



2nd

POP'S
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Jefferson County Homeless Association
Jefferson County Homeless Association had a booth set up in order to provide information about the association and its services. Photo by Emerald Greene Parsons.

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Grand Supporters of the WATERMELON Festival
Grand Marshal **Angela Gray**

Three Two One BOOM! One of the favorite events to watch is the tubband exploding watermelon contest. The Katal and Isabella Gray are pictured dodging watermelon as it flies through the air, after putting histories of tubbands around it.

Lucas Ronald Rodriguez, of Monticello, is celebrating his 21st birthday by celebrating watermelon and hanging out at the annual Watermelon Festival. He is the 21-month-old son of Isabella and Carlos Rodriguez and the grandson of Shawn and Cindy Holand.

Portfolio Photography (Robert J. Ellison Memorial Award) Emerald Greene Parsons - Second Place

3rd

Community News

Properly Displaying Your Address Could Save a Life

Kathrine Alderman
ECB Publishing, Inc.

As people, sometimes it's easy to take something for granted, or not realize quite how important something is until you need it more than ever. Something that a lot of people might not realize is important is properly displayed address numbers.

Address numbers should be displayed as follows:

- It can be fastened to the mailbox if it is within ten feet of the drive and there is no chance it could be mistaken for a neighbors number.
- Any other numbers which may be mistaken or confused with the assigned street address should be removed to display the address correctly.
- It should be displayed in a manner that can be seen from either direction when passing down the road.
- The numerals should be of contrasting color with the immediate background of the building, structure or material they are placed on.
- Street address numerals should be in Arabic numerals, made of reflective material and should not be less than four inches in height and one-half inch in width.
- If the building is in a subdivision or city street type situation and less than 75 feet from the road, the number can be placed on the building within three feet of the front door as long as it is viewable from the road by a passing vehicle.
- All vegetation must be kept from covering the number.
- It should be displayed at the intersection of the drive to the building and the road passing the property, either public or private.

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Informational Graphic Mark Estefan - Third Place

3rd

MONTICELLO NEWS
154 Years of Serving the Monticello Community

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Correctional Officer Trainee dies on duty
Mike Johnson
ECB Publishing, Inc.

This is a sad time for Correctional Officers all around as they put the black band around their badges, paying respect to a fallen brother/sister in arms. A trainee with the Florida Department of Corrections died last week after a gun accidently went off during a training session, the agency announced Saturday, Aug. 28.

Correctional Officer Trainee Whitney Cloud was participating in firearms training Thursday, Aug. 26, at the Harry K. Singletary Training Academy at Wakulla Correctional Institution in Crawfordville, Fla., when her weapon accidently discharged, fatally wounding her.

She was transported to a nearby hospital, where she later died. No other officers-in-training or instructors were injured in the incident. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement will lead the investigation into the incident.

"We are absolutely devastated by the loss of Officer Whitney Cloud," Secretary of Corrections Mark Inch said in a statement. "As a newly hired officer-in-training, Officer Cloud vowed to make a difference in the lives of others and protect her community. We are immensely saddened by this unexpected tragedy. Our deepest condolences go out to her loved ones and fellow officers during this extremely difficult time."

Cloud served the Florida Department of Corrections for three months, beginning her career on June 25. She was an officer in training and being assigned to the Jefferson Correctional Institution, in Monticello.

Four candidates to be interviewed for City Manager
Lazaro Aleman
ECB Publishing, Inc.

City officials last week selected and set interviews for the four top candidates seeking the city manager position, with at least two more candidates likely to be selected for interviewing in the coming week.

The four selected candidates, all of whom live outside the area and whom expert advisor Jim Hanson recommended, are Anthony Carson, Marcus Collins, Seth Lawless and Frank Ventresco. The closest of the candidates lives about an hour away, the others as far as Missouri, North Carolina and Texas.

A second tier of candidates that Hanson selected qualified but not recommended, also numbered four. City officials hope to choose another two from this second tier list to make for a total of six candidates to interview. As of last week, however, the council had yet to name the last two candidates.

The council expects to interview the candidates between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 4, and reach a decision on Tuesday, Oct. 5. The plan is to give the candidates and their spouses a tour of the town and some kind of reception prior to the interviews, depending on the Covid situation at the time.

Hanson made his recommendations to the council on Tuesday evening, Aug. 24. At the time, however, the council was prevented from taking action because it lacked a quorum. Three of the members participated by phone, which allowed them to listen to Hanson's presentation and ask question but not vote. Hence, the reason for the council holding a second meeting on Wednesday evening, Aug. 25.

Hanson told the council at the earlier meeting that after reviewing the applications of the 23 persons who had applied for the position, he and fellow senior advisor Ken Parker had chosen eight for recommendation, four in what he called the top tier, and four in a second tier.

He and Parker, he said, had made the selections based on the candidates' knowledge, skills, abilities, traits and competencies, as identified on the questionnaires that council members had earlier completed.

"Our recommendations are contained in three groups," Hanson said. "They are the recommended candidates, qualified but not recommended, and not recommended."

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Say "neigh" to horse medications
Mike Johnson
ECB Publishing, Inc.

In a world that has changed due to one illness, people are turning to any solution to help fight against it. COVID has now been around for a while and vaccinations have been created to help with the prevention but there is still no cure. U.S. Citizens are wanting to resume their old lives prior to how things were before COVID. Living a life in fear of getting this respiratory illness is no way to live.

Citizens are trying to treat and prevent COVID by taking prescribed horse medications commonly used as a dewormer. Ivermectin is commonly used as an anti-parasitic cream or injection for dogs, cats, sheep, cattle and horses. It can eliminate lice, scabies and worms in mammals. This medication, though helpful for animals and the prescribed problem they have, can poison humans.

If taken at smaller doses humans can tolerate it with minimal side effects such as nausea, rashes and increased heart rates. The problem comes from people taking this medication at doses meant for a horse. At the amount needed to treat a horse it can, and will, poison a human causing great issues such as seizures, comas, lung issues and heart problems.

Ivermectin is prescribed by doctors for human use (in human doses) to treat parasitic worms, head lice and some skin conditions like rosacea, but it's not an antiviral drug. If you have a prescription for ivermectin for an FDA approved use, get it from a legitimate source (your doctor or pharmacy) and take it exactly as prescribed. Never self-medicate with animal medication. Ivermectin preparations for animals are very different from those approved for humans.

The Missouri Poison Center has seen a 40 to 50 call increase daily over the regular number of messages they had received a day prior to the pandemic. Rather than wait to get the proper drugs or vaccinations from their doctors, people are falling for the fake cures posted online or

See MEDICATIONS page 3

Sewer extension to Lloyd sought
Lazaro Aleman
ECB Publishing, Inc.

The Monticello City Council approved a similar resolution on June 29, formally affirming its commitment to seeking a Jobs Growth Fund Grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FDEO) for infrastructure improvements at the I-10 and SR-59 interchange.

This latest application to the FDEO is an updated version of the one that the city and county jointly submitted in 2019.

Following the City of Monticello's lead, the Jefferson County Commission recently approved a resolution aimed at furthering a joint pursuit of state funding to extend sewer service to the Lloyd interchange.

County officials approved the resolution on Thursday evening, Aug. 19, with scant discussion, other than for the brief comments by Clerk of Court Kirk Reams.

The 2019 application, however, languished as a result of the pandemic, which caused the state to halt issuance of the grants.

Reams told the commissioners that in recent conversations with city officials the previous problems had been ironed out and needed clarity brought to the issue.

"We feel that we have a good chance of getting the grant this time," Reams said, adding that the funding cycle was underway. "Some awards have already been made since July 1."

The difference between this application and the one submitted in 2019 is

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There are 31,557,600 seconds in a year.

Best Headline Mike Johnson - Third Place

3rd

SARAH FULFORD
A modern day previvor

Following a mastectomy, women can choose reconstruction, prosthesis or nothing at all.

AFTER SURGERY

Laura Young
ECB Publishing, Inc.

In 2021, breast cancer became the most common cancer worldwide. Women who discover that their family history, personal medical history or genetics heightens their risk of developing breast cancer can find their life's path increasingly fraught with more-than-routine screenings filled with deep anxiety, waiting for test results.

Like many women around the world, when Sarah Fulford of Monticello learned in 2007 that her mom had breast cancer, her life changed in an instant.

"Not only did I have to watch my mother go through the toughest journey of her life," says Fulford, "I had to come to terms with how this would affect my life as well."

At age 31, the risk factors were starting to build up for Fulford. Her paternal grandmother had also had breast cancer, and she learned that her own breast density increased her risk. She started having screenings early, and the more frequent mammograms and MRIs that her doctors recommended repeatedly revealed worrisome cysts, which led to frequent biopsies and one lumpectomy of a cyst cluster. Genetic testing, though inconclusively in the "gray zone," added to the worry that breast cancer was on her horizon.

Fulford had become a "previvor." A previvor is someone with a predisposition to cancer but who hasn't yet had the disease. Breast cancer previvors have basically three options to manage their risk: monitoring their condition, taking a hormone-lowering medication or undergoing a preventative double mastectomy.

"So, here I was," recalls Fulford, "rotating from mammograms to MRIs every six months, dealing with my own breast issues, biopsies, results, scans and worries and prayers. My surgeon told me I could have a mastectomy at any time, and that I easily qualified for it."

Fulford faced a monumental decision about how to manage her risk. She chose to continue with monitoring for 12 long years, all the while going back and forth in her mind about the surgical option. Then, in the summer of 2018, when a radiologist mistakenly identified an old spot as a new cancer, she realized she had enough of the stress and trauma of monitoring.

I knew in my heart, I was ready to move forward with my surgery," says Fulford. "We met with my surgeon again, talked things over and set the date for Jan. 25, 2019."

As a farmer's wife, Fulford needed to plan for the surgery and recovery to happen during the brief time of year that falls between harvest and planting. Then, unexpectedly in October, her husband Ernest had a serious farm accident. A 15-foot fall from a semi-trailer while harvesting peanuts left him with complicated injuries: a crushed wrist, damaged rotator cuff, eye trauma, a concussion and partial amnesia. He embarked on a series of surgeries that would overlap with his wife's own mastectomy date. She didn't feel she could cancel her surgery; so she pressed on, with faith that it would all work out.

To ease the anxiety leading up to the big day, Fulford joined The Prophylactic Mastectomy Group on Facebook.

"It helped me so much! I met so many brave, incredible women who helped me along the way. Even though so many people were praying for me, I still couldn't shake my nerves. I was a wreck until the morning of. Then the Lord put a peace over me that I cannot describe. I felt each prayer, and I was ready to do this."

Fulford's successful surgery for a double mastectomy with no reconstruction lasted two and a half hours. She was able to receive visitors during the first, difficult night afterwards, and the following afternoon she went home.

"My next days were full of resting, getting my drains stripped and watching my family and friends step up and take care of my every need," remembers Fulford. Meals arrived daily, friends brought gifts to help with recovery and someone anonymously paid the kids' school tuition for the month.

"People showed us the love of Christ by their actions," says Fulford.

She found the physical pain very manageable, but the roller coaster of emotions was more difficult than she expected.

"I couldn't bear to look at my chest. I had to grieve my boobs. Getting a shower took every ounce of energy I had. I felt as if I would never be myself again. I craved normalcy badly, but it felt like I would never achieve it."

Fulford thanks her husband for stripping her drains twice a day, bathing her, telling her how great her wounds looked when she wasn't able to look at them, and encouraging her through it all. When he needed his fourth post-injury surgery just two weeks after her double mastectomy, she didn't know how they would handle it. Thankfully, Clay, the oldest of the six children in their combined families, was able to drive them to Shands Hospital in Gainesville. When they returned, the two youngest children, still at home, took charge.

"I couldn't take care of Ernest, being down myself," says Fulford. "So challenging! Our 12-year-old daughter Megan really stepped up to the plate and took care of her mom and dad with such grace. She had to fix meals, tidy the house and make sure her little brother was cared for. Our 10-year-old son Noah helped out as well. He never left my side except to go to school. He fetched water, medicine and blankets. He held my hand every time I experienced pain. I feel so blessed to have them."

Nearly three years have passed since Fulford had the prophylactic double mastectomy to reduce her risk for breast cancer. No longer in a high-risk group, she now has a zero to two percent chance of developing the disease. The difference is huge for her.

"Sometimes I can't believe it has been that long, and other days it feels like it was just the other week. It's been such a time of growth, strength and realizing I'm a proud, beautiful warrior. God has grown me in ways I could not have imagined. My faith has increased, and He told me early on that He would use me to share my story. When we go through something very challenging in life, it helps to know someone who has experienced firsthand what you are about to endure. I share with women who I went through and answer any questions they may have."

Fulford frequently gets asked why she chose not to have reconstruction. She explains that following a mastectomy, a woman has a number of options about her appearance. She can present herself as flat, simply wear a store-bought padded bra, be fitted for custom prosthetic breasts, have reconstruction with implants or have reconstruction with fat from another part of her body.

"In the beginning, I fully planned to get implants," says Fulford. "I just didn't feel like I could wake up and be completely flat. Then a friend of mine had to explain due to being severely ill from her implants. She almost died twice because of immune issues. I decided right then and there that the risk just wasn't worth it."

Because she has chosen not to have reconstruction, Fulford says, "It's up to me to have boobs today or not."

She has zero regrets about the choices she has made. She has found her new normal and is living life to the fullest. Fulford's conversations with women on this journey always conclude with several reminders: you can do it this! Even when it seems impossible, you can do it with God's help. Second, boobs do not define who you are. You are beautiful with or without boobs. Each scar tells your story and makes you a beautiful warrior. Lastly, nothing is wasted. God has and will continue to use every hand thing we face for good. What comes overhelming now will be your testimony later."

See CITY MANAGER page 3

Health, Medical & Science Reporting Laura Young - Third Place

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