, and make amends with your brother or sister. With as much uncertainty that has and continues to swirl in our communities, I can say without a doubt that this holiday season will be much more than the gifts, decorations and food – with a smile and a chuckle, this season will be a season of healing.

From one Front Porch to the next, we wish you a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you in January!

John Willoughby, Editor-In-Chief

A stylized, cursive handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John".



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Sittin' on the porch with...

Margarite Jackson



Story and photos by Mickey Starling, Staff Writer

Most folks in Mayo need no introduction to Margarite Jackson, better known as “Mother” Jackson due to her many years of nurturing and loving on people throughout the community. Jackson has resided in Mayo for 67 years, spending 33 of those years working in the lunchroom at Lafayette High School. “I enjoyed every moment,” said Jackson. “I loved spending time with the kids.”

After retirement, Jackson went right back to work, helping people through the Manor House, which was a local ministry that helped people throughout the community. “We prayed for a lot of people and many of them turned their lives around,” Jackson recalled of her 15 years with the ministry.

Retired for a second time, Jackson has plenty of time to sit on her front porch, which she refers to as her prayer room. “I get up early and pray on this porch,” said Jackson, who repeats Psalms 23 every day. “I also admire the birds on my feeder and I think about the fact that I will fly away with them one day.” But, while she is here, Jackson is intent on being a blessing to others, especially

the kids who continue to look up to her. “I talk to young people a lot,” said Jackson. “They come to see me for prayer and advice, and sometimes they want me to cook them something.” Jackson is legendary in these parts for loving people and being an outstanding cook.

In these troubled times, Jackson offers some simple wisdom to others. “This, too, will pass. Keep praying, looking up and keep loving people,” said Jackson, who recently used this message to encourage brothers who were having trouble getting along. “I reminded them that one of them would die before the other,” said Jackson. “Then, what are you going to do with all that hate? You can love each other. It’s not hard.” The boys took her advice seriously and they promised this well-respected icon that they would do better.

Jackson readily admits that love is a choice. “I don’t always love the ways of some people, but I can still love them.” This mentality helps Jackson to worry less about most things in life. “God works most things out while we are still trying to figure them out,” said Jackson.

When it’s family time, Jackson enjoys her favorite pastime twice a month, when her kids come home from Tallahassee to take her to some of her beloved fishing holes. Jackson is also blessed to have a son who lives close by who checks in on her regularly.

The friendly community of Mayo is made even nicer with people like “Mother” Jackson around to point the way to love’s guiding light and to offer prayers and support to a generation of kids who are benefitting from her timeless wisdom.

culture





GEORGIA BEER COMPANY

• BREWING •
GREAT BEER
• AND BETTER •
FRIENDSHIPS

Story and photos by Rick Patrick, Staff Writer

It all started during a conversation among five friends at Valdosta State University (VSU). Like many college-age guys, these friends enjoyed a good beer every once in a while. Sometimes more often than that. During one evening of dreaming, as college students often do, these guys played a simple game of, "If I won the lottery I would ...". One of these friends said he would open a brewery, so they could all "hang around and drink beer all day." As with many ideas among college friends, this one eventually took a back seat to other careers and family. Two of these friends, Chris Jones and Jack "J-Ryce" Martin remained close and eventually the "brewery idea" resurfaced. The two friends decided to seriously pursue the idea of opening Valdosta's first brewery. Only one thing stood in the way of the two of them and this dream becoming a reality. Neither one of them knew anything about beer except how to drink it.

The two began researching the brewing process by traveling to other small breweries and learning as much as they could about the beer-brewing process. One thing the aficionados had in their favor was Martin had earned his degree in microbiology. This scientific background has proven to be very helpful in understanding how all the ingredients interact to give each beer its own unique flavor and characteristics.



There was also a lot of trial and error in those early days, with emphasis on the “error.” “In the first batch of beer we brewed, we let it get too hot and it killed the yeast,” said Jones. “What we ended up with was a sweet, non-alcoholic Octoberfest beer.” “It was horrible,” said Martin.

But, the Georgia Beer Company was born. That was in 2014. They opened their permanent location in January of 2019.

During the next five years the pair worked to learn and perfect the process, while selling t-shirts in order to make money to put into the business. Bit by bit, their beer-crafting skills improved and they found they needed more room. They began searching around Valdosta for a suitable location. With the help of the City of Valdosta and the local economic development council, they found an old building near downtown Valdosta. Dubbed the “Water Works Building,” the old brick structure was built in 1906 and once housed the city’s water department. That department was the primary source of drinking water for Valdosta. In the 1940’s, the water department moved and the building was

shut down. For many years, the local fire department used the building as a workshop for repairing used bicycles that had been donated to the fire department to repair and redistribute to needy children in the area at Christmas. The city still owned the building and a deal was struck to allow the brewery to be housed in the building for the cost of renovation. “This is a true private/public partnership,” said Jones. Part of the deal with the City of Valdosta is to provide employment. Currently, there are six full-time employees and 11 part-time workers at Georgia Beer Company. With increased demand for their products and an increased capacity, those numbers could be expected to rise in the near future.

Most of the furnishings found in the brewery’s taproom are all “Georgia grown.” The room, which is separate from the brewery is where patrons can sample the various types of libation available. The room keeps a rustic feel that adds to its welcoming atmosphere. Although beer is sold and enjoyed in the taproom, this is no ordinary “bar.” Both Jones and Martin have gone to a great deal of effort to make the

place “family friendly.” Jones noted that he enjoys seeing a wide diversity among the patrons. Jones points out that at any time, one can see a wide variety of people from various backgrounds enjoying time together. Jones says that everything they do is done with the company’s core values in mind; that being “hard work, hospitality and community.”

Giving back to the community is important to both Jones and Martin. When a hurricane devastated the Bahamas, Georgia Beer hosted “Operation Night-light” to collect flashlights, batteries, etc. to be donated to the people of the island nation. The company has been active in helping the United Way, the VSU Alumni Association, the Humane Society and many others.

The future is very bright for Valdosta’s hometown brewery. They recently quadrupled their production capacity in order to keep up with high demand. Several varieties of Georgia Beer can be found in all 149 Publix grocery stores throughout the State of Georgia. Other retail outlets are expected to begin carrying the Georgia Beer products in the near future.

Georgia Beer offers a wide variety of brews for every taste; from light, refreshing pale ales to rich, dark stouts. There are also ever-changing seasonal offerings. Whenever possible, local ingredients are used in order to give Georgia Beer a local twist with each beer they brew. Jones and Martin are always looking for something new. For instance, for Valentine's Day, they thought of adding cherry to a chocolate stout for a "chocolate-covered cherries" flavor. There is definitely a great deal of "art" that goes into the science of brewing beer. "We perform science to make art," said Martin.

The Georgia Beer Company is located at 109 S. Briggs St., in Valdosta, Ga. The taproom is open Monday through Thursday, from 4 p.m. until 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, from 12 p.m. until 10 p.m. and Sundays, from 12:30 p.m. until 6 p.m. Food trucks are frequently on site. They can be reached by phone at (229) 588-4664. Visit their website at <https://georgiabeerco.com>.



It's always 5 o'clock at Georgia Beer Company.



College friends "J-Ryce" Martin (left) and Chris Jones started Georgia Beer Company in Martin's garage. Now the Valdosta Brewery employs 17 people.

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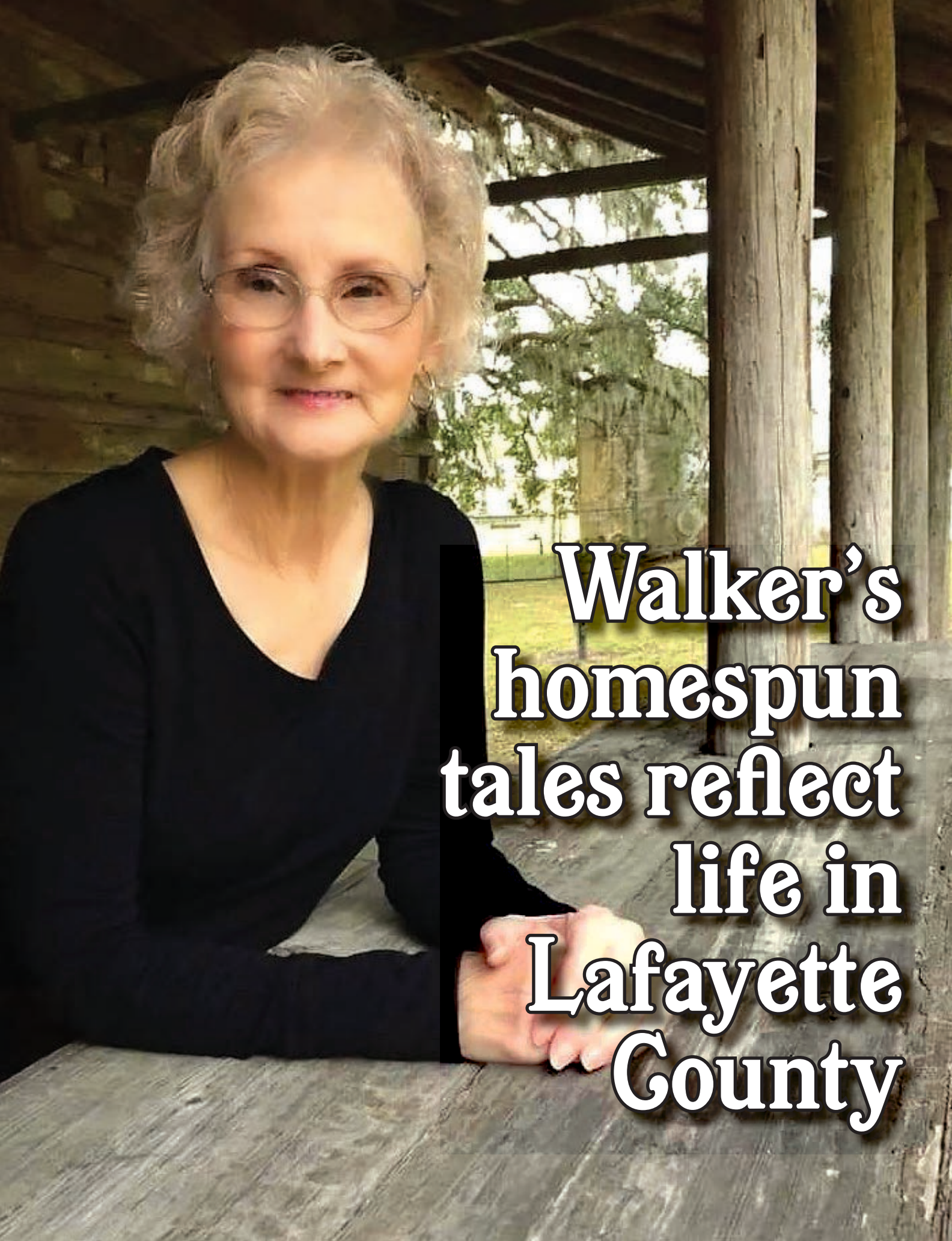
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**Walker's
homespun
tales reflect
life in
Lafayette
County**



Delores Walker displays some of the books she has written. Currently, Walker is publishing one novel per year.

*Story by Mickey Starling, Staff Writer
Photos by Mickey Starling and Delores Leggett Walker*

As a child, Delores Leggett Walker made good use of her time in Taylor County. Her gifted imagination took her inside the lives of everyday people and generated creative stories for her writing enjoyment. Crafting stories continued as her family relocated to Lafayette County in 1960, where Walker has remained since.

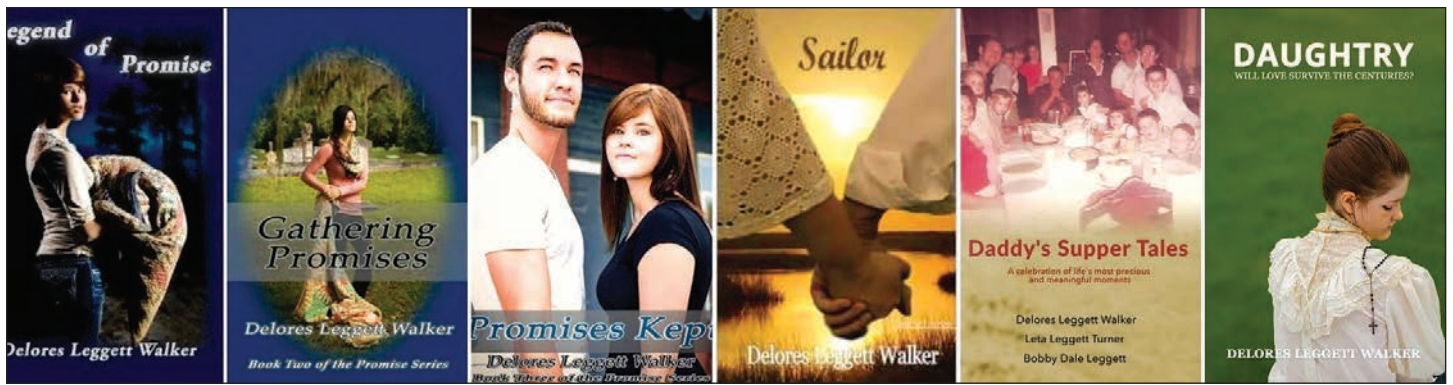
As a young lady, Walker landed her first job as a waitress at a local cafe, where her magnetic personality and love of people gave her plenty of material to write about. After marrying the love of her life, Edward Walker, at 17, Walker continued working as a substitute teacher and library assistant while raising two children. At 57, the energetic Walker was looking for something to do when she visited the Mayo Free Press to see if they needed a receptionist. “No, but we do need a reporter,” said the office manager. Walker was not one to shy away from a new challenge, so she jumped at the opportunity to make use of her writing skills. “I rode with Editor Sue Lamb for a few days and I was off and running,” said Walker.

Over the next six years, Walker flourished at her new job,

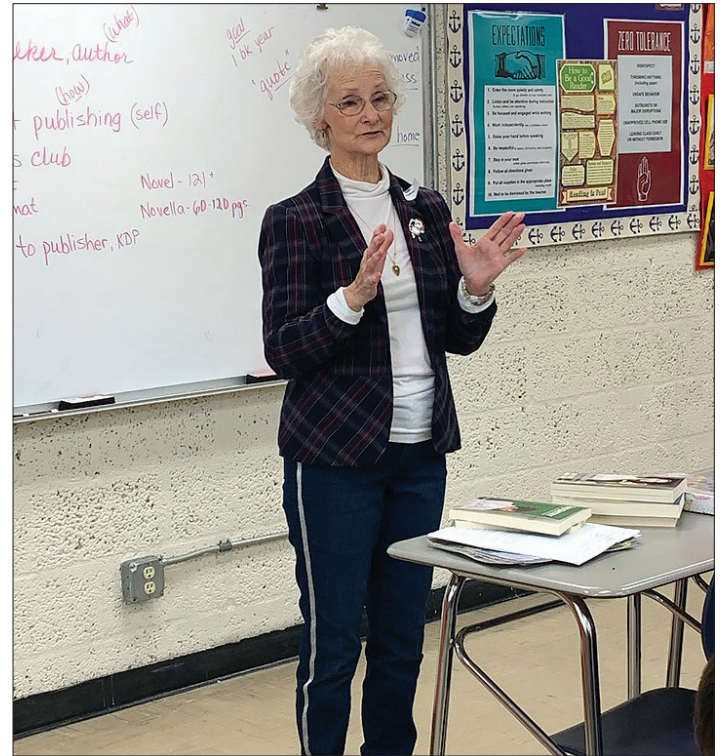
covering all sorts of news, including the 9/11 terror attacks and many others. Though she was pretty busy, Walker made time to travel with a local Gospel group for two years before the late nights started taking a toll on her. “I retired again at 62, but I still write columns for the Taco Times, in Perry,” said Walker, whose energetic lifestyle seems incompatible with retirement.

Newspaper columns aren’t the only thing that has kept Walker’s pen moving. In 2013, Walker had what she describes as an “amazing dream that put an entire story in my head.” Walker had recently heard a compelling story centered around her late father-in-law’s quilt that may have inspired the dream. Walker called a fellow writer and told them all about the dream, concluding with the question, “Should I pursue this?” An answer of “absolutely” came quickly.

Having never written a book before, Walker sought guidance from a local author who assisted her with the process for several weeks. Walker then jumped into writing without even a page of notes to work from. “I had the entire story in my head and I didn’t forget a line of it,” said Walker, who completed her first novel, “Legend of Promise,” in less than a year. Thoroughly bitten by the writing bug, Walker has continued writing Christian fiction



All of the covers for Walker's books feature family members, which is another way that she continues her family's story-telling legacy.



Delores Leggett Walker frequently gives of her time to encourage other writers. She recently addressed a journalism class at Branford High School.

at a rapid pace. She has generated six novels since 2013, with a seventh one in the works. "I've written a book every year except for when my husband passed away in 2018," said Walker. All but one of Walker's writings are Christian fiction. "Daddy's Supper Tales" is a collection of some of her father's favorite stories told around the dinner table when Walker was growing up.

Seeing the benefit of working with other authors, Walker and a group of writing enthusiasts formed a group called "Writers INK." The group meets weekly, sharing excerpts from their recent writings and helping each other through the writing and publishing process. So far, they have helped about 20 writers to successfully publish their material.

There are a couple of reasons why Walker has been able to generate books so quickly. "I told the Lord that I would write one book each year if He would help me," said Walker, who has been inspired by dreams for several of her novels. "I know those dreams are coming from the Lord," said Walker, who also draws much of her best material from members of the community. "Sometimes, when a character for a book gets in my head, I realize that they are much like someone I know. I will then ask them if I can put them in my story. It helps me to make my characters as realistic as possible." Even the covers for each of Walker's books maintain

a sense of family and community, as many of the books feature one of her grandchildren on the cover. Since Walker has eight grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren, she has plenty of happy faces available for future books.

Having the gift of storytelling is a treasure to Walker, who is certain that she inherited her love of hearing and telling a good story from her father. "He could take the minutest event of the day and turn it into a memorable word picture without losing a single truth," said Walker. She plans on continuing to use her gift to tell family stories for years to come, all with a consistent theme: finding God's purpose, no matter what comes your way.

An added bonus to Walker's work is the response she gets from readers. Commonly heard feedback includes comments like "You kept me up all night" and "Reading your books are just like having a conversation with you." Those words are all Walker needs to know that her writing is on point and making a difference.

All of Walker's books are available on Amazon. Her six books make up two series. The "Promise Trilogy" is made up of "Legends of Promise," "Gathering Promises" and "Promises Kept." The "Destiny Diary Series" features "Sailor," "Daughtry," and "Daddy's Supper Tales." "KerryLynn" will be added to this series when completed later this year.

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A LISTENING MEMORY
THAT RENEWS THE SOUL.

A TIME THAT WAS - AND A TIME THAT IS -
FOREVER BUILDING MEMORIES, PAST AND PRESENT.

Story by
John Willoughby, Editor-in-Chief
Poem by
Bobbie Lester
Photos by
Shane Mathews
Photography

There lives on a poem that perfectly tells of a South Georgia treasure that has stood the test of time alone for well over 120 years. The Crescent of Valdosta, genuinely identified in the piece as "grand" and "majestic," does no justice to its actuality.

From the moment the front porch veranda was planned with a semi-circle drawn in the sand in 1898, the home once dwelled in by the revered West family remains true to how the house and its property was used as a venue for entertainment and relaxation. But of



Keepers of the Crescent

Inside one of Valdosta's treasured sites

course, around every corner in the mansion, there's a piece of history that begs to be told, allowing those with willing ears to dive into the splendor of the grounds that speak lavishly of early 1900s elegance.

The home was erected at the turn of the 20th century by the late United States Senator William Stanley West, who was native to Buena Vista, Ga. Many of the healthy oak trees that grace the premises were hand-planted by West himself and have since grown to be beautiful additions to the property, but before their branches extended to give shade to much of the front lawn, it was a common sight for those in the home to look out upon Downtown Valdosta in all its beauty. Even the view from his wife, Ora Lee West's room – now serving as a bridal suite during scheduled events – offered an easing sight for sore eyes.

Born in 1849 to James and Mary West, William Stanley West was a man of much, having experience in timber, teaching, serving as a lawyer, cotton broker, a traveler who made a fortune, and a philanthropist, who, in his later years, served as President of the State Senate in the Georgia Legislature in the wake of the death of his predecessor.

Just one decade before the Crescent was even a thought, West gained his lovely companion, Ora Lee after they wed. West had given up teaching years prior, but kept in touch with some of his pupils – it

was his wife, a former student, who caught the attention of the tall-in-stature West. They saw each other frequently and later joined in courtship before joining in Holy Matrimony in 1888.

The West family welcomed their only child, William Stanley West Jr., into the world in 1902 as construction continued on the luxurious home. Often West would partake in activities with other youth of Valdosta who would, with the blessing of Ora Lee, play ball on the front lawn. It was for this reason Ora Lee didn't plant more shrubbery in the beginning. She would rather raise children than flowers she said, which allowed the Crescent's front lawn to become more of a common rendezvous in the late 20s and early 30s for the youth, some of which later became athletes at the nearby college. It was due to this that grass never really formed on the front lawn until the fun and games were no more.

Following his father's short unsought stint in the Georgia Legislature and his death in 1914, the young West was well-educated and handled the family estate well, although he had one vice-gambling. His admiration of the game would soon bet off a slice of the northernmost property to a fellow Valdosta resident, who took ownership over the land up for grabs.

The years flew by and South Georgia entered the Great

Depression, which forced the West family to begin dividing and renting rooms for sustainability. West Jr. and his mother had both passed away by the late 1930s, leaving only the grandchildren of the original homeowner, who later multilaterally agreed to sell the home. Word soon spread of its coming demise after the home had reportedly been purchased by an investor looking to replace the West Mansion with a fueling station in the middle of Valdosta.

After years of the house standing vacant, the home was saved from demolition in 1951, thanks to the efforts of three local women, who, before the mansion's demise, learned the Crescent had been purchased and plans were in place to replace the historical structure with a commercial fueling station. The women later raised a healthy \$35,000, which allowed the Garden Center of Valdosta to purchase the home. "They knew there would always be a group and a foundation to take care of it," said Amy Stubbs, a member of the Garden Center of Valdosta and representative of the Crescent. One of the few remaining ancestors of the West family, Reaves West, spoke highly of the women who saved the historic gem from being disposed of, saying their act speaks to determination and fortitude. "The Garden Center was amazing enough to scrape together the funds," said Reaves West, a resident of Philadelphia, Penn. and a great-great-grandchild of William and Ora Lee West. "Were it not for them, the house would not be standing. For those women to organize in the way they did and get those funds, it was not easy. It took a vision to see what the house could be ... It's always been about inclusion. It's where all are welcome."

In the upstairs board room, on the walls are three portraits of Corinne Briggs Smith Sr., the dreamer in buying the Crescent as a home for the Garden Center, the organization of which she was the president at the time. Other oil paintings also grace the walls of her cohorts: Jewel Whitehead and Hyta Plowden Mederer. "The common denominator was they all loved gardening," Stubbs added. "They were all accomplished gardeners."

Each savior of the home had noted specialties within the Garden Center of Valdosta. Mrs. Whitehead was famous for her Camellias; a Camellia trail is on campus in her honor. Mrs. Mederer was a lover of daylilies, which grace her portrait; Mrs. Smith had a thumb for growing roses.



Not overlooking their mission to preserve the life of the Crescent, for which they were awarded the Georgia Trophy for Outstanding Achievement in three years after the grand purchase, the Garden Center of Valdosta's history extends much farther past their initiative in the mid-20th century.

The year 1915 was the first trip around the sun for the Garden Center of Valdosta, first known as The Floral Club, formed by a group of women in the immediate Valdosta area. It wasn't until 1945 when the Garden Center intensified its work toward beautifying Valdosta. A study of wildflowers was undertaken by the organization from '47 to '49, flower arrangement, and horticultural schools were conducted before the Crescent was brought into the picture.

Over the years, from the purchase of the Wests' home to the 1980s, The Garden Center of Valdosta continued their efforts in raising

funds and completely restoring the Crescent to its original glory, which continues to serve many entertaining usages today. The Garden Center of Valdosta remains as active as ever promoting programs of interest in and helpful to botanical, horticultural, environmental, and agricultural matters. The organization as a whole operates as one umbrella over seven primary clubs: Amaryllis, Camellia, Dogwood, Holly, Magnolia, Southern Lilly, and Town & Country.

Numerous events are held at the Garden Center of Valdosta's prestigious home throughout the year. A favorite among the organization is perhaps Christmas time, when members, Valdosta State University students and local citizens pitch in and decorate the entire property for the holiday cheer. The Garden Center of Valdosta is in the planning stages of organizing the event for the 2020 season, though no official time has been set. "It's just such a tradition," said Judy Pinkston, president of the Garden Center of Valdosta. "We have many families who come and say 'we do this every year.'"

The organization also remains in the early stages of planning an upcoming Flower Show, an event of competition between horticulture (for the public) and design (for members only) for nearly the last decade. In fact, "It's as simple as if you have a beautiful magnolia bloom, you bring it," Pinkston continued. The show is anticipated to be held in the spring of 2021.

While the home has not been open to the public for tours since the COVID-19 outbreak, Pinkston remains hopeful that public visiting will resume sooner than later. "We just try to stay positive," she added. Weddings, birthdays and other gatherings continue to be booked at the mansion as well, but how could the property go without attention? The grounds and home remains constantly up-kept. Each garden is maintained by members of the Garden Center of Valdosta as each of the seven clubs have their garden. But, as one enters through the double front doors, visitors are greeted by history and are taken aback by the beauty that remains.

Throughout the home are numerous rooms decorated with era-appropriate furnishings, some of which were used and enjoyed by generations of the West family. To the left of the front entrance, a library is full of modern books used by the Garden Center of Valdosta, along with original books used by the family of West. To the right, the front parlor is graced with a tall mantel, which was the subject of a long-told story that West wanted the mantle to be tall enough to rest his arm on, but his granddaughter, Sis May, debunked that legend, saying "He was tall, but not that tall!" The middle parlor in the neighboring room is decorated with full-body portraits of West, Ora Lee, and West Jr.

Across from the library is the dining room, aesthetically pleasing to the eye and perhaps one of the most beautiful rooms in the entire home. Representatives of the Crescent say that West, in anticipation of building the mansion, selected and reserved choice lumber, storing such wood in a separate building. The wood was destroyed in a fire the night before construction began, however, which left West only enough to decorate the dining room in a dark-stained curly pine wood.

The dining room ceiling was completed with nine large squares filled with ornate plaster medallions, all ordered from Italy when construction began. Homage to the Garden Center is paid in the dining room furniture as the Queen Anne-style chairs are decorated with even the chandelier hanging from the ceiling was specially-made, featuring glass angels in the curvature of the base.

The beauty of the Crescent house, gardens and grounds are currently open for special events, including wedding and photo shoots. Additionally, small group tours of the historical landmark are now being scheduled. General tours are not being scheduled at this time. If you would like to inquire about renting The Crescent or would like to arrange a tour, please contact the rental chairman via email at thecrescentrental@gmail.com. You may also leave a message at The Crescent house via phone by calling (229) 244-6747.



Advent Christian Village

The Heart of Independency

lifestyle



*Story by John Willoughby, Editor-in-Chief
Photos by Advent Christian Village*

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Founded in 1913, Advent Christian Village (ACV) at Dowling Park has allowed seniors to live the meaningful life they want and deserve. One way they accomplish such a mission is by offering a variety of living options. Independent living is one of the most favorable options, allowing seniors to come and go wherever they please on the property to enjoy life at its natural best.

There are multiple options for a retired, independent life on the grounds of ACV. While homeownership may be one of the best choices for comfortable, independent living for those 55 and older – It's surely not all of what's offered. If living in your owned home in the River Woods neighborhood is not for you, there are income-based rentals available (for individuals and couples aged 62 and older, including those with mobility impairments), featuring an array of amenities and services, modern kitchens, and appliances, along with state-of-the-art safety features.

There are also over 300 residential choices for seniors looking to rent an apartment mid-rise complex to a ground-

level duplex and townhome center. Looking to rent a lot to place your own mobile home? That choice is available to you as well.

For those who want a sense of supported independence, ACV offers assisted living with many services, including an exercise program, on-campus



transportation, and 24-hour supervision and personal assistance. Skilled nursing in ACV's 161-bed facility offers both short-term rehabilitative stays and long-term nursing care in an environment where social engagement is the norm.

Members are encouraged to take advantage of the many living activities, whether it be enjoying the shade of the North Florida pines, canoeing the

nearby Suwannee River, joining a club, or volunteering at one of the many village shops. Whatever passions lie within the senior's heart, there is something to satisfy that craving at ACV.

Over the last 100 years, the community has embraced the idea that senior living activities are meant to be a shared experience, through the village church choir, the local artists guild, garden club, or any of the other clubs occupied by individuals with a variety of talents.

Because of the faith-based nature of the community, ACV also opens The Village Church weekly, ministering to the needs of all generations with an active, caring congregation where friendship and fellowship are found.

ACV is more than just another retirement community – ACV is a ministry, and not only serves seniors, but children and families with special needs assisted through the community benevolent ministry. ACV also offers multiple employment opportunities for those looking for a career path to be a light to those in need.

While tours are common at ACV, they are currently not available at the moment due to the COVID-19. Interested parties are invited to visit www.acvillage.net or call 1 (800) 714-3134 for more information.

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North Florida on the Field

Foreword by Rick Patrick, Staff Writer

As the weather begins to get a bit cooler in North Florida and South Georgia, the lights begin to shine on Friday nights. For hundreds of young athletes, they dream of extending their gridiron days beyond Fridays to Saturdays and even Sundays. Although it is rare, some of these young men do achieve what some may have told them was the unachievable. In this issue of The Front Porch, we pay tribute to a small group of athletes from our area who did accomplish what so many dream of, even when others told them they never would. From Monticello's Hall of Fame football great Jack Youngblood to Taylor County's LeGarrette Blount, these men serve as an inspiration to us all that those who dream big can accomplish big dreams.

sports

Chris Thompson: From Cowboy to Jaguar

Story by John Willoughby, Editor-in-Chief

Photos by the Jacksonville Jaguars

Chris Thompson is a former Madison County Cowboy and currently plays for the Jacksonville Jaguars as a running back.

Chris Thompson, a 5'8" North Florida kid who has the ability to play big, has proven skill throughout the last 10 to 15 years. From leading his high school team to a state championship, to persevering through a broken back during his college days, Thompson has suited up again in 2020 – this time in his home state."

The 29-year-old son of Maurice and Cynthia James, and Jerome Thompson, the former Madison County Cowboy recently signed with the Jacksonville Jaguars as a running back to compete in his eighth professional season with the National Football League.

The same coach, who, in the last three years led the Madison County Cowboys to their second, third and fourth state championship, worked with the player as a student on the field and refers to Thompson as an electric player. "Chris Thompson is as good of a human being as you will find," Madison County High School Varsity Football Head Coach Mike Coe said of the



running back who helped lead the local team to a 2007 Class 2B Championship. "He was a young man that was never late – never missed a workout or practice ... His eyes and vision set him apart. He had the ability to make one cut and get to top velocity in the same step."

The 2009 graduate received offers from winning major programs such as the Clemson Tigers and Miami Hurricanes, but it was those teams major rival, the brotherhood of Seminoles, for whom he would go on to run the ball.

Thompson started off his freshman season in college football by gaining 49 yards against Georgia Tech. He later gained his first and second touchdown as a Seminole against NC State the following week, contributing to the team's winning score of 30-27. Not shy to the field, the running back proved his star status by recording a wealthy 800-plus rushing yards throughout the entire 14-game schedule.

His junior year was plagued with a nasty injury to his back, when he sustained a season-ending T5 and T6 compression fracture while playing against Wake Forest, one day before 9/11. He told SB Nation's Tomahawk Nation community that he didn't know if he wanted to play football again after the incident. "I was in that hospital bed and so many thoughts went through my mind," said Thompson as reported by www.tomahawknation.com. "I didn't know if I wanted to play football again. I didn't know if I was going to play again and I didn't know if I was going to be walking straight." But the Greenville-native proved himself wrong one year later.

FSU's memorable 2012 season began with a massive 69-3 victory over Murray State and two consecutive shut-outs over Savannah State (55-0), and Wake Forest (52-0), during which Thompson racked up a career-best average of 197 yards on nine carries to include a 74-yard sprint for a six-point recording. He earned ACC's offensive player of the week accolades following that match up.

With only one loss to NC State (17-16), FSU traveled to Miami to face the Hurricanes, where Thompson would run 94 all-purpose yards before tearing his ACL, which sidelined the running back for the remainder of the season. After witnessing his teammates continue on for a ten-win season, including FSU's first ACC title in six years, Thompson wrapped up his college career with a legacy of 15 touchdowns and 1,735 rushing yards.

Despite having his last two seasons cut short due to injuries, it was no indication he wouldn't go on to further his football career. Thompson was added to the list of Madison County Cowboy greats when he



was drafted by the Washington Redskins in the fifth round of the 2013 NFL Draft. His first two seasons as a professional was spent on the Redskins' practice squad but action was found for the running back, appearing in 13 games. In an interview with Greene Publishing, Inc., he recalled his first score with the team. "The first game I played in, the first time I touched the ball, it was a touchdown," Thompson said, smiling. "It was such a blessing to finally get the chance and the first time I do, it's a touchdown. It was the best feeling in the world."

On the field for the entire 16-game schedule in 2016, Thompson stepped up and rushed for a total of 356 yards on 68 attempts and 349 yards receiving on 49 pass receptions, mainly in third-down situations. This was the same season Thompson scored his first three rushing touchdowns, including a season-long 25-yard run for a touchdown which helped the Redskins secure a victory against division rival, the Philadelphia Eagles. Other highlights included a personal season-record 38-yard pass reception against the Dallas Cowboys.

After concluding his most productive season in the NFL, the Greenville native racked up nearly 300 yards in 2017, over 170 yards in 2018 and 138 yards on 37 carries in his final season (2019) with the Washington Redskins.

In May of 2020, the experienced running back experienced some sort of a

homecoming. Not only is he closer to his Greenville home after signing a one-year deal with the Jacksonville Jaguars; he is also reunited with Jay Gruden, who served as Thompson's head coach in Washington from 2014 to 2019. Gruden is now the offensive coordinator for the Jaguars.

In his first game on Sunday, Sept. 13, against the Indianapolis Colts, Thompson had two receptions for a total of six yards, but there's no doubt he will stack more and more yards as the season progresses.

Jaguars running backs Coach Terry Robiskie said it is phenomenal to have Chris in the locker room leading group efforts. "With everything that's going on with the world, the environment, the society – so many other things going on in the today, it's a true blessing to have Chris in there," said Coach Robiskie. "Because obviously, I've been coaching for a long time, Jay [Gruden] has been coaching for a long time; we've been coaching together, so trying to get on the same page has been a challenging and we've been rationing with it and getting it done. But to have Chris in there to just clarify something that may be as simple as two yards wider or two yards deeper; to have Chris in there who has done it and has done it consistently at a high level in this offense, is a plus. So, Chris is a blessing and I'm happy as [heck] that he's here."

Thompson is the father of Kali Thompson.



During the 2019 season, Kerwin Bell (right), former offensive coordinator for the USF Bulls, served along side former head coach Charlie Strong, a teammate to Bell in his early days with the Gators.

Kerwin Bell: The Throwin' Mayoan

*Story by John Willoughby, Editor-in-Chief
Photos by USF Athletics*

From the tobacco fields he was raised on to the football fields he has worked on, one of the University of Florida's (UF) most successful quarterbacks doesn't stop until the job is done.

Born in the summer of 1965, Kerwin Bell was raised by parents Doyle and Zelda Bell in

the slimly-populated town of Mayo, Fla., and while attending Lafayette High School, Bell began what he soon realized would be his bread and butter for the rest of his career.

As a young athlete, Bell first carried the leather ball in eighth grade, across the field where he would later gain the county-wide-known nickname "The Throwin' Mayoan." Coach Taylor McGrew, now a school board

member and the father of 49ers great Reggie McGrew, recalls Bell as a great student in the classroom and a great player on the turf.

"I've never seen anyone who hated to lose worse than Kerwin," McGrew said, who remembers Bell taking the starting quarterback position midway through his sophomore year. "Kerwin only lost four games;" Not just four games in a season, four



games total throughout his high school career playing varsity and junior varsity.

Before graduating, Bell led the Lafayette Hornets to an undefeated season and a state title his junior year.

The small-town kid quickly put Mayo on the map one year after he walked on at UF in 1983. Though he was redshirted and buried deep in the depth chart, transfers and an injury to the senior starting quarterback raised Bell to the forefront of the Gators offense hungry for action inside and out of the Swamp in 1984.

All eyes were on the Florida Gators and the Miami Hurricanes in the first-ever college football game aired live by ESPN on Sept. 1, 1984. In Bell's debut, the 6'3" powerhouse had completed 15 of 30 for 159 yards, racking up 20 points with a final five-yard touchdown pass to Frankie Neal and an extra point for a seemingly-victorious 46th meeting of the rivals. The Hurricanes rallied back for a 32-20 win with just seconds remaining, but that didn't keep Florida down. Following a 21-21 tie with the LSU Tigers, the rest was pleasant history. Bell led the 1984 team to nine wins, including two shut-outs over Syracuse (16-0) and the Georgia Bulldogs (27-0).

The 1984 Southeastern Conference (SEC) Player of the Year remained in his quarterback position the following year, once again bringing home another successful 9-1-1, including bragging rights over Florida State, LSU, Miami, and Auburn.

Bell never had the chance to hoist the Heisman Trophy, though he was a candidate for the honor during his sophomore year. His statistics after his college career, which includes 549 completions for over 7,500 yards, certainly speaks volumes.

Despite having graduated from the university in 1987 with a degree in psychology, walking the stage wasn't the end for Bell. The athlete was drafted by the Miami Dolphins in the seventh round of the 1988 NFL Draft and later played for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers as a third-team quarterback before a knee injury ended his season diminishing any chance of playing in 1990. He went on to play a total of fourteen seasons professionally with the World League of American Football and the Canadian Football League, where he amassed over 19,000 passing yards and 101 touchdowns in nine seasons.

After a 1990 graduate assistantship under Steve Spurrier at the Swamp and a brief tenure with the Toronto Argonauts as a co-offensive coordinator, Bell took a step into his first full-time coaching position with Trinity High School in Ocala from 2001 to 2006. There, Bell scored his first championship as a Class 2B head coach in 2005, but his success wouldn't end there. In 2007, Bell became the head coach for the Jacksonville University, where he led the team to three Pioneer Football League championships and gained notoriety as the league's Coach of the Year in

2008. Bell later led the Jacksonville Dolphins to a school-best 10-1 season and conference title in 2010.

Success for Bell continued in 2016 when he took his extensive coaching experience to the Valdosta State University Blazers as head coach, where, in three years of coaching, led his team to a school-record 15 straight victories (for a coaching record of 27-7), two Division II playoff appearances and a 2018 national championship over Ferris State in a close 49-47 match. The 2018 offense led the nation with an average of 52.0 PPG.

Bell landed his first major program position at the University of South Florida (USF) in 2019 as an offensive coordinator, under the leadership of former head coach Charlie Strong. Bell and Strong played ball together during the 1983 and 1984 season at UF. Bell remained at USF for one season.

"I have known Kerwin for more than 30 years and have a great deal of respect for what he has done in his career both as a player and coach and the success of the football programs he has led," said Strong in an interview with The Florida Times-Union. "He has directed some very explosive, high-scoring offenses and consistently puts his players in position to reach their highest potential."

Bell, a 1997 inductee of the UF Athletic Hall of Fame, is married to Cosette and they have three children: Kade, Kolton, and Kenzley.

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Photos by Rick Patrick and the
Jefferson County School District

As you enter the town of Monticello, you will see signs at the city limits that read, "Welcome to Monticello, home of Hall of Fame football player Jack Youngblood." Jack Youngblood was born to Herbert J and Kay Youngblood on Jan. 26, 1950, in Jacksonville, Fla. He was raised in Monticello, along with his sisters, Paula and Lynn. While attending Jefferson County High School (JCHS), Youngblood played football and basketball, but it was football that young "Jackie" loved. "From the first time I was introduced to it, the game [of football] appealed to me," Youngblood would later say. "I'm competitive, which means I like to beat the other man."

While playing football for the Tigers of JCHS, Youngblood played on the offensive line and linebacker, as well as kicker. During his senior season at JCHS, he helped lead the Tigers to a state title in 1966. During that season, Youngblood was bestowed several honors; including All-Conference, All-Big Bend and being named the Big Bend Lineman of the Year. Despite these honors, he was not recruited by his favorite team at the time, the Florida State University (FSU) Seminoles. There is a story that Bill Parcels, who was an assistant coach at the time and would later become one of the most well-known coaches in the National Football League (NFL), told Youngblood that he would "never play a significant down of college football." At that same time, a prominent booster of the University of Florida athletic program from Perry, Fla., suggested that the Gators take a look at the young Monticello player. The coaching staff of the Gators liked what they saw in Youngblood and the rest is college football history.

After spending one year playing on the junior varsity football team at the University of Florida, Youngblood began to make a major impact on the Gator football program. A skinny 6'4", 158 lb kid became a 6'5", 248 lb beast on the defensive line during his time wearing orange and blue. Youngblood gained national attention during a game on Saturday, Oct. 4, 1969 when he tallied five sacks against in-state rival FSU. The Gators won that game 21-6.

Youngblood's time at the University of Florida has etched his name indelibly in the annals of Gator football history. He defined himself as the premier defensive linemen in the nation and arguably the best to ever play the defensive end position for the Gators. Youngblood solidified his place in Gator history during the Georgia/Florida game during his senior year in 1970. Another Gator legend, Sports Information Director Norm Carlson recalled the game in an article he penned for floridagators.com.

The Gators were 11-point underdogs and trailed 17-10 in the fourth quarter. Georgia had first-and-goal at the UF one-yard line. On the first down, he hit the runner, forced a fumble, and dug it out from under a pile of players for the recovery.



A sign at the city limits still proudly identifies Monticello as the home of NFL Hall of Fame member Jack Youngblood.

Florida's offense came to life after that recovery, scoring on a 32-yard pass from John Reaves to Carlos Alvarez to tie the game with 5:13 to play. Then the Youngblood-led defense stopped the Dawgs at the Gator 38-yard line, and the inspired offense drove 62 yards in the closing moments, scoring on a 48-yard pass from Reaves to Alvarez with 1:39 to play for a 24-17 victory.

After that game, Georgia Head Coach Vince Dooley credited Youngblood as being the difference maker in that game. "We couldn't block him," said Dooley after the game. "The fumble was the turning point. I really don't know how he came up with the football. If we could have scored there I really believe we would have won the game."

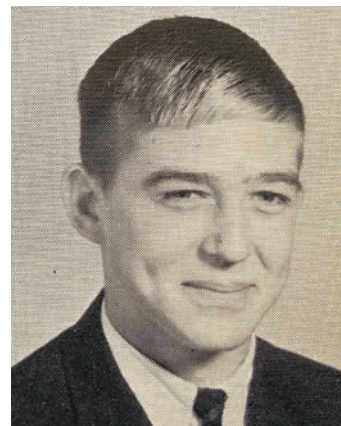
Youngblood was named a consensus All American and was an Outland Trophy finalist. The Outland Trophy is the annual award presented to the nation's top interior lineman by the Football Writers Association of America.

Following his career at the University of Florida, Youngblood was drafted by the Los Angeles Rams in the first round of the 1971 draft. Youngblood continued to build on his reputation as one of the toughest competitors to play the game. During his 14-year career with the Rams, Youngblood played in 201 consecutive games, was a five-time All-Pro, seven-time All-NFC and played in seven straight Pro Bowls. His toughness was exemplified after the 1979 season when he suffered a fractured left fibula (leg) during the first round of the playoffs. He went on to play every down in the NFC Championship game that year against the Tampa Bay Bucs and in Super Bowl XIV against the Pittsburgh Steelers. During that 1979 season, Youngblood tallied a career-high 18 sacks. Youngblood retired from the NFL on Aug. 27, 1985. He was voted into the NFL Hall of Fame as a member of the Class of 2001.

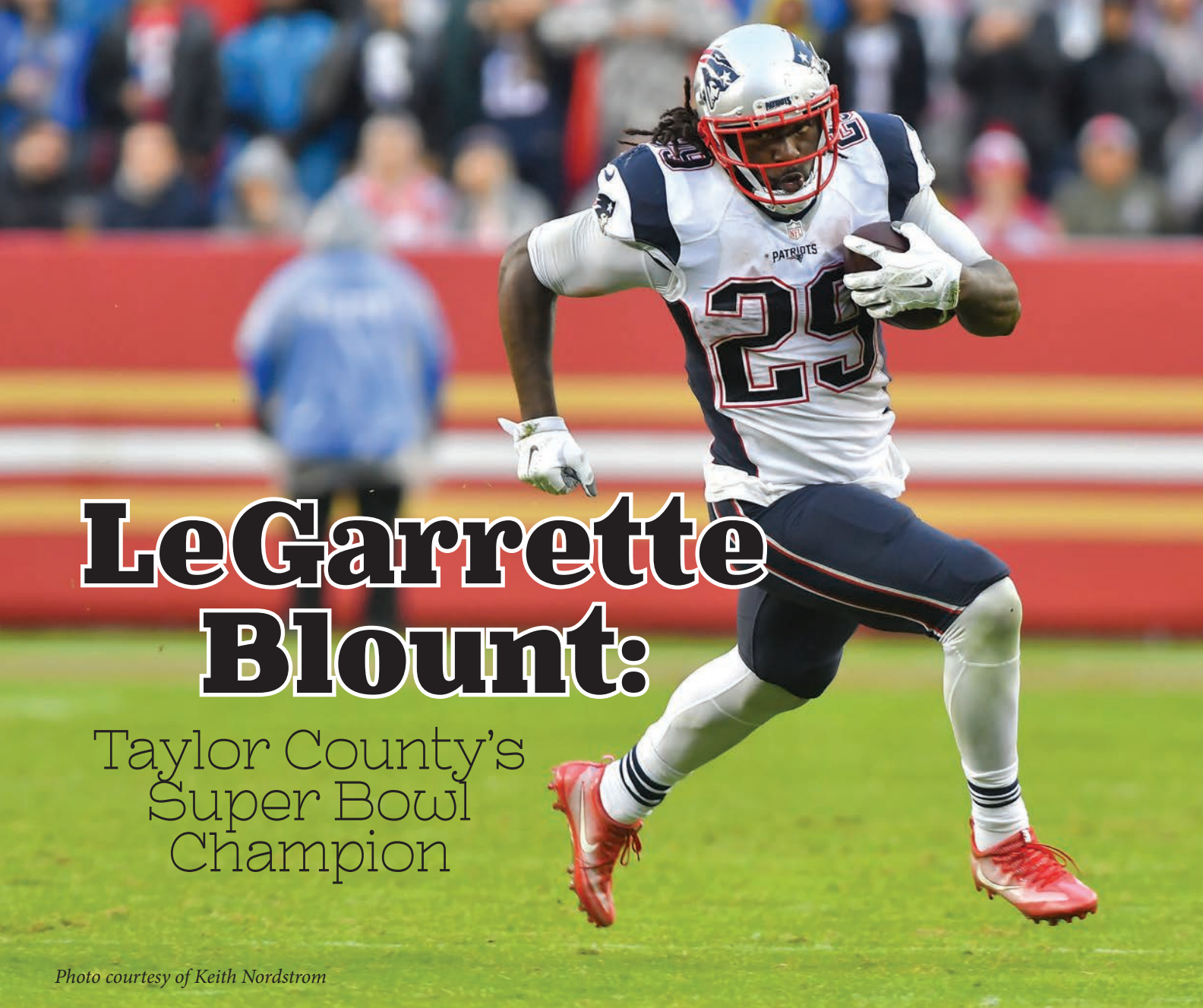
After his retirement from the NFL, Youngblood continued to be involved with the Rams, working as a color analyst for their radio broadcasts from 1987 to 1991. He has also worked for ESPN and even tried his hand in acting, appearing in a pair of TV movies as a Secret Service agent. He served as an executive for the Orlando Predators in the Arena Football League, eventually becoming the team's President and General Manager.

Since his time at the University of Florida, Youngblood has been very generous, often making time for youngsters. While at Florida, he was involved with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He later gave his time to such worthy causes as the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation, the United Way, Hands Across America to fight hunger and others. In 2014, he founded the Jack Youngblood Center for NeuroEnhancement, a center for the treatment of traumatic brain injuries, located in Orlando Fla.

Youngblood is married to his wife, Barbara, and lives in Winter Haven, Fla. He has a son named Robert Youngblood. He also has a farm in Jefferson County, which he frequently visits."



Jack Youngblood, a 1967 graduate of Jefferson County High School, helped lead the Tigers to a state title in 1966.



LeGarrette Blount:

Taylor County's Super Bowl Champion

Photo courtesy of Keith Nordstrom

*Story by John Willoughby, Editor-in-Chief
Photos by the New England Patriots and
Taylor County Chamber of Commerce*

There's something about the pride of Taylor County, Fla. So much so, the three-time Super Bowl champion from the coastal county represents the hometown he credits for his beginnings through the ink on his forearms.

Born the son of Barbara Bonner and Gary Blount, LeGarrette Blount was raised in the small town of Perry, Fla., home of the Taylor County High School Bulldogs. Like the athletic surrounding schools in the immediate area, it was considered an honor to be put on the field representing school colors – in this case, orange and blue.

The 6'4" running back was a four-year starter at Taylor County High School and three-time 1,000-yard rusher during his high school career.

Blount racked up over 2,000 rushing yards on 367 carries in 17 games through his two-year junior college career at East Mississippi Community College, before moving onto the University of Oregon in 2008, where he entered his junior year of college sharing the running back position with Jeremiah Johnson, a senior at the time who later signed with the Houston Texans in 2009. Running in 13 games, Blount was able to put up 1,002 yards – his most successful game of the season coming at the beginning of September in 2008 against Utah State, marking up 132 yards and two touchdowns to help the Oregon Ducks secure a massive 42-point victory (66-24).

Despite his senior year being plagued by a two-month suspension following an incident with Boise State, Blount found himself in the 2010 Rose Bowl with his team, where he ran for a total of 36 yards in

the game, rounding out his college career with a Pac-10 championship.

His professional on-field career began just hours south of his beloved hometown in Tampa, with the Buccaneers where he showed up on Halloween in 2010, accumulating 120 rushing yards on 22 carries, including two touchdowns, against the Arizona Cardinals in a 38-35 victory. He would go on to secure a then-career-high stat of 164 yards in a 38-15 victory over Pete Carroll's Seattle Seahawks in Week 16. His rookie season was undoubtedly his most successful in his three years in the red and pewter uniform.

The gridiron athlete began proving his worth under the leadership of Bill Belichick during his four years with the New England Patriots, where he took the field 16 games out of the season for three years of his tenure, with an extremely brief stint with

the Pittsburgh Steelers in between. He was picked up in a trade during the seventh round of the 2013 NFL Draft and ran no less than 700 rushing yards in his first season – He also set up a 334 all-purpose yards franchise record in December against the Buffalo Bills in the post season, earning himself the NFL Ground Player of the Week.

The City of Perry was well represented in one of the biggest sporting events in the history of the world – Super Bowl XLIX in 2015, when Blount made his first appearance in what would be his team's eighth appearance. After matching up with the Seattle Seahawks, Blount would help hoist the coveted Vince Lombardi Trophy after rushing 40 yards on 14 carries. One appearance wasn't enough though.

After a successful 2016 season, during which he tallied a franchise record 18 touchdowns with 1,161 yards rushed, Blount would go on to appear in Super Bowl LI in 2017 against the Atlanta Falcons. Blount put up 31 rushing yards in 11 carries during the game, which was dubbed the largest comeback in Super Bowl history after the Patriots rallied back from a third quarter score of 28-3 to secure the

victory, 34-28. Yet again, this was not the end of Blount on football's biggest platform.

Blount signed his name to a one-year contract with the Philadelphia Eagles, debuting with a handsome 30-17 victory over the Washington Redskins, against Chris Thompson, a native of Greenville, Fla., just north of Blount's town of Perry. Starting in 11 games, his season amounted to 766 rushing yards and 50 receiving before facing his former team, the New England Patriots, in the 2018 Super Bowl LII, in which he rushed 90 total yards (including a 21-yard touchdown) to push the Eagles to their first franchise Super Bowl win.

After his third Super Bowl win, Blount was named to a brief list of only four other NFL players to win back-to-back Super Bowls with different teams, along side Deion Sanders, Chris Long, Ken Norton Jr. and Brandon Browner.

His most recent time on the field came with the Detroit Lions, where he ran in eight games for a total of 418 rushing yards and 67 receiving yards. Despite a loss to the Chicago Bears, his best game of the season came in week 12 when he put out 88 rushing yards and two touchdowns.



Photo courtesy of David Silverman





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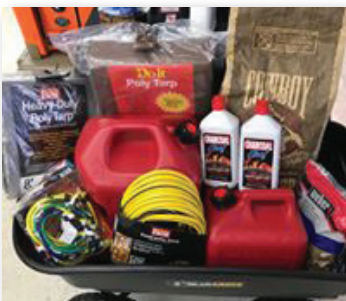
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- **Thanksgiving Celebration (November 23-28)**
Traditional Thanksgiving Dinner - Thursday at Noon
Campers Bring a Side Dish
- **Celebrate Winter Fest and New Year's Day Raccoon Plunge (December 27 - January 1)**

While you're reserving your campsite, be sure to check out these exciting and upcoming themed weekends that you can plan your trip around! More themed weekends are offered and can be viewed at www.ragansfamilycampground.com.

Disc golf coming to North Florida

*Story by John Willoughby,
Editor-in-Chief*

North Florida's premier campground and water park is getting ready to extend their offerings for campers and day-visitors this holiday season.

Latrelle Ragans, owner of Ragans Family Campground in Madison, Fla., is more than happy to announce the addition of disc golf to the long list of excitement that never fails to entertain at the park. The sport will be included in the amenities for campers and day-visitors. Additional details are in the works as construction is underway. Ragans hopes to have the course open by Thanksgiving.

An airborne form of traditional golf, disc golf has been around since the early 1900s and the first game was held in Canada in the mid-1920s. Most disc golf courses have 9 or 18 holes, with an average of 200 to 400 feet per hole.

Early games were played using trees or park equipment as the target. In modern disc golf, courses feature baskets constructed with a central pole holding a basket under an assembly of hanging chains. As the game goes, players sling their frisbee from the tee box, with the lowest scorer throwing first. Like traditional golf, disc golf also has a slew of terms, such as "Par," "Double Bogey," and "Birdie," all relating how the game is scored.

Disc golf is rather popular with the United States, as there are more than 6,000 courses. Finland has the second most, with 600 plus courses.

For the extended Ragans

family who call the Ragans Family Campground their home, camp is more than just the tents you slumber in and the bonfires you huddle around while melting chocolate and marshmallow s'mores in the fire. Camp is the wholesome family fun and tradition that constantly remains the same in the fast-paced world of today.

The campground offers 16 primitive campsites, more than 40 cabins and countless options for RV hook-ups and campers, but the fun doesn't stop there.

As an amenity, campers are welcomed to enjoy the 60-foot Tornado Water Slide that has been a favorite among thrill seekers for years. As you slip and slide into the lazy river, with its ¼ of a mile of flowing waters. The campground also offers a splash pad, as well as a zero-entry swimming pool, sloped to transition from land to water for handicap-accessibility.

As the game of disc golf joins the campground, one can't forget about the numerous games, such as the Downpour

Derby and Water Wars. For the fishermen and avid-ATV fanatics, cast your fishing pole for catch-and-release fishing in Camper's Lake or dig through the mud on multiple trails that line the backwoods of Ragans Family Campground.

Plan a trip to check out the fun for you and your family by visiting www.ragansfamilycampground.com. Interested in hosting a disc golf tournament? Contact Ragans Family Campground at (850) 973-8269.



What is Lupus?

- Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease in which a person's immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissue, cells and organs.
- Symptoms are unpredictable and can range from extreme fatigue, skin rashes, severe joint inflammation and muscle pain to organ failure and even death.
- The actual number of people with lupus remains unknown. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that a conservative estimate suggests a prevalence of 161,000 with definite SLE and 322,000 with definite or probable SLE.
- The exact cause of lupus is unknown; however, research suggests it is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors (e.g., infection, sunlight, stress) that trigger the disease in susceptible individuals.

Who is most often affected?

Women

- 9 in 10 adults with lupus are female. Lupus most often starts between the ages of 15 and 44.
- Women who have lupus and become pregnant are more likely to develop preeclampsia, a serious condition that causes high blood pressure and problems with the kidneys and other organs.
- Women who have lupus are at greater risk of developing other diseases; osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes and are 50 times more likely of having a heart attack than women of a similar age.

African Americans

- African American women are three times more likely to get lupus than Caucasian women.
- Studies have shown that African Americans develop lupus earlier in life and have more symptoms. Most prevalently seizures, strokes and kidney disease.
- African-Americans are more likely to suffer premature death from lupus.

Latinos

- Latinos tend to have aggressive disease activity and have a higher probability of heart disease and kidney damage.
- Most Latinos that suffer from lupus develop it at a younger age and when diagnosed are already dealing with ancillary health issues as a result of the disease.
- Due to language barriers it is difficult to spread the message of what the warning signs of lupus are within Latino communities.

More information about the Lupus Research Alliance and lupus can be found by visiting www.lupusresearch.org.

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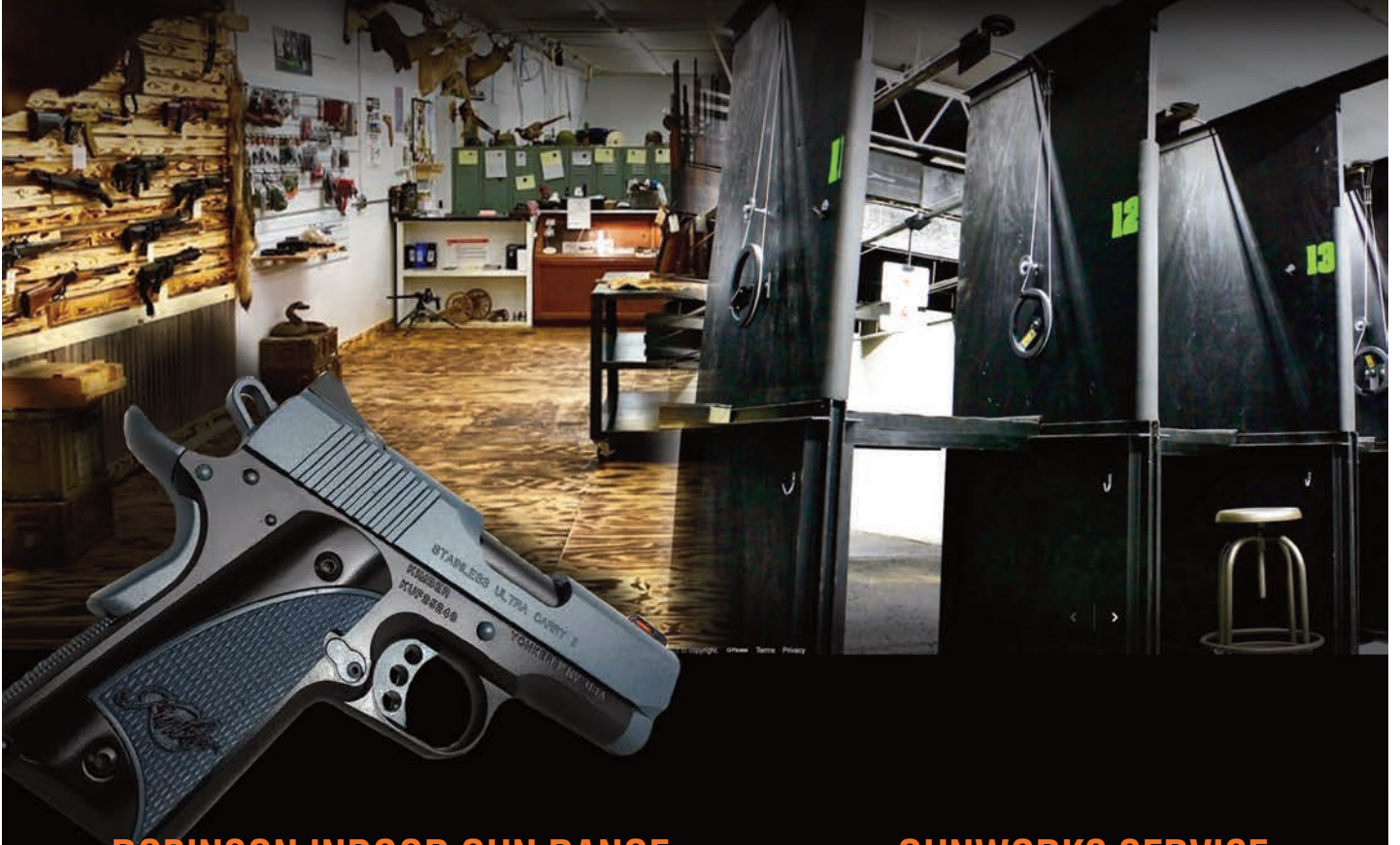
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Courtesy of the Rolling Stones

A photo of Jacksonville's Lynyrd Skynyrd taken during the photo shoot for their first album in 1973. After showcasing their acts many times at the Wanees, their music has inspired many other acts who have appeared on the same platform.

The Suwannee Valley's Musical Spirit

Story by Cole Davis

North Florida is lucky to be a staple region of Southern Rock and good music in general. Georgia boys Gregg and Duane Allman first earned their chops at gigs in Daytona in 1969 and the Lynyrd Skynyrd band burst out onto the music scene from Jacksonville with their influential "Pronounced 'Leh-'nérd 'Skin-'nérd" album in 1973. They, along with Molly Hatchet, .38 Special, Blackfoot, and the Outlaws distilled the musical traditions that characterize the Florida region of the Deep South with songs like Free Bird, Ramblin' Man, the Ballad of Curtis Lowe, Dreams I'll Never See, Gator Country, Green Grass and High Tides, Highway Song, and Hold on Loosely.

For years, Suwannee County's Wanees

Music Festival, held at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park, has done its best to showcase this genre of music and to promote the arts and culture that are unique to our area. Starting in 2005, the festival was hosted by the Allman Brothers Band until it was taken over by Live Nation in 2014. Over its thirteen year span it has featured acts like Gov't Mule, Widespread Panic, Stephen Stills, The Doobie Brothers, Buddy Guy, and Blues Traveler. Needless to say, it's attracted and displayed many a musical legend. The last show to date was in 2018 however, and it was in November of that year that Live Nation announced that there would not be a Wanees festival in 2019. There have not been any plans to continue the event since then.

In a way, this renowned and well-

attended festival has kept the Suwannee area grounded to its musical heritage. Stephen Foster's 1851 "Old Folks at Home" or "Swanee River" has had such a significant impact on American music culture that for years people have associated Suwannee County and the Suwannee River with the classic tune and with American music at large. The Wanees festival, its cousin the Suwannee River Jam, and the Florida Folk Festival in White Springs have all contributed to cementing our area as a place rich with musical tradition.

One can only hope that, as things start to open back up after our country's battle with COVID-19, festivals like the Wanees can continue for more people to enjoy what our area has to offer and for more music and history to be made.



Courtesy of C. Michael Stewart

Gregg Allman of the Allman Brothers Band playing the organ at the Wanee Festival in 2013.




A view of the crowd and stage at the 2014 Wanee Festival

Courtesy of Ian Rawn Photography

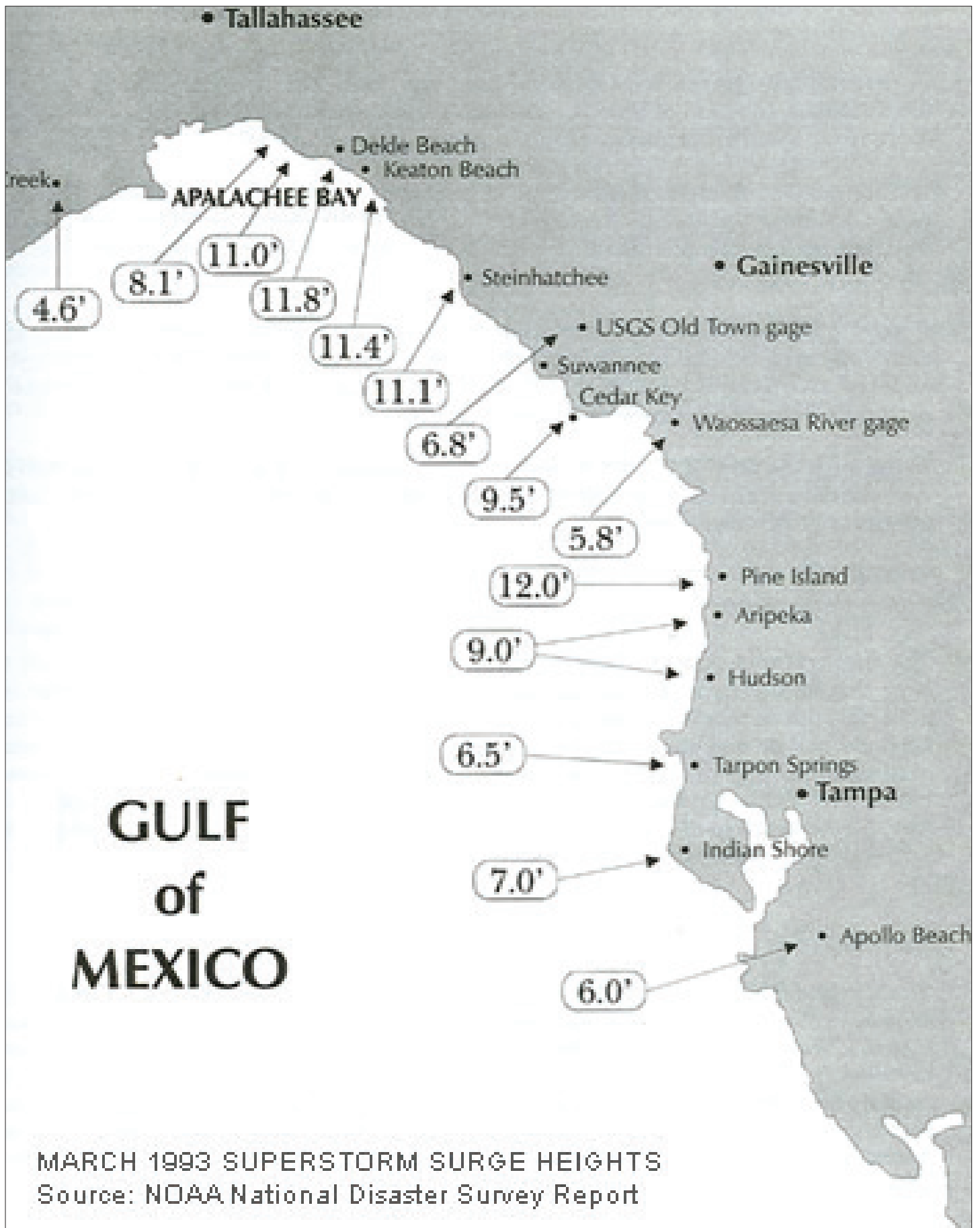
Death and Destruction with No Name





Story by Rick Patrick, Staff Writer
Photos courtesy of Perry Newspapers

There is an old weather saying that informs us that March “comes in like a lion and leaves like a lamb.” In the year 1993, March weather brought a lion that roared across the eastern United States from South Florida to New England. Called by many the “Storm of the Century” and by others the “No Name Storm,” the rare storm system brought hurricane force winds, tornadoes, and a deadly storm surge along Florida’s western Gulf Coast. Particularly hard-hit was the Taylor County Gulf Coast where a wall of water upwards of 12 feet high pounded the coastline and claimed the lives of 13 people.



This 17-year old graphic from NOAA details just how high storm surges were in parts of Florida's Big Bend as the no-name superstorm raged on.



An inside view of what used to be Roy's Restaurant in Steinhatchee

RIGHT: The Taco Times, a local newspaper based in Perry, Fla., shows the aftermath of the Storm of the Century following its destruction in Dekle Beach.

It all began about five days earlier when weather-watchers began observing a rapidly-developing area of low pressure near the western Gulf of Mexico. As the week went on, arctic, polar and sub-tropical jet streams were converging at the same time that tropical moisture was moving north from the Caribbean. This simultaneous series of events lit the fuse on what some called a "meteorological bomb." By noon on Thursday, March 12, the storm system had formed off the Texas Gulf Coast and began moving rapidly toward the east. A massive squall-line formed and by the late evening of Friday, March 13, and into the early morning hours of Saturday, March 14, the worst of the storm was pounding the western Florida coastline. The speed at which the storm raced across the area, at times upwards of 70 m.p.h., left little time for warnings and evacuations. The storm surge along the Taylor County Coast rose so fast and so high that roads that would have served as avenues of escape turned into rivers of destruction. For some, all they could do was to load themselves and pets into boats and attempt to flee from the storm in the darkness of the pre-dawn hours.

Because of the cold arctic air that was propelling the storm, record cold temperatures were experienced across the eastern United States. Rare snow flurries were seen as far south as Tallahassee, Fla. and Valdosta, Ga. From Augusta, Ga. to Augusta, Maine snowfall amounts from 25 to nearly 30 inches blanketed the ground. It would take days and even weeks for some to dig out from the massive snowfall.

It is estimated that approximately 90 million lives were directly impacted by the storm.



Home for the Holidays

Foreword by John Willoughby, Editor-in-Chief

What is Thanksgiving and Christmas without the sweet scents of scrumptious pies baking in the oven, a large pan of sticky cornbread dressing cooling on the counter and perhaps the juicy taste of deep-fried Turkey and honey-baked ham?

The following recipes come from a group of ladies once affiliated with the Woman's Club of 1978-79 in Greenville, Fla., who put together a cookbook called "Home Town Recipes of Greenville."

Here at the Front Porch, we hope you will keep these recipes, make it your holiday tradition and pass on the love and laughter that comes from cooking with the time-honored recipes that have been enjoyed by generations and many more to come.

-Entree-

Chicken Divan

Bernice McLeod

- 2 ten oz. pkg. frozen broccoli or asparagus
- 2 cups diced, cooked chicken
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup of mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. curry powder
- ½ cup shredded cheddar
- ½ cup buttered breadcrumbs

Cook broccoli or asparagus in salted water until tender. Place vegetables in baking dish. Combine chicken, soup and other ingredients. Spread over vegetables. Spread crumbs and cheese over top. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes.

-Dessert-

Maple Nut Pumpkin Pie

Thelma McNelly

- 1 ½ cup pumpkin
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp. Salt
- ½ tsp. Cinnamon and/or other spices of preference
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 ¼ cup evaporated milk
- ¼ tsp. Maple flavoring
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 unbaked pie shell




Mix pumpkin, sugars, salt and spices. Blend in eggs, milk and flavoring. Pour into unbaked pie shell and bake at 400 degrees for 50 minutes. Decorate with pecans or topping.



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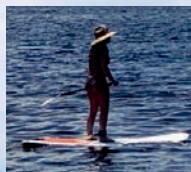
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Fish Gills



3BR, 3BA. Located on deep water canal. Sleeps 10. Amazing sundeck, washer/dryer, WiFi, Dish Network, 40 ft. dock, fish cleaning station, grill and more.

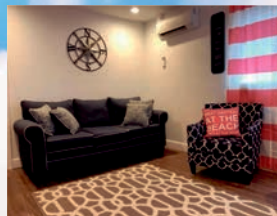
Kayak, Paddle Board & Bike Rentals



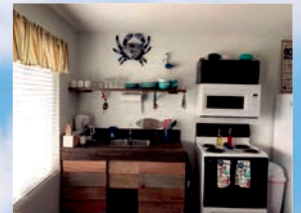
Keaton Beach Vacation Rentals has single kayaks, paddle boards and two- and three-wheeled bicycles for rent, with various discounts available. Rentals include life jacket and whistle for the kayaks and paddle board rentals, and adult helmets for bicycle rentals.

Boat House

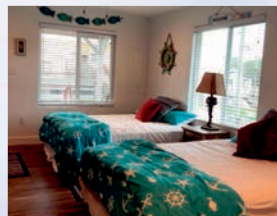
The Boat House is perfect for family reunions, business retreats or a get together with friends. Located near the Keaton Beach Public Boat Ramp, each of the four smaller units are uniquely decorated. Property includes six boat slips, a fish cleaning station, WiFi, laundry facilities and more.



Port Side: 1BR, 1BA with two queen beds and a queen sleeper sofa.



Amidship: 1BR, 1BA with king bedroom, queen sleeper sofa and fully-equipped kitchen.



Starboard: Includes two queen beds, full bath with shower and a kitchenette.



Lower Deck: 1BR, 1BA with two full beds, queen sleeper sofa and kitchenette.



Our Keaton Beach vacation rental homes are located 20 miles east of Perry on Taylor County's unspoiled and undeveloped breathtakingly beautiful Florida Gulf Coast. It's a quaint, small community away from the busy cities; a place to reconnect with one another and to the outdoors for a few days, weeks or longer; and a place where you will create memories that will last a lifetime.

20368 Ponce de Leon Perry, Fla. • Call Stephanie at (772) 284-0124
keatonbeachvacationrentals.com • Follow us on Facebook and Instagram





MADISON
RV & GOLF RESORT



Light-Up Madison

Downtown Madison

December 5, 2020



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Jefferson County Solid Waste Department

1697 S. Jefferson
Monticello, FL 32344
(850) 342-0184
(850) 342-0185 fax

7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday – Friday

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Hazardous waste is collected at the Main Office and at some of the collection sites. JCSWD prefers to accept all of the following items at the Main Office.

- Household: cleaners, cooking fats, oils & grease, aerosol cans, , kerosene, photo chemicals, chemistry sets, spot removers, adhesives, glue, resins, fluorescent tubes & bulbs
- Outside: gasoline, Insecticides, weed killers, pesticides, fertilizer, propane cylinders, swimming pool chemicals,
- Paints: oil-based, latex, stains, thinners & strippers, solvents & varnishes, wood preservatives, hobby supplies, artists' supplies
- Cars: engine degreaser, brake fluid, transmission fluid, motor oil, oil filters, batteries, antifreeze
- Batteries: all single use and rechargeable batteries
- Electronics: television & computer monitors, vacuums, blenders, etc. (anything with a cord)
- Medications: medications must be given directly to an employee at the JCSWD main office. Please remove the labels from bottles. Needles and similar supplies should be placed inside of a large bleach jug or similar and sealed securely. Note: Red Sharps Containers must be taken to the Health Department.

RECYCLING

Reduce! Reuse! Recycle! Recycling containers are located at all collection sites. Help keep reusable items out of the landfill. JCSWD collects the following:

- Cans: tin & aluminum (examples: food, dog & cat food, soda, beer)
- Paper goods: newspapers, magazines & office paper
- Plastics: soda & water bottles, milk jugs, laundry detergent bottles
- Cardboards: cereal & food boxes, laundry detergent boxes, shipping boxes, brown grocery bags. Note: Wax coated cardboard (example: meat and produce boxes) are not accepted.
- White goods: refrigerators, freezers, washing machines, dryers, air conditioner units, (anything metal)
- Glass: all clear, brown and green glass and jars

This program is partially funded by our recycling sales. Unfortunately, there is a high level of scavenging and theft of metal and aluminum cans from our collection sites, resulting in a loss of income to the County.

In an attempt to combat this loss, we have added OFFICE PAPER to our recycling program! The previous office space in the warehouse has been prepared for storage of office paper, which includes items such as copy paper, stationary, notebook paper, envelopes, magazines, file folders, and paper-based packaging. The campaign will be announced in April, 2015.



TREE DEBRIS

JCSWD provides a dedicated site for residents to dispose of tree debris. The site is conveniently located in a central area to county residents, just off Tyson Road at 8639 Landfill Road. No other items may be disposed of at this location. Call our office for access information.



ANIMAL CONTROL

At this time, the Animal Control program is limited to assisting the Sheriff's Department with dangerous and aggressive dogs. Stray animals are not accepted.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

A code investigation may be initiated upon a signed complaint by a county citizen. Our goal is to help citizens find solutions that will bring violations into compliance without the need for formal proceedings.



ADOPT-A-ROAD

This popular program encourages businesses, civic groups, or residents to adopt a two mile section of road to control litter, beautify and clean roadsides, and improve the appearance of the County road system.



TIRES

Citizens are allowed to dispose of only 4 tires per household per month. Commercial tires are not accepted at collection sites. JCSWD is a registered tire-hauler and can assist businesses with proper tire disposal.



CONTAINER RENTAL

JCSWD offers temporary container rentals for construction or cleaning projects and permanent container rentals for scheduled refuse pick-up. Sizes range from 4 yard, 6 yard and 8 yard (square) household to 20 and 30 yard (long) construction containers. Rental rates are as low as \$1 per day.

GRAPPLE SERVICE

JCSWD offers bulk grapple service for citizens who wish to have a large load of debris (tree or refuse) picked-up from their home. Each load is \$100 for county residents paying the landfill assessment.



Carrying on the Legacy

holiday



Walker's Landmark store front

Walker's Landmark prepares for the holiday season

Story by Kathrine Alderman, staff writer

Photos by Kathrine Alderman and Walker's Landmark

Walker's Landmark, known by most as Walker's Pecan House or simply "The Pecan Stand," is a wonderful store located at 16912 US Hwy. 19 North, in Lamont. Though just driving by you might mistake it for a simple gas station, this store has much more history and love in it than meets the eye. As Tracy Mertz, co-owner of the store, says, it's "a country store that happens to sell gas."

The store is more than just a simple fueling station for traveling vehicles and hungry bellies – it's a fueling station for the heart. This holiday season, Mertz hopes to bring back a little bit of home for the residents of Eridu, Lamont and those who swing in, through time-honored recipes and dishes.

Walker's Landmark was established by Lyman Walker III and his wife, Ermajean Walker in 1962. Lyman was 20, born in Wacissa and raised in Waukeelah, and Ermajean was 17, born and raised in

Greenville, and Walker's Landmark was the store they had where they owned both the store itself and the land it was on. It has been at its location for 58 years and now, the store is run by the late Lyman and Ermajean's daughter, Sherry Walker, and family friend, Tracy Mertz. Walker felt the need to continue the store's legacy, as it was something her parents had worked their whole lives to establish and run. Mertz had been working as the catering director for Florida State University for many years but when Walker asked if Mertz would like to



Pecans Gift Baskets Homemade Candies Pies & Cakes

Walker's Landmark



Walker's Landmark LLC
(850) 997-2088
16912 North US 19
Lamont, Fl. 32336



Walker's Landmark has a variety of cakes and pies, but one can't overlook the gift baskets full of homemade jelly and other goods.



Tracy Mertz holding one of Walker's Landmark's amazing pecan pies.

help out with running the store and keep the tradition alive, she had no reason to refuse. Mertz says she's known the family forever and now gets to use what she knows to do what she loves while keeping the tradition alive and selling quality products.

While the store may be mostly known for their pecans and pecan products, they also sell a variety of other handmade things such as candies, pies, cakes, jellies, jams, pickles, chow chow, pork rinds and syrups – some of which have been a staple in the small roadside country store since their humble beginning in 1962. "If it's not broke, don't fix it," Mertz added.

They fry up the pork rinds, or pig chips as they call them, and make fresh pies and cakes every day, selling, on average, about 60 pies and 20 to 25 cakes a week. They also sell lunch items and even sell locally

made products, such as soaps and sausages because, as Mertz says, "it's important to support your locals because they're the ones that support us. So that's why we try to have as many local products as possible."

New this holiday season, Walker's Landmark is pleased to offer side dish specials for the ease of convenience as far as preparing for holiday meals are concerned. Though no one will find anyone at the Pecan Stand on Thanksgiving or Christmas, the eve of two of the biggest holidays will be the pick-up day for locals who want that perfect homemade meal without the homemade hassle. "People just don't have the time anymore," Mertz continued. "I just want to bring that little bit of home to them."

Walker's Landmark has a wide-ranging clientele, from people who are just stopping

in because they needed gas, the locals who have been coming for ages, and those that make it a point to stop in on their travels, some of whom have been stopping in for over fifty years.

Not only does Walker's Landmark sell their handmade goodies, but they also do catering and hold events, such as a recent fish fry, and during the holidays they ship out gift baskets to the surrounding areas as well. You don't have to come into the store to buy their products either, as they ship out everywhere, just place an order and they will send it straight to you, or you could call in and come pick it up. Follow Walker's Landmark on Facebook for information on events, ordering, and catering, or call (850) 997-2088.

Flatwoods Café

FAMILY OWNED • WOODFIRED PIZZA



**Now booking private parties
on Mondays and Tuesdays!**

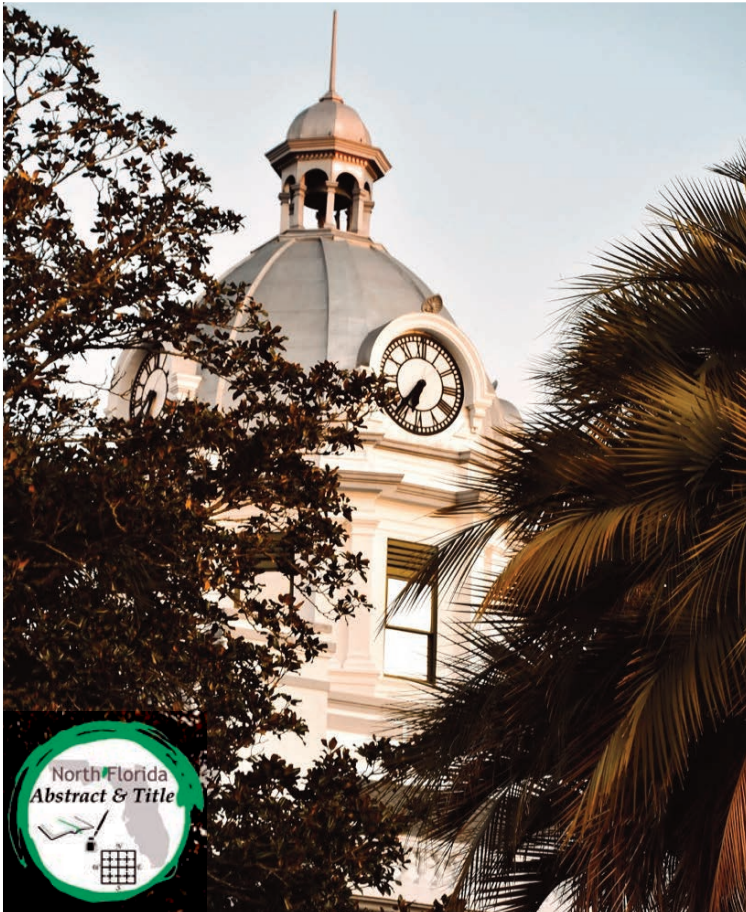
Backrooms available for parties throughout the week.

Pizza available until 9 p.m. on Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday.

(850) 997-1979

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SUN-WED-THURS 11 AM-8 PM • FRI-SAT 11 AM-10 PM • CLOSED MON-TUES



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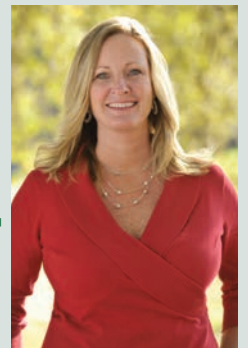
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What's happenin'?

October

24: The Florida Forest Festival, held annually on the fourth Saturday in October, is a celebration of the forestry industry in Taylor County. While the festival in the park has been cancelled due to COVID-19, spectators may still enjoy a festive parade through downtown where marching bands, classic cars, antique military vehicles, shriners and many other dignitaries have been known

to make an appearance. Visit floridaforestfestival.org for more information.

24: Cornhole Tournament in Monticello will be held on Saturday, Oct. 24, as a fundraiser for the Monticello-Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce. Enjoy an evening of socially-distanced excitement with a cornhole tournament, live music, games, food and so much more on Dogwood Street in downtown Monticello. Teams of two may enter for \$40 by calling the

Monticello-Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce at (850) 997-5552.

29: Ghouls' Night Out will be held in downtown Monticello for interested individuals wanting to celebrate Halloween and shop the night away on Monticello's Main Street. Participants are encouraged to dress up for the occasion, which kicks off at 5 p.m.

31: Halloween in downtown Madison will take place on All Hallow's Eve from 5p.m. to 8 p.m. Though the Madison

County Chamber of Commerce and the Madison Police Department will not be hosting their events, this new downtown event will be hosted by local Madison residents. There is not fee to participate and all ages are welcome. There will also be no mask mandates or social distancing restrictions. If you are interested in being a part of the event, contact Cindy Poire at (850) 869-0492."



Upcoming holiday events in your area

Notice: Local events scheduled to take place in November, including the 7th Annual Jefferson County BBQ Festival, in Monticello; Madison County Florida Storytelling Festival, in Madison; and Old Tyme Farm Days and Swamp Meet, in Live Oak, have been cancelled. Due to COVID-19, all events are subject to change.

December

1-30: Suwannee Lights, the annually anticipated sparkling event in Live Oak, Fla., at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park and Campground, will be back in action through the month of December. The 2020 event will feature dazzling lights and breathtaking displays to help spread the Christmas cheer. The event begins nightly at 6 p.m. and lasts until 10 p.m.

3-5: 37th Annual Christmas

on the Square will take place in Live Oak, Fla., on Thursday, Dec. 3, until Saturday, Dec. 5. Festival will include the Jingle Bell Fun Run and Walk, the lighting of the Christmas Tree in Millenium Park, a lighted Christmas parade, arts and craft vendors, food vendors, live entertainment, fireworks and a 100 percent chance of snow!

4: Downtown Christmas returns to historic downtown Perry, Fla. with a drive-thru Christmas display. More details will be announced by

the Taylor County Chamber of Commerce.

5: Light Up Madison is one of Madison, Fla.'s largest annual events. Not only do local businesses dress up their storefronts, but folks from neighboring towns and counties enjoy an afternoon of shopping, dining and watching an elaborate Christmas parade.

5-22: Festival of Lights at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, in White Springs, Fla., has been tenta-

tively scheduled. Stay updated by visiting floridastateparks.org or stephenfostercso.org. You may also call (850) 869-0492.

12: Mayo's Christmas in the Park will be held as one big celebration after Pioneer Days in October was cancelled. A parade will be held during the mid-morning hours. Additional details will be announced via the Lafayette Activities Group on Facebook.

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