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SOUTH BAY ACADEMY ENROLLMENT OPENS FOR THE 2026-27 SCHOOL TERM

By Libby Hopkins



South Bay Academy is a Christ-centered pre-K through 12th grade private school in Riverview that strives to be Christ-centered in all aspects of the learning environment. It teaches and leads from a biblical worldview.

"We offer a premier Christian Education to students, not just those who excel but those with unique abilities as well," said Sean Doherty, executive pastor of South Bay Church and treasurer of South Bay Academy. "Our mission is to cultivate a Christ-centered learning community where students are cared for with compassion, equipped with excellence, sent with purpose and connected deeply to the great commission."

South Bay Academy's journey is built on the faithful foundation of Livingstone Academy (Riverview campus), which served students on South Bay Church's campus from 2011 through 2025.

"Their years of dedication, particularly in providing personalized education and exceptional ESE services, helped shape the high standard of care we provide today," Doherty said. "We are proud to carry that legacy forward."

In 2023, South Bay Church cast a vision to establish a K-12 institution that would continue this history of excellence under a new banner. Following a successful transition year, South Bay Academy officially launched for the 2025–26 school year.

South Bay Academy specializes in serving our students with a premier ESE department, specifically designed to support those with SLD and speech language impairments.

"At South Bay Academy, we believe every student deserves an environment where they are truly known," Doherty said. "We combine rigorous Christian education with the specialized support necessary for every child to thrive."

South Bay Academy believes that excellence honors God and inspires people; so, it is a school with high academic standards. It prepares students to achieve their highest potential.

Enrollment is currently open for the 2026-27 school term.

"Parents of preschool through 11th grade students can inquire by visiting our website or calling us," Doherty said. "South Bay Academy is really about creating a family where students feel known and supported as they grow in their faith. The big hope is that by surrounding kids with mentors who truly care, they'll develop the confidence and character to go out and make a real difference in the lives of others."

If you would like to learn more about South Bay Academy or if you'd like to enroll your child at the school, you can visit its website at www.southbay.academy or call 813-399-3180. The school is located at 13498 U.S. 301 S. in Riverview.

FLORIDA IRONWORKERS GIVE BACK THROUGH TAKE KIDS FISHING DAY

Staff Report

Over 200 attendees were introduced to fishing and the outdoors at the 2026 Union Sportsmen's Alliance (USA) Ironworkers Local 397 Take Kids Fishing Day on April 25 at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center.

All 128 kids in attendance took home a free rod and reel. In addition to fishing, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission held three educational stations about fish identification and regulations, knot tying and casting.



A group of youth anglers smile with their fishing poles at the Ironworkers Local 397 Take Kids Fishing Day. 128 kids attended the event.



Twenty-five volunteers from Ironworkers Local 397 provided instruction, including financial secretary-treasurer and business agent Keven Barber. The day was especially meaningful for Barber, who fished with his 5-year-old grandson, Bryar, for the first time.

"He got there with me early to help me set up and stayed all day," Barber said. "I think he had fun wandering around and helping other kids. We worked on how to cast, and he baited his own hook with a shrimp. After that, he told me that he didn't need help anymore."

USA conservation coordinator Maggie Sager said volunteers helped create a welcoming and engaging experience for youths and their families.

"The volunteers showed the community what mentorship, service and giving back look like," she said. "They helped create meaningful connections with the kids while bringing the USA's mission to life by introducing the next generation to the outdoors."

Take Kids Fishing Day is part of a series of free, community-based youth outreach events organized under the USA's flagship conservation program, Work Boots on the Ground. The Suncoast Youth Conservation Center's wheelchair-accessible boardwalk and fishing pier were constructed by local union volunteers back in 2019 as part of the USA's 200th Work Boots on the Ground project.

"It was incredibly meaningful to host this event on the same pier these volunteers built seven years ago through Work Boots on the Ground," Sager said. "Seeing it still in great shape and continuing to serve the community shows the lasting impact these projects have in creating outdoor opportunities for years to come."

Barber explained the value of this event for union members.

"This event is a great way to give back," he said. "As union members, we do a lot for our communities without expecting anything back. It means a lot to get kids outdoors because the outdoors has always meant a lot to me. I just want to share that with my own family and other kids in the community."

For more information, visit www.unionsportsmen.org or connect on Facebook, X, YouTube and Instagram.

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THE KNOCK ON THE DOOR
WHAT A VOLUNTEER ROUTE REVEALS

By Jeff Evans



There are some things you don't fully understand until you see them up close.

For my wife, Cathy, and me, that moment came at the volunteer appreciation lunch this week for Meals On Wheels of Tampa Bay. It was our first time attending, even though we've been delivering meals for the past year and a half. What stood out wasn't the program or the recognition. It was the people.

Volunteers were called up and recognized for their years of service: five, 10, 15 and 20. Then one person was honored for 30 years. Not 30 months or even a decade but 30 years of showing up.

You can learn a great deal about an organization by watching who stays. In this case, people don't just participate; they commit.

Meals On Wheels is often understood at a surface level as a meal delivery service, but that framing misses what actually makes it work. The national movement dates back to the 1950s, with roots in postwar efforts to care for those who could not care for themselves. Over time, it expanded into a network that now serves seniors, individuals recovering from illness and others who face barriers to preparing meals on their own. The stated goal is nutrition, but the deeper purpose is independence — keeping people in their homes, in their communities and connected to the world around them.

At a practical level, the model is straightforward. Meals are prepared, routes are organized and volunteers deliver food directly to recipients, usually around midday. But the simplicity of the system hides what's actually taking place. The delivery isn't just a transaction. It's a point of contact.

Over time, the route stops feeling like a list of addresses and starts becoming a series of relationships. And with those relationships come stories — more than you expect, and often more than can be told in detail.

There's the former teacher who clearly misses the classroom and the daily rhythm of conversation, who lingers at the door not because of the meal but because someone is there to talk to. There's the woman slowly losing her sight who refuses to surrender her independence, finding ways to stay active and positive even as her world narrows. And there are the stories you hear secondhand, like the one shared at the lunch — a man facing his first Christmas without his wife, sitting alone in a quiet home, carrying the kind of loneliness and grief that doesn't announce itself but is deeply felt.

Mandy Cloninger, the new CEO, has stepped into the role with a clarity that is easy to recognize. Her background in nonprofit and community-focused leadership is evident not in what she says but in how she frames the work.

That culture is reinforced by the team on the ground. People like Jeremy Gloff, Yvette Rouse and all of the other staff don't just coordinate logistics; they build continuity. They know the volunteers, understand the routes and carry the small details that make the entire operation work. In organizations like this, those details are not minor. They are the difference between a system that functions and one that actually serves.

In the end, it's not just a meal being delivered. It's a reminder — someone still cares enough to knock. Visit www.mowtampa.org.

END OF AN ERA — SOUTHSHORE CHAMBER DIRECTOR REFLECTS ON 21-YEAR LEGACY

By Kelly Wise Valdes



After more than 21 years leading the Greater SouthShore Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director Melanie Davis is preparing to step down in July, closing a chapter she describes as both meaningful and deeply personal.

Davis said the moments that left the strongest impression were when the chamber united around community needs.

"Anytime the chamber came together and went beyond business to truly support our community stands out the most," she said. "If our community doesn't thrive, then our businesses can't thrive either."

About 15 years ago, Davis helped guide a major transition in the chamber's mission.

"We made a conscious shift to become more involved in giving back," she said.

The decision wasn't universally popular at first.

"We were even labeled the 'dogood chamber,' and some hesitated to join," she added.

But she said the approach eventually became one of the organization's greatest strengths.

"Our members now value the opportunity to connect with likeminded businesses while also making a meaningful impact," she said.

Leading through change became a defining part of her tenure. Davis said working with a board of directors that rotates every few years required constant adaptability. But nothing compared to the challenge of COVID19.

"There was a moment when we came close to closing our doors," she said.

Instead, the chamber doubled down on helping businesses survive by connecting them with resources and keeping the community informed.

"That experience reinforced the importance of resilience and servicedriven leadership," Davis said.

In recent years, the chamber has seen significant growth in engagement. Davis credits that momentum to redefining value after the pandemic.

"We leaned into our committees, strengthened member involvement, and focused on building a true sense of community — almost like a family," she said.

Stepping away, she admits, is emotional.

"It's incredibly bittersweet," Davis said.

She began the role in her mid20s, raising three daughters while growing alongside the chamber.

"It truly feels like an extended family," Davis said. "I feel like I gained 20 extra grandparents through this journey."

What she'll miss most is working directly with business owners.

"There's almost always a way forward, and I love the creativity that comes with problemsolving," she said.

As she prepares for her next chapter, Davis said she looks forward to slowing down. And she is confident in her successor, Bonnie Peacock.

"She has experienced the chamber from every angle," Davis said. Visit www.southshorechamberofcommerce.org or visit the chamber's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/southshorechamberofcommerce.org.

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SOUL CIRCUS COWBOYS COME HOME TO BRANDON FOR CHARITY FESTIVAL

By Brian Bokor





Inside Morrisound Recording Studio: Frank J. Myers, Rick Morgan, Billy McKnight, and Jim Morris during a recent recording session in Tampa.

Before the Billboard-charting albums, national tours and collaborations with Grammy-winning songwriters and platinum-record producers, Billy McKnight was playing quarterback and middle linebacker for the Brandon Broncos while attending Nativity Catholic School in East Hillsborough County.

Years later, the Soul Circus Cowboys frontman became a familiar face at Nativity Novemberfest, where the band regularly drew large hometown crowds and helped create what McKnight once described as a "complete Brandon reunion."

Now, McKnight is bringing that same spirit to the upcoming Chris Rocks the Vote Music Festival benefiting Forgotten Angels and ECHO.

The festival is scheduled for Saturday, June 27, at the Forgotten Angels ranch, located at 3604 Little Stearns Rd. in Valrico, as part of Chris Ciulla's honorary mayor campaign supporting the two nonprofits. The honorary mayor race is a community fundraising competition where donations and ticket purchases count as votes supporting local charities.

Forgotten Angels supports young adults aging out of foster care, while ECHO assists local families and individuals facing financial hardship throughout the Brandon area.

"We couldn't be more grateful for having the Soul Circus Cowboys supporting Forgotten Angels and the kids we work with," said Cindy Tilley, founder of Forgotten Angels. "The funds they are helping us raise will help save the lives of youth in our community."

Forgotten Angels and ECHO work closely together to support local individuals and families facing difficult situations throughout the community.

The event will feature live music, food trucks and family activities, including performances by Wade Williams, Sidney O'Sullivan, Clay Bo, Sons of the South and Soul Circus Cowboys.

Despite years of touring and recording, McKnight said his connection to Brandon and Valrico has remained constant throughout his career, especially his longtime relationship with Raccoons Bar & Grill, where he performed even before moving to Nashville, Tennessee, in the 1990s.

"Three times a year, I always go back to where I came from," McKnight said. "I play there Thanksgiving Eve, once in the spring and again near the end of the year."

McKnight said football was originally his main focus growing up in Brandon before eventually turning his attention toward music after his athletic plans changed.

Soon afterward, he auditioned for a friend's band.

"His band wound up going with me and we got on Star Search," McKnight said.

That early exposure helped lead McKnight to Nashville in 1994, where he spent nearly a decade learning the music business.

"Nashville was like a college to me," McKnight said.

After returning home to Florida, McKnight formed Soul Circus Cowboys in 2009.

The band has since become one of the region's most recognizable country rock acts, sharing stages with nationally known artists, including Big & Rich.

Their 2016 album, Tailgate Country, reached No. 25 on Billboard's Top Country Albums chart.

Soul Circus Cowboys also gained regional attention during the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' 2020-21 Super Bowl season after releasing the fight song "We're Going to Buc You Up."

Along the way, McKnight built relationships with respected music industry veterans, including Grammy-winning songwriter Frank J. Myers, who won the 1995 Grammy Award for Best Country Song for co-writing the hit "I Swear."

McKnight said Myers first took interest in him after hearing him perform the song "High and Low."

"He heard me sing 'High and Low' and said, 'We want to meet him,'" McKnight recalled. "Then we met, and he said, 'OK, we're going to develop you.'"

"If you want to be the best, you've got to work with the best," McKnight said.

That philosophy eventually led to collaborations with additional respected music industry names, including Jim Morris of Morrisound Recording, the internationally recognized Tampa recording studio associated with multiple platinum-certified records.

The band recently released its newest single, "Something Stronger," and did a May 18 music video premiere on the American Country Network (ACN).

Despite the success, McKnight said giving back locally still comes first.

"Let's make this a Brandon reunion," McKnight said. "Come out and do some good for our neighborhood like we always do. When a Brandonite goes down, or one of our bikers goes down, we get together and put things like this event together to help out.

"Quote me — it's something I've said for years: Come on out and let's help other people out. This is more than just a concert for us."

Tickets for the June 27 festival are scheduled to go on sale on Monday, May 25, with general admission tickets priced at $25 and VIP tickets available for $50.

For event details, follow the Chris for Mayor 2026 Facebook page www.facebook.com/chrisformayor2026. Visit https://linktr.ee/chrisformayor to find ticket information and purchase.

Questions can also be directed to Forgotten Angels at ctilley@forgottenangelsflorida.org or by calling 813-812-0120.



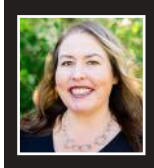






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MANAGING EDITOR
Marie Gilmore
813-657-2418
editor@ospreyobserver.com


BILLING MANAGER
Terry Vassalotti
813-657-2418
terry@ospreyobserver.com


NEWS REPORTER
Taylor Wells
813-657-2418
twells@ospreyobserver.com


DELIVERY MANAGER
Bill Andrew
813-657-2418
bandrew@ospreyobserver.com


ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR
Libby Hopkins
813-657-2418
libby@ospreyobserver.com


CUSTOMER SERVICE
Jenny Bennett
813-657-2418
jbennett@ospreyobserver.com

GRAPHICS MANAGER - **Kathi Hayes** - *khayes@ospreyobserver.com*

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APOLLO BEACH MOTORS HELPS DRIVERS FIND THE FIT FOR EVERY BUDGET

By Libby Hopkins

Apollo Beach Motors is the go-to for quality used cars in the Apollo Beach Community. Owner Craig Blum has been in the used car business for more than 38 years, and he works hard to make sure his customers leave his car lot happy and in a car they love.

"At Apollo Beach Motors, we don't just sell vehicles, we help people find the right car for their life, their budget, and their next chapter," Blum said. "We understand that finding the perfect combination of quality and affordability can be difficult. So, we have made it our goal to provide Apollo Beach and the surrounding areas with the best buying experience possible."



Apollo Beach Motors has a huge inventory of SUVs, trucks and sedans, all in one place and ready to drive home any day of the week. It is the 'Home of the Car Deal.'

Apollo Beach Motors has a full sales and service department. Every vehicle on its lot goes through a 126-point inspection before it is offered for sale.

"We have more than 75 years of automotive experience to offer you a world class car deal and environment," Blum said. "We offer financing for every credit situation with a 99 percent credit approval."

Apollo Beach Motors has a huge inventory of SUVs, trucks and sedans, all in one place and ready to drive home any day of the week.

"We do more than just sell cars," Blum said. "We offer full vehicle support, from oil changes and repairs to extended warranties and GAP insurance, so you can drive with total confidence."

There's nothing like that moment when you finally get the keys and drive off in a vehicle that feels just right. Strong, reliable, and ready for whatever comes next.

"One of the things I like most about what I do at Apollo Beach Motors is working with our customers to find their vehicles," Blum said. "Because it's not just about buying a vehicle; it's about driving something that makes you proud. Smooth driving, reliable performance and a car you can trust every day because the right car doesn't just take you places; it changes how you experience the journey."

If you would like to learn more about Apollo Beach Motors or see some of the used vehicles it has to offer, you can visit its website at https://apollobeachmotors.com or call 813-645-2227. The dealership is located at 5301 N. U.S. 41 in Apollo Beach.





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ASSET LOCATION: THE OVERLOOKED LEVER IN TAX-EFFICIENT INVESTING

Staff Report



The team at Payant Wealth Management in Sun City Center encourages clients to align investment and tax strategies for long-term financial success.

When it comes to building long-term wealth, most investors focus on what they own—stocks, bonds, funds, and alternatives. But an equally important question is where those assets are held. This concept, known as asset location, can have a meaningful impact on after-tax returns, yet it's often overlooked in portfolio construction.

Asset location refers to strategically placing investments across different account types—taxable accounts, tax-deferred accounts (like traditional IRAs or 401(k)s), and tax-free accounts (such as Roth IRAs). Each type carries its own tax treatment, and aligning investments accordingly can help reduce unnecessary tax drag.

For example, income-generating assets like bonds or high-turnover funds may be better suited for tax-deferred accounts, where interest and short-term gains are sheltered from annual taxation. Meanwhile, growth-oriented investments—such as equities with potential for long-term appreciation—can be ideal for taxable or Roth accounts, where capital gains benefits or tax-free growth may be realized.

The difference may seem incremental year to year, but over time, tax efficiency can significantly improve overall portfolio performance. In fact, minimizing taxes is one of the few "controllable" factors investors have, alongside costs and discipline.

Yet many investors unknowingly hold tax-inefficient assets in the wrong accounts, creating avoidable tax liabilities. This is where comprehensive planning—and ongoing coordination between investment strategy and tax considerations—becomes essential.

Ask yourself: Does your advisor talk to you about asset location?

Are your investments positioned with taxes in mind, or simply allocated based on risk alone?

How tax-efficient is your plan?

True financial planning goes beyond selecting investments—it involves integrating tax strategy, retirement goals, and portfolio design into one cohesive approach. Reviewing asset location regularly, especially as tax laws or personal circumstances change, can help ensure your portfolio is working as efficiently as possible.

In today's environment, where every basis point counts, thoughtful asset location isn't just a technical detail—it's a strategic advantage.

Payant Wealth Management is located att 1653 Sun City Center Plaza, Sun City. Visit www.payantwealthmanagementgroup.com or call (813) 633-7333.

WELLNESS WARRIORS HELP ENHANCE LIVES THROUGH HOLISTIC PRACTICES

By Libby Hopkins



Shirley Sullivan, Lisa Kennedy and Shari Leiterman are known as the Wellness Warriors.

Shirley Sullivan, Lisa Kennedy and Shari Leiterman are known as the Wellness Warriors to the Brandon community.

"Shari and I first met while she was working at a local cafe, and I was immediately drawn to her high-vibrational energy and warm spirit," Kennedy said. "When she asked if we could be friends, I didn't hesitate to say yes. Our connection grew naturally through our shared passion for wellness, spirituality and community."

At that time, Kennedy had recently graduated from yoga teacher training and was beginning to step into teaching.

"Shari started attending the new moon goddess circles and full moon gatherings I was hosting in my home, and she became incredibly supportive of my journey," Kennedy said. "She connected me with the owner of the local health food store and cafe, who graciously allowed me to begin offering yoga classes there. Shari also helped spread the word to everyone she knew. I still remember teaching my very first class in that space. It was such a meaningful moment because it gave me the confidence to continue teaching and eventually expand into other locations and wellness offerings."

Leiterman introduced Kennedy to Sullivan, who happened to be a neighbor.

The three women joined together to form the Wellness Warriors.

"The Wellness Warriors was created as a community-centered wellness group focused on bringing people together through holistic healing, education, mindfulness, movement, spirituality and connection," Kennedy said. "We recognized that many people were searching for authentic community and meaningful ways to support their well-being beyond traditional approaches."

What began as small gatherings and wellness discussions gradually expanded into workshops, circles, healing events, educational presentations and community collaborations.

The Wellness Warriors' activities include sound healing, meditation experiences, full moon and new moon circles, yoga, drumming circles and educational wellness workshops, to name a few.

"We welcome anyone who feels called to explore wellness, healing, mindfulness, spirituality or simply meaningful human connection," Kennedy said.

Visit www.facebook.com/share/1fe6ehdgpd/ or call 813-946-6164. The Wellness Warriors meet at Divine Harmony LLC - Holistic Wellness, located at 1218 Millennium Parkway in Brandon.

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ALL CHILDREN'S OUTPATIENT CARE OPENS IN APOLLO BEACH

By Libby Hopkins



This past March, Johns Hopkins All Children's Outpatient Care opened its doors to the Apollo Beach community. The grand-opening ribbon cutting had 100 people in attendance. Representatives from Hillsborough County Schools, nonprofit organizations, Tampa Sertoma, and Sounding Joy also came out to show their support.

"The paper chain ribbon used for the opening was made by speech and hearing patients," said Paula Golson, director of Audiology Services at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital. "Our COO, Justin Olsen, welcomed and shared our vision and then invited the children to cut the ribbon and start the tour/scavenger hunt of the various rooms and services."

The new facility is operated by pediatric therapists and staff that provide audiology and speech-language and feeding evaluation and therapeutic services at the new location.

"This is a speech, feeding, audiology and infant hearing service location serving birth to 21 years of age," said Therese Montanari, director of Speech-Language and Feeding Services at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital. "This new facility is designed to meet the pediatric population with bright colored walls and playful art. We have a large classroom to offer group therapy sessions, which will include a language group, group for children with hearing loss and parent education programs."

In addition to the classroom, this site has four SLP treatment rooms, hearing aid dispensing and a full diagnostic testing suite.

Hearing loss interferes with a child's brain development, can affect communication development and can also affect everything from school performance to social relationships and emotional well-being.

"Our pediatric audiologists provide evaluation and treatment for children with hearing loss and hearing disorders to help them hear and communicate to the best of their ability," Montanari said. "Your child's hearing can be tested at any age, including as a newborn. The earlier hearing loss is detected, the greater the chance for normal auditory brain development."

The Speech-Language and Feeding program at Johns Hopkins All Children's helps children develop the skills needed for successful communication, feeding and swallowing.

"Our master's-level, certified speech-language pathologists have extensive training in childhood speech, feeding and language programs," Montanari said. "As part of a comprehensive medical program based at a pediatric hospital with one of the largest neonatal intensive care units in the country, our speech-language pathologists are experienced in providing a range of speech, language and feeding therapy services to children of all ages, from infants to teens, with complex medical conditions."

Visit www.hopkinsmedicine.org/all-childrens-hospital or call 813-910-5189. The facility is located at 211 Harbor Village Lane in Apollo Beach.

TURNING KNOWLEDGE INTO KEYS: ADAMS HELPS BUYERS FIND HOMES

By Libby Hopkins



Research, knowledge and education are the tools one would need when purchasing a new home. Local real estate agent Christina Adams began her career as an educator.

"I loved teaching, but I wanted to spend more time with my children, so I decided to become a real estate agent for RE/MAX Alliance Group," Adams said. "I love history and research, so I do my best at researching properties for my clients."

You could say Adams was born into real estate. Her mother was a real estate agent while Adams was growing up.

"I've grown up in real estate," Adams said. "I'm the daughter of a RE/MAX broker and found my way home to real estate after an exciting career in education."

Adams' focus is finding the right home for her clients that they will love and be able to afford.

"Helping my clients achieve their real estate goals is my priority," she said. "Whether they are buying, selling or both, every situation is unique and calls for an individualized plan of action. I consider it an honor to be entrusted to protect my clients with the largest investments of their lives. It's simple; I represent my clients as I want to be represented, with honesty and integrity."

Buying a home in Florida is exciting, but without a clear roadmap it can feel overwhelming fast. Whether you're a first-time buyer or relocating to the Sunshine State, understanding each step will help you move forward with confidence and avoid costly mistakes.

"Before you fall in love with a home, talk to a lender and get preapproved," Adams said. "This shows sellers you're serious and gives you a clear price range. In competitive Florida markets, a strong preapproval can make the difference between winning and losing a deal. Florida's real estate market varies widely from city to city; coastal properties, flood zones, HOA communities, and new construction all come with unique considerations. A knowledgeable agent helps you navigate pricing, neighborhoods and negotiations."

Buying a home in Florida doesn't have to be stressful. With the right team and a clear understanding of the process, you can navigate each step with confidence and ease.

"I have an understanding the foundation of the real estate market and stay abreast with the current market trends and changes to ensure my clients investments are secure," Adams said. "If you're thinking about buying, or just want to understand your options, I'm here to help guide you every step of the way. Let's turn your homeownership goals into reality."

If you are in the market for a new home or selling your current home, give Adams a call at 813-480-2071 or visit her website at https://christinaadams.remax.com/index.php.





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TAX COLLECTOR NANCY MILLAN HOSTS ANNUAL KIDS TAG ART CEREMONY

Staff Report

The Hillsborough County Tax Collector's Office rang in the spring season with a night of celebration, art and community, hosting the Kids Tag Art Awards Ceremony on April 15 at the Brandon Tax Collector's Office. Students, families, teachers and community supporters gathered to honor the young Hillsborough County artists whose original designs were selected as the award-winning artwork of this year's program.



Melina Fenton, a student at Apollo Beach K-8 received the Tax Collector's Choice Award for her license plate design.



Anabelle Webster is presented with a Sponsor's Choice Award for the Kids Tag Art program.

The ceremony marked a milestone moment for the program celebrating its fifth year. This program was brought to Hillsborough County by the Tax Collector Nancy Millan and her innovative partnership with Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) and the Hillsborough Education Foundation. At the ceremony, each student winner was recognized individually, receiving applause from a room filled with proud families, supportive educators, and community members who came to witness the next generation of Florida artists take their well-deserved spotlight.

"What makes Kids Tag Art so special is that it gives young artists something most programs can't — the chance to see their work live beyond a classroom wall," said Millan. "When someone chooses to put a student's design on a license plate, a mug or a keychain they carry every day, that's a powerful message to a young person about the value of their creativity. We want our students to know that Hillsborough County doesn't just celebrate the arts, we invest in the artists."

The Kids Tag Art program is also a meaningful community fundraiser. Proceeds from the sale of Kids Tag Art vanity license plates benefit arts education in Hillsborough County. Since its inception in 2021, the program has raised over $143,000 for local students. A final fundraising total for the program this year will be formally presented to the community and the Hillsborough County School Board in the coming weeks.

Community members who want to show their support for Hillsborough County's young artists can still purchase a Kids Tag Art specialty license plate through the tax collector's online store at www.hillstaxfl.gov/shop/. Every purchase directly supports arts education in our schools and puts a student's creative vision on display across Florida.

FLVS FLEX OFFERS TUITION-FREE SUMMER COURSES FOR STUDENTS

Staff Report



As summer break approaches, Florida students have the opportunity to use time away from the traditional classroom to focus on practical skills that support academic success, career readiness and personal well-being through tuition-free online courses.

Available to students statewide, the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) Flex option allows students to take individual courses online and work at their own pace, making it possible to continue learning alongside summer schedules, jobs or family commitments.

"FLVS Flex provides students with a way to continue learning on their own terms," said Jason Schultz, senior director of instruction at FLVS. "By offering courses online and year-round, we're able to meet students where they are."

FLVS Flex courses are aligned with Florida educational standards and state requirements and are designed to support a range of student academic and instructional needs.

For example, the Driver Education/Traffic Safety course fulfills the state requirement that students complete a driver education course before obtaining a learner's license.

Health and fitness offerings provide options for students completing required physical education coursework outside the traditional school year, while career and leadership courses allow students to explore postsecondary interests and develop decision-making and organizational skills.

All courses are taught by Florida-certified teachers and include instructional support and interactive components. Students may enroll in one or more courses based on individual academic plans.

FLVS Flex courses are available tuition-free to Florida students, with unique requirements that apply to those receiving scholarship funding. Students can enroll in individual courses on a rolling basis throughout the summer. Additional information about course offerings and enrollment is available on the Florida Virtual School website at www.flvs.net/enrollment/flex.

Course Offerings

FLVS Flex offers courses designed to help students develop academic, career and life skills outside the traditional classroom.

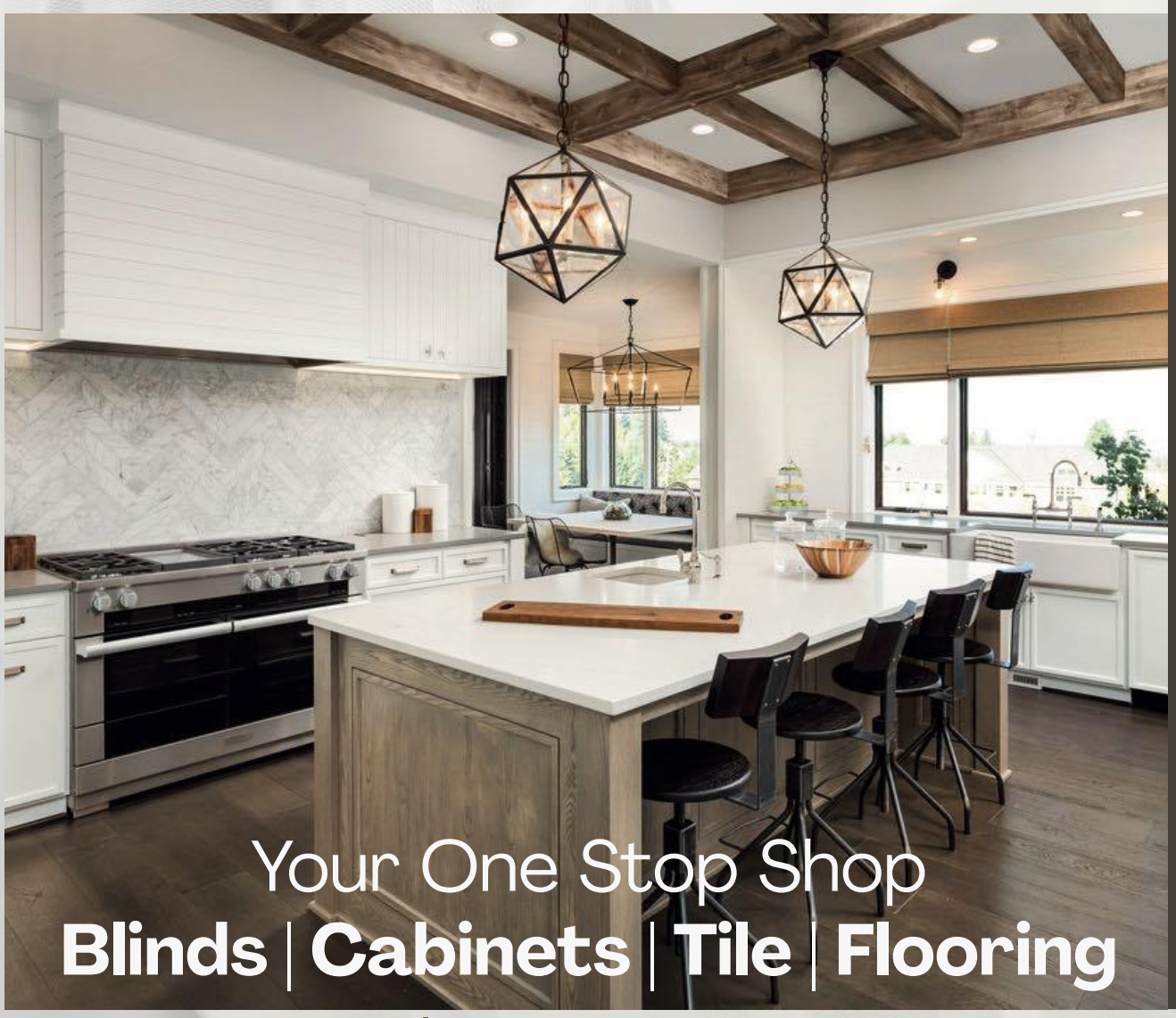
Middle school courses include:

- Business Keyboarding
- Career Research and Decision Making
- Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Learning Strategies

High school courses include:

- Career Research and Decision Making
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- Driver Education/Traffic Safety
- Fitness Lifestyle Design
- HOPE - Physical Education (Core)
- Leadership Skills Development
- Life Management Skills
- Outdoor Education
- Personal Fitness

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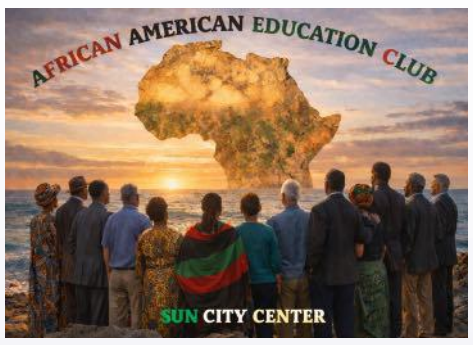
Woman's Club Fashion Show, Arts & Crafts Fair Vendors & More....

Compiled by Jenny Bennett
jbennett@ospreyobserver.com

Catsino Night Fundraiser For A Kitten Place

Join A Kitten Place for its inaugural Catsino Night on Friday, June 5, at Center Place Fine Arts & Civic Association in Brandon. The event is presented by the Fuddy Fund and will be an unforgettable evening supporting A Kitten Place and all the lifesaving work it does for kittens and cats in need. Tickets are $75 and include casino-style gaming, food, beverages and a fun, high-energy night with fellow animal lovers. Tickets are available at https://akittenplace.org/events/.

Juneteenth Commemoration and Celebration



The African American Educational Club invites the community to join its Juneteenth Commemoration and Celebration on Saturday, June 20, from 3-5 p.m. at the Florida Room, 1009 N. Pebble Beach Blvd. in Sun City Center. This special event will honor the history and continuing importance of Juneteenth through education, reflection, culture and community fellowship. The program will include presentations, music and recognition of student essay contest participants. The celebration will also highlight the ongoing journey toward freedom, equality and greater understanding. Community members of all backgrounds are encouraged to attend and take part in this meaningful celebration of African American history, resilience and achievement.

School Board Member Honored With Distinguished Leader Award

Hillsborough County School Board Member Patti Rendon has received the Distinguished Leader Award from the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA), recognizing outstanding leadership and a commitment to effective school board governance that supports student success.



The Distinguished Leader Award recognizes board members who demonstrate dedication to professional learning, leadership development and governance excellence. Recipients must first earn both the Certified Board Member (CBM) and Advanced Certified Board Member (ACBM) designations through FSBA.

"School board members who earn this award go above and beyond in their commitment to effective governance and public service," said Tina Pinkoson, director of leadership services for the Florida School Boards Association. "By earning the Distinguished Leader Award, member Rendon demonstrates outstanding leadership, a commitment to continuous learning and a lasting positive impact on students, schools and their community."

The Florida School Boards Association is the statewide professional association representing Florida's 67 elected school boards.

Apollo Beach Woman's Club Celebrates Spring Fashion

The Apollo Beach Woman's Club (ABWC) brought color, style and camaraderie to its April 8 luncheon with a Spring Fashion Show held at the Ruskin Moose Lodge 813, located at 1212 Shell Point Rd. in Ruskin. The special event featured nine club members modeling spring fashions from the Teal Turtle Boutique, a popular shop located in Apollo Beach. Each model selected her own outfit, with the opportunity to purchase it at a discounted price. The showcase proved to be a hit, with several attendees leaving the boutique with additional purchases. The fashion show added an energetic and festive element to the luncheon, drawing enthusiastic applause from the audience.

Seeking Artists For Arts & Crafts Fair

Redeemer Lutheran Church in Sun City Center will be having its seventh annual Arts & Crafts Fair on Saturday, November 7, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. It is looking for 40 artists of fine and applied arts. Both indoor and outdoor spaces are available. For more information or an application, email rlceventsscc@gmail.com.



COMMISSIONERS APPROVE $95M FOR FLOOD PROTECTION PROGRAM

Staff Report



Hillsborough County Commissioners on Wednesday approved spending $95 million for 10 additional projects that will help improve drainage and alleviate future flooding across the county.

The Rebuilding for Tomorrow projects include removing obstructions in a channel in Northdale to improve water flow after rains, acquiring or restoring natural lands to reduce storm surge and flooding in Gibsonton, building a low-pressure sewer system to decrease the risk of post-storm wastewater flooding in Ruskin and replacing or repairing culverts at more than 100 sites across Hillsborough.

In all, the work is estimated to directly benefit 370,000 residents.

The funding will come from $709 million of Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) grant funding awarded to the county from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) after Hurricanes Helene and Milton in 2024.

Here is a look at some of the projects approved recently and their estimated costs:

• Ruskin low-pressure sewer system conversion ($30 million): Construction of a centralized vacuum sewer collection system, lift station and pressurized sewer pipe in a low-lying, flood-prone area. The project will decrease the risk of sanitary system overflows during and after flooding.

• Kracker Avenue Coastal Habitat ($2 million): Restores 25 acres of highly disturbed coastal wetlands and uplands adjacent to Tampa Bay to capture stormwater runoff and lessen the impact of storm surge along U.S. 41 in Gibsonton.

• Stacy R. White Nature Preserve Hydrologic Stream Restoration ($6 million): Restores 93 acres of disturbed stream habitat and wetlands within Little Bullfrog Creek headwaters to increase on-site water storage to reduce downstream flooding in Riverview and Gibsonton.

• Culvert projects ($24 million): Repair or replace 150 culverts throughout the county that are critical to maintaining the flow of stormwater.

In addition to the $95 million approved, the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners approved more than $70 million of drainage projects on March 4 and another $9 million earlier this year.

Hurricanes Helene and Milton caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage throughout Hillsborough County. Most of the damage from Hurricane Helene came from storm surge, while Hurricane Milton's strong winds and heavy rains brought flooding throughout the county.

About the Rebuilding for Tomorrow Program

Rebuilding for Tomorrow is a Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program administered by Hillsborough County and funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that provides funding to help communities recover from Hurricanes Helene and Milton. The program supports long-term recovery efforts, including housing rehabilitation, infrastructure restoration, economic revitalization and mitigation projects, with funding prioritized for the most impacted areas and low- and moderate-income households.



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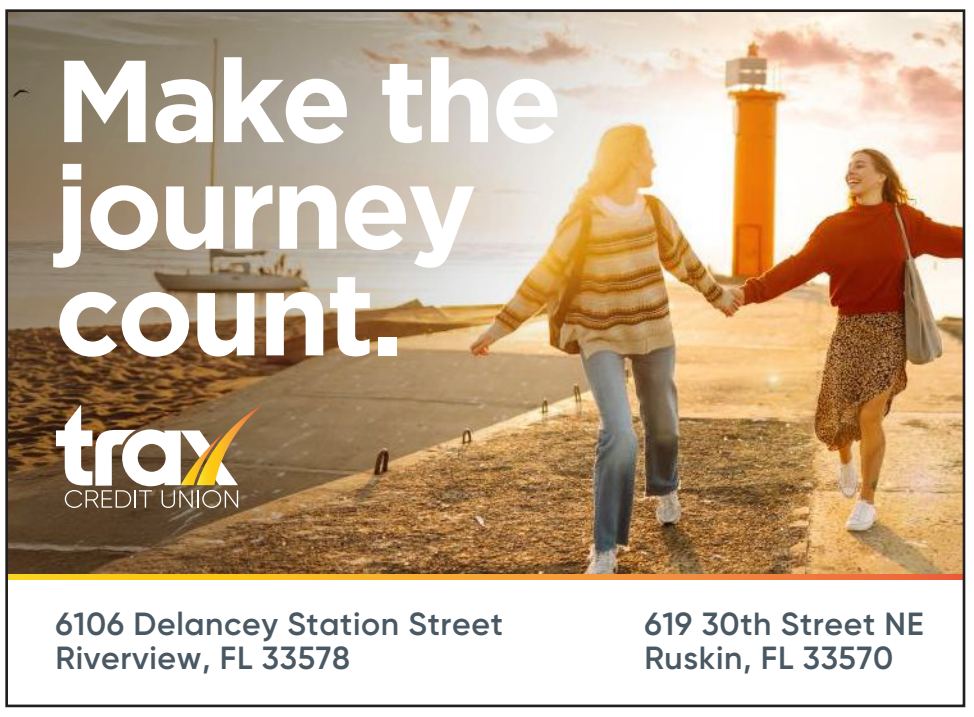

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CARDINAL ROOFING CO-OWNER BECOMES AN INDUSTRY PIONEER

By Madeline Gardner

For Bridget Jenkins, roofing is more than an occupation. Roofing is in her blood.



Bridget Jenkins (center) gathers with fellow members of National Women in Roofing, an organization which she co-chairs.

Cardinal Roofing, founded by her father, Roger Jenkins, in 1995, quickly became a major part of her early adult life. And when Bridget Jenkins sought a career-pivot, she became more involved with Cardinal Roofing, taking on every job within the company before obtaining her roofing license over 25 years ago. She has since earned her general contractor license and is now a co-owner of Cardinal Roofing, alongside her father and their partner, Chad Curchin.

Bridget Jenkins also serves as the first female president of the West Coast Roofing Contractors Association (WCRCA). The WCRCA is a local organization fostering collaboration between licensed roofing professionals. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the WCRCA, a moment she plans to highlight with a series of special events, including a fishing tournament in October.

She has also become a national influencer with the RoofersCoffeeShop (RCS), which serves as a hub for roofing professionals. The platform provides professionals with access to formal job postings and networking opportunities, as well as its RCS Influencer program, which Bridget Jenkins was invited to participate in.

"Of course, I said yes because I'm always up for a good conversation with people about, you know, my favorite topic, which is roofing and construction, because I'm a total construction geek," she said. "So, they started this program, and I, of course, jumped on board, and at the last convention they gave us little pins that said, 'RoofersCoffeeShop Influencer,' so I'm feeling pretty fancy. I've got an official pin for my lapel."

Reflecting upon her accomplishments, Bridget Jenkins cited the importance of pursuing your career passions.

"Jobs are great, but if you actually geek out about whatever your job is, it makes it so much easier. Construction is one of those jobs [where] nothing is ever the same. It's always different every single day, hour-to-hour, ... and I just love roofing," she said. "I just think it's fascinating. ... Just making sure that people feel safe in their homes. It's just one of those things that I was born into; it's in my blood, I was meant to be this person, so I'm just going to take it and run with it."

For more information on Cardinal Roofing, please visit www.cardinalroofingfl.com or call 813-689-7663. Cardinal Roofing is located at 1312 Orangewalk Dr. in Brandon.

HONORARY MAYOR CANDIDATES READY FOR MONTH OF FUN EVENTS

Staff Report

In East Hillsborough, something special is about to begin. The Valrico FishHawk Chamber of Commerce is getting ready for the 2026 Honorary Mayor's Race, a community-driven initiative designed to bring people together while raising funds for impactful local nonprofits.



Voodoo Brewing owner Chris Ciulla is working hard to support ECHO and Forgotten Angels.



Attorney Steve Glaros is supporting High 5 Inc., Raining Cats and Dogs Shelter and Sanctuary and Impact Program Inc.

The race will officially kick off on Monday, June 1, at 6 p.m., at Lake Michigan Credit Union (LMCU), located at 3467 Lithia Pinecrest Rd. in Valrico. People from across the area are invited to come, meet the 'candidates' and learn how they can take part. The event will mark the start of a month filled with fun activities, all created to raise money for good causes.

The race concludes on Tuesday, June 30, with one final event scheduled for Monday, July 13, at 6 p.m., at The Boulevard at FishHawk, located at 15260 FishHawk Blvd. in Lithia, where the community will gather again to celebrate a month of creative fundraising and community engagement and announce the 2026 Honorary Mayor of East Hillsborough County.

Two participants are leading the way this year, and both are focused on helping others.

Steve Glaros is supporting High 5 Inc., Raining Cats and Dogs Shelter and Sanctuary and Impact Program Inc. His events include a Mayor's Summer Splash Bash, Music Bingo, a Chef Soiree and Online Auction and even an 'Amazing Race.' Each event is meant to bring people together while helping youth, families and animals in need. Glaros said he joined the race to "strengthen the community and make a difference."

Chris Ciulla is also working hard to support important groups. He is raising money for ECHO and Forgotten Angels, both of which serve vulnerable individuals and families in the community. His campaign includes Boot Scootin' Bingo, a 'Sit, Stay & Sip' pet-friendly event, a Mayoral Royal Casino Night and a Chris Rocks the Vote Music Festival. Ciulla wants everyone to join in, saying, "There is something for all ages to enjoy while helping others."

This race shows what can happen when people work together. Every dollar raised goes straight to local charities. That means real help for families, children, and others who need support.

For more information, you can visit the candidates' Facebook pages @GlarosForMayor and @ChrisforMayor2026.

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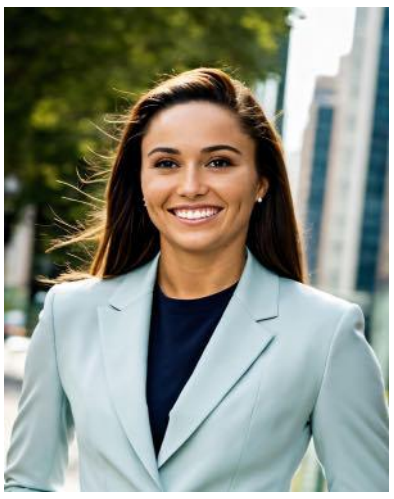
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HIGH 5 INC. TEAM MEMBERS SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

By Emily Harper



High 5 Inc. chief operating officer Patrick Skidmore.



High 5 Inc. chief communications officer Jada Spano.

High 5 Inc. is a multipurpose facility in Brandon where the community can come together. Recently, two individuals were recognized for their dedication to the organization by earning promotions: Patrick Skidmore and Jada Spano.

Skidmore was initially the director of development and has since been promoted to chief operating officer. In this new role, his main priority is "supporting our team to allow them to perform at a high level and provide superior programming to all participants in any of our programs."

Skidmore is a third-generation Tampa native who grew up going to the formerly known Brandon Swim and Tennis, now High 5 Inc. There, he attended his first swimming lesson. Prior to his career at High 5, he worked as a paramedic at Brandon Regional Hospital and is a second-generation president of the Rotary Club of Brandon, fostering his leadership skills.

On the other hand, Spano's previous title was the vice president of operations. She has now transitioned into her new role as chief communications officer. Spano's main focus is on "building a strong, consistent and recognizable brand that drives engagement and growth."

Growing up in the Brandon area, Spano has many early memories at this organization. She also learned to swim there and spent time playing tennis at the facilities. She now uses her childhood experiences and professional background to succeed in her role at High 5.

"That's what makes this role so meaningful to me, as it's truly a full-circle moment. I've gone from being a participant in these programs to now helping tell the story and bring awareness to the impact High 5 has on so many families in this amazing community," said Spano.

Both Skidmore and Spano are excited for the future of High 5 as they continue to grow and positively impact the community. "High 5 is more than just a place people come to participate but as a cornerstone organization that shapes lives and brings people together," said Spano.

For more, visit www.high5inc.org.

TWIN BROTHERS, STUDENT LEADER HIGHLIGHT HILLSBOROUGH COLLEGE GRADUATION CEREMONY

Staff Report

Hillsborough College celebrated the achievements of its Class of 2026 during commencement ceremonies held May 1 at the Florida State Fairgrounds Expo Hall, recognizing graduates whose stories reflected perseverance, leadership and academic excellence.



Twin brothers Nathahn and Noah Jorden, along with student leader Christopher Harris (below), were recognized during Hillsborough College's Class of 2026 commencement ceremony on May 1 at the Florida State Fairgrounds Expo Hall in Tampa.



Among the standout graduates were twin brothers Nathahn and Noah Jorden of the SouthShore area, who completed the Collegiate Academy program at Lennard High School with identical 7.0 GPAs. The brothers will both continue their education at University of South Florida and share the same long-term goal of becoming pediatric nurse practitioners.

College officials highlighted the Jordens as an example of dedication and determination, noting the brothers balanced rigorous dual-enrollment coursework while preparing for their future healthcare careers.

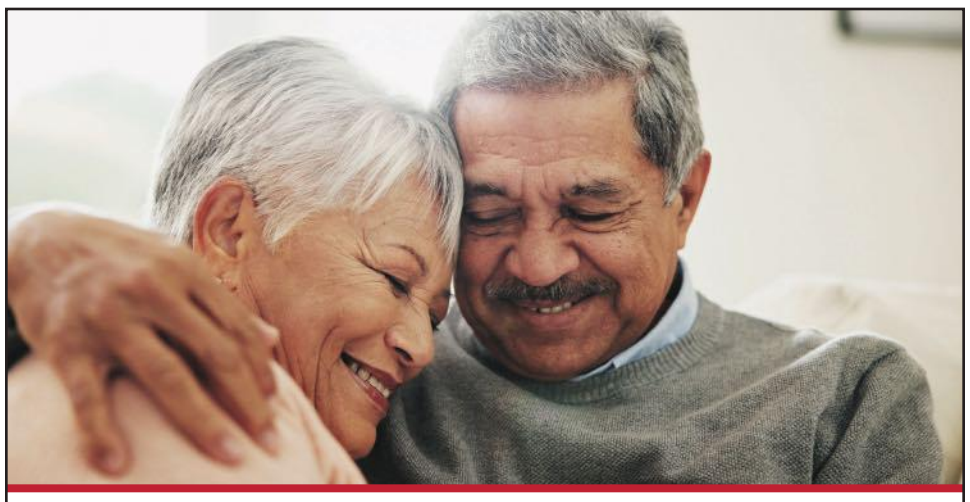
Another graduate recognized during commencement was Christopher Harris, whose college journey reflected significant personal growth and resilience. Harris arrived at college uncertain about his direction, but found purpose and community through the student government association.

As he became more involved on campus, Harris developed leadership skills and confidence that eventually led him to serve as Student Government Association president at the Brandon campus. College leaders said his transformation stood as a testament to the impact of mentorship, involvement and perseverance.

"Once told he wouldn't achieve anything meaningful, Christopher is graduating as a leader and someone he is proud to have become," the college shared in highlighting his accomplishments.

The commencement ceremony celebrated hundreds of graduates entering careers, universities and service opportunities across the region and beyond.

For more information about Hillsborough College, academic programs or enrollment opportunities, call 813-555-2026 or visit the college online.



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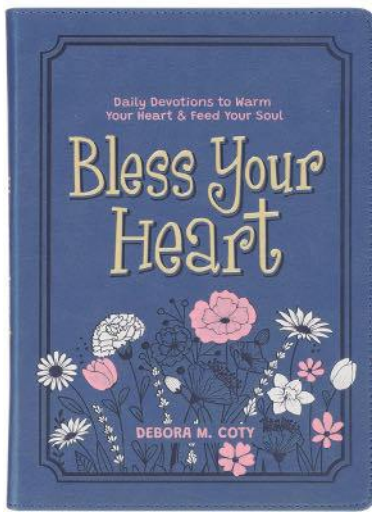
TOO BLESSED TO BE STRESSED AUTHOR LAUNCHES NEW DEVOTIONAL SERIES

By Olivia Clark

Debora Coty has spent two decades helping women trade burnout for peace through a blend of biblical truth, practical strategy and humor. The Central Florida author and inspirational speaker is best known for the *Too Blessed To Be Stressed* brand, a collection of more than 35 products that includes books, devotionals, journals, planners, a cookbook and calendars. Coty stated that the series has sold over 2 million copies.



Debora Coty is a Central Florida author and speaker known for the Too Blessed To Be Stressed series and her new devotional, Bless Your Heart: Daily Devotions to Warm Your Heart & Feed Your Soul.



"Many women sprint along on the just-get-it-done treadmill with no inkling how to get off," said Coty. "That's the goal of all my Too Blessed To Be Stressed books, ... to offer practical tools and strategies for dealing with stress so that it's manageable, not crushing."

Coty's perspective is shaped by a long career as an occupational therapist specializing in orthopedics. She said physicians referred patients to her for help with managing injuries and pain tied to constant stress. Coty pairs work simplification techniques and therapeutic suggestions with Scripture and what she calls "lots of giggles" to address stress physically, spiritually and emotionally.

"I love it that my books have been called 'biblical truth gift-wrapped in humor,'" Coty said. "I believe that laughter is a catalyst for releasing the joy of the Lord in our spirits."

That approach carries into her newest release, *Bless Your Heart: Daily Devotions to Warm Your Heart & Feed Your Soul*, a 365-day devotional that marks the start of a new series. Coty said she stepped away from steady writing after 2019 amid years of family loss and health challenges.

"The gal who encouraged others to look for the funny couldn't see any funny anywhere," she said.

Coty said a publisher later approached her about writing another yearlong devotional, a project she initially declined. After revisiting a Corrie ten Boom quote about attempting something so big it would fail without God's help, Coty began writing again. The manuscript took 18 months, she said, and ultimately drew interest from multiple publishers.

Coty hopes the devotional reaches "the woman who feels like she's alone, frightened, confused, miserable and exhausted," she said, adding that men have also told her they read her short entries in the bathroom.

Coty continues her long-running Grace Notes column in the *Osprey Observer*.

EXPRESS OIL CHANGE & TIRE ENGINEERS OPENS NEW LOCATION

By Olivia Clark

A new automotive service option has arrived in Riverview with the opening of Express Oil Change & Tire Engineers. The new location is designed to provide convenience, efficiency and comprehensive vehicle care for local residents, eliminating the need to navigate heavy traffic along Big Bend Road for routine maintenance and repairs.





Express Oil Change owner Jeremy Persinger.

Owner Jeremy Persinger said the decision to open in Riverview was driven by a clear need in the community.

"We wanted to give customers a more convenient location to service their vehicles and avoid the congestion on Big Bend Road," said Persinger.

The facility offers a wide range of services, combining speed with full-service automotive care. Customers can remain in their vehicles for oil changes completed in less than 15 minutes while also having access to more extensive services, including tires, brakes, alignments, diagnostics, electrical work and major engine and transmission repairs.

What sets the business apart is its ability to deliver both quick oil changes and comprehensive automotive services under one roof. According to Persinger, this dual capability is unique within the market and designed to meet the varying needs of busy customers.

The opening also represents a broader impact beyond automotive services. Persinger emphasized that the new location brings job opportunities to the area while contributing positively to the local economy.

Community involvement is already a priority. The business is sponsoring Sumner High School, located nearby, and continues to support pediatric cancer initiatives through 'Round Up' programs. Persinger has also served as a board member with the National Pediatric Cancer Foundation for nearly 20 years, supporting clinical trials for children across the United States.

To celebrate the grand opening, customers can take advantage of promotional offers, including 50 percent off any oil change when using an Express Oil Change & Tire Engineers card and 25 percent off future oil changes with the card.

Additional conveniences include no appointment requirements for oil changes, same-day service on most repairs and Saturday hours for those unable to visit during the workweek. The location also stocks more than 1,000 tires to meet a wide range of vehicle needs.

Express Oil Change & Tire Engineers is located at 13131 U.S. 301 S. in Riverview. For more information, call 813-677-4000 or visit www.expressoil.com.

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MAKING WATER SAFETY PART OF SUMMER FUN



Summer in Florida means sunshine, longer days and plenty of time spent around water. For families in the autism community, it's also the perfect time to make water safety an important part of those summer plans.

Many individuals with autism are naturally drawn to water. Whether it's the calming sensory input, the movement or simply the joy of splashing and swimming, water can be incredibly enjoyable and therapeutic. At the same time, children and adults with autism may wander, have limited danger awareness or be unable to communicate in an emergency situation, making water safety education especially important.

The good news is water safety can still be fun, positive and part of everyday family life.

Simple water activities can create memories while also helping children and adults become more comfortable and confident around water. Families can enjoy sprinkler games in the backyard, water balloon tosses, sponge relay races, sidewalk chalk with water paintbrushes, splash pad visits, bubble play or even filling buckets and cups for sensory water stations at home. Pool noodle races, floating toy games and practicing safe pool entry and exit can also help build familiarity with water in a relaxed way.

For families interested in swim activities, Hillsborough County offers a variety of free and low-cost swim lesson programs throughout the summer, along with private swim instructors who specialize in teaching individuals of all abilities. Learning basic water safety skills, floating techniques and swimming fundamentals can help build confidence and create safer experiences around water for children, teens and adults alike.

Experienced Autism Alliance (EAA) encourage fellow autism families to explore local parks, recreation centers, adaptive swim programs and community organizations that create inclusive opportunities for individuals of all ages and abilities. As parents, caregivers and community members, water safety is something we can work on together through everyday routines and simple conversations. Small steps like swim lessons, wearable identification, door alarms, pool locks and layers of supervision can go a long way in creating safer environments.

For local autism resources, safety tools and community support, contact EAA or visit https://autismalliancefl.org/.

TAX COLLECTOR LAUNCHES BUS BRINGING SERVICES TO RESIDENTS

Staff Report



Hillsborough County Tax Collector Nancy Millan announced the launch of MILES (Mobile IDs, Licenses and Essential Services), a mobile service center bringing key tax collector services directly into neighborhoods.

Services offered include: Driver licenses, IDs, Property tax payments, Vehicle registration renewals, Handicap placards and Vehicle titles.

"MILES is about accessibility and convenience. Not everyone can get to an office, so we're bringing the office to them," said Millan. "Whether you're a senior, a small business owner or a family juggling a busy schedule, MILES makes it easier to stay up to date on registrations, renewals and essential services. We're committed to ensuring no community is left behind."

Accessibility features include: An ADA-compliant ramp, Widened entry and maneuverable interior space, ower counters and bilingual signage and Staff trained for disability and seniors.

"MILES will make a meaningful difference for seniors and underserved communities," added Hillsborough County Commissioner Gwen Myers. "For many families, something as simple as renewing a registration or updating paperwork can become a real hardship. This mobile resource helps lift that burden and ensures our most vulnerable residents aren't left behind."

MILES will begin a scheduled rotation of senior centers, rural communities, libraries and major neighborhood events. Residents can learn more about MILES at www.milesbushctc.com.

MILES is a first-of-its-kind commitment to proactive public service – one that moves beyond traditional office walls to bring real, in-person Tax Collector services directly into the neighborhoods, senior centers, business districts, and community spaces that make up Hillsborough County.

This initiative is part of Tax Collector Nancy Millan's ongoing commitment to accessible government services. MILES is a fully equipped mobile service unit that travels directly into Hillsborough County communities, bringing IDs, driver licenses, registration renewals, and other essential Tax Collector services to residents where they live, work, and gather.

If you are interested in requesting a MILES appearance, visit www.hillstaxfl.gov/miles-bus/.

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I'm running for the 2026 Honorary Mayor of East Hillsborough with a simple mission: to support and amplify the organizations already doing meaningful work in our community.

For more than 20 Years, I've served Tampa Bay families as an attorney, focusing on family law and personal injury. I've helped people through some of life's most difficult moments, which has shown me how important strong support systems truly are. Before opening my firm, I served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Florida, reinforcing my commitment to advocacy and standing up for others.

Outside of work, I'm a proud father of two. Like many families here, we're focused on raising our children with strong values, responsibility, and a commitment to showing up for others.

That perspective is what led me to support the organizations behind this campaign.

High 5 Inc provides after-school programs, mentorship, and opportunities that give kids a safe place to grow and succeed. The Impact Program equips young people with the tools to make informed decisions through education, prevention, and character development. Raining Cats and Dogs Shelter and Sanctuary cares for animals while promoting compassion, responsibility, and community values.

This campaign is an opportunity to make a real impact. You can get involved by attending events, sponsoring, donating, or helping spread awareness.

At the end of the day, what we do here matters.The way we show up for our community matters. The opportunity to make a difference is right in front of us.

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SUPPORT CHRIS CIULLA FOR HONORARY MAYOR OF EAST HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Meet Chris Ciulla, the former executive who swapped his corporate cape for a chef's apron and is now a culinary crusader in East Hillsborough County!

Since planting his roots in the local scene, Chris has been a whirlwind of community spirit; championing small businesses, rallying for nonprofits, and throwing himself into initiatives like a party planner on a mission. Whether he's hosting shindigs, volunteering his time, or crafting alliances, Chris is the local hero with a heart of gold!

Chris for Honorary Mayor



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- 9 — Tuesday, June 9 — Boot Scootin' Bingo - BINGO + Line Dancing
- 13 — Saturday, June 13 — Sit, Stay & Sip - All Day Dog Party
- 19 — Friday, June 19 — Mayoral Royale Casino NIght & Chef Soiree at The Regent
- 27 — Saturday, June 27 — Chris Rocks The Vote - Music Festival

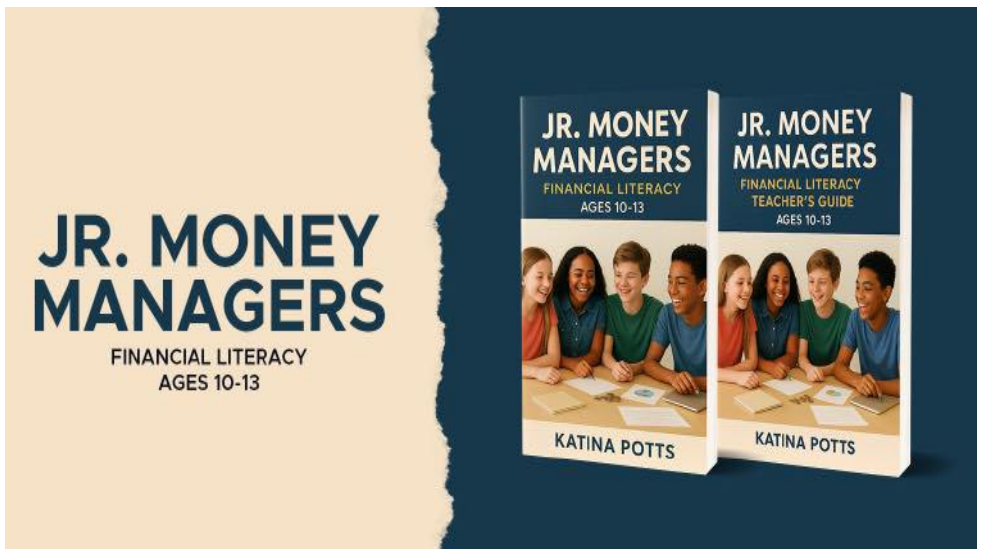


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JR. MONEY MANAGERS LAUNCHES TWO-DAY SUMMER FINANCIAL LITERACY WORKSHOP FOR YOUTH

Staff Report



Parents and youth leaders looking for a meaningful, skill-building summer experience now have a powerful new option. Jr. Money Managers, a dynamic financial literacy program, is offering a two-day summer workshop designed for children ages 9-13, equipping them with real-world money skills in a fun, engaging environment.

Led by Katina Potts, a former personal financial advisor and former financial analyst, this workshop goes beyond theory to teach practical financial habits that children can apply immediately. With a strong background in finance and a passion for education, Potts brings both expertise and relatability to every session.

What sets Jr. Money Managers apart from traditional summer camps is that the workshop comes directly to homeschool groups, churches and youth organizations, creating a convenient and personalized learning experience in a familiar environment.

Participants will engage in interactive lessons covering:

- Budgeting and money management.
- Saving and goal setting.
- Smart spending habits.
- Real-life financial decision-making.

The program requires a minimum of six students and delivers nine to 10 hours of instruction over two days, ensuring both depth and engagement.

The cost is $75 per student, which includes the cost of the books. For nonprofits with 10 students or more, it is $50 per student.

This workshop is designed to give young learners a strong financial foundation early in life, helping them build confidence, responsibility and lifelong money management skills. The workbooks are also a companion set (teacher and student editions) available for purchase on Amazon.

To schedule a workshop or learn more, contact Potts at 813-863-1047 or katinapotts@gmail.com.

TESSERA SENIOR COMMUNITY REIMAGINED AS AMBIANCE AT BRANDON

By Marie Gilmore

A familiar senior living community in Brandon is entering a new chapter under new ownership, bringing a refreshed vision while maintaining its longstanding commitment to care.

Now known as Ambiance at Brandon, the community formerly operated as Tessera of Brandon continues to offer assisted living and memory care services for seniors, including those living with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Providence Senior Living is a private company, backed by senior housing developers, that functions as an owner/operator of senior living communities exclusively in Florida. Thanks to the new ownership, Ambiance at Brandon is now locally owned and managed. It believes senior care is meant to be hands-on and that every life it touches is a member of its family.

That's why it carefully chose its team members for its passion and senior living backgrounds. Its team has more than 75 years of assisted living and memory care management experience combined, residents are known from the top down and its executives are integrated into daily operations. It is committed to serving residents in a manner that aligns with its Providence Senior Living pillars: love, empowerment, excellence and purpose. With new leadership in place, the goal is to blend enhanced amenities and updated programming with a resident-centered approach that prioritizes individual preferences and daily routines.

The transition reflects a broader investment in elevating both the environment and experience for residents and their families. Community leaders said the focus remains on creating a supportive, engaging atmosphere where residents can maintain independence while receiving personalized assistance when needed.

Residents at Ambiance at Brandon have access to a range of services designed to simplify daily life and promote well-being. These include restaurant-style dining across multiple venues, weekly housekeeping and laundry, scheduled transportation and help with activities of daily living. On-site therapies and a fitness center featuring specialized HUR equipment are also available to support physical health.

Beyond essential services, the community emphasizes lifestyle and connection. Residents can spend time outdoors on landscaped patios, relax under a gazebo, stroll through garden paths and take part in recreational activities such as bocce ball, pool and putt-putt golf. Social opportunities and structured activities are designed to encourage engagement while respecting each resident's pace and interests.

Jill Andrew, marketing director, said the transition represents "new owners, same heart," emphasizing continuity in care alongside thoughtful improvements.

Located at 1320 Oakfield Dr., the Brandon community invites prospective residents and families to visit, meet staff, and explore whether the updated Ambiance lifestyle is the right fit.

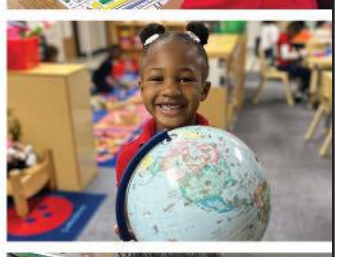
Ambiance at Brandon is located at 1320 Oakfield Dr. Brandon. For more information, visit www.ambiancebrandon.com.

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Give your child a strong start with Hillsborough County Public Schools' Early Childhood Programs. Prepare them for kindergarten and beyond in safe, nurturing environments that promote exploration, growth, and lifelong skills. Using evidence-based practices, these programs develop literacy, math, problem-solving, communication, and social skills.

Program highlights include certified teachers, research-based curricula in literacy, math, science, and more, free VPK for all 4-year-olds, and Pre-K Exceptional Education.







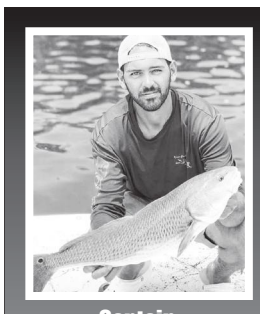


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UNITED WAY SUNCOAST NAMES BUCS EXECUTIVE KOURTNEY SANCHEZ AS CEO

Staff Report



The United Way Suncoast Board of Directors has selected Tampa Bay Buccaneers executive Kourtney Sanchez as its next CEO, effective Monday, June 1.

Sanchez brings a wealth of experience to United Way Suncoast, having most recently served as the Bucs' chief impact officer. In that role, she helmed the NFL franchise's community team, overseeing all philanthropic strategies, growth and implementation for local and national programs and partnerships. Additionally, she served as the executive director of the Glazer Family Foundation and the Glazer Vision Foundation, partnering with the family on all of their personal philanthropic initiatives.

"Kourtney brings an exceptional amount of leadership experience and development acumen to United Way Suncoast," United Way Suncoast Board Chair Sara Nichols said. "Her work across several organizations helped her rise from a pool of nearly 300 applicants compiled by the Winner Partners search firm during our four-month national recruitment process."

"Kourtney matched her record of accomplishment with an energetic approach and innovative ideas needed to continue leading United Way Suncoast into its second century of service," said Nichols. "It's her experience and insight that won the board over."

A third-generation Tampa Bay native, Sanchez has combined more than a decade's worth of experience in the nonprofit sector with an educational background that includes degrees from the University of Florida and Duke University and a certificate in leadership from Harvard University.

"I'm excited about joining the United Way Suncoast team and helping this talented group build on its 102 years of success," Sanchez said. "I am passionate about uplifting our community. Through my previous nonprofit work, I've witnessed the power individuals and organizations have in curating positive social change.

"Inspired by that experience, I'm confident I can blend what I've learned about philanthropic and for-profit strategies to support our mission work."

In addition to her work with the Bucs, Sanchez has also proven herself by successfully handling roles in community engagement, strategic planning, communications and fundraising.

She previously worked in development roles for AdventHealth, the Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation, the American Heart Association and the Pediatric Cancer Foundation.

"I know what it's like to approach funders and donors as a fundraiser," Sanchez said. "And I know from working with the Bucs how funders like to be approached. I don't look at fundraising as transactional. It's about building and maintaining relationships."

Sanchez replaces former United Way Suncoast CEO Jessica Muroff, who left in January to lead the Community Foundation of Sarasota County as its CEO.

For more, visit the website directly at www./unitedwaysuncoast.org/

'ART OF READING' PROGRAM OPENS CHALLENGE FOR ALL AGES

Staff Report



The Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative is inviting residents of all ages to turn the page on summer boredom by joining its annual Summer Reading Challenge, with registration opening Monday, May 25.

Part of the 'Art of Reading' initiative, the program encourages children, teens and adults to log their reading throughout the summer while earning prizes and digital badges along the way. Participants can begin tracking their progress starting Monday, June 1, using the Beanstack Tracker app or website.

Jason Rogers, programming manager, said the challenge is designed to combat the 'summer slide,' a common learning loss students experience when school is out.

"It is intended to keep families and the community reading throughout the summer, when reading and learning tends to slow down a bit," Rogers said.

Children and teens, ages 0-18, are challenged to read for a total of 24 hours, while adults are encouraged to complete four books. Along the way, participants can earn incentives at registration, midway and upon completion, including books, badges and themed items. Some prizes have been provided by the Tampa Bay Sun Football Club.

In addition to milestone rewards, participants will be entered into grand prize drawings for items such as tickets to ZooTampa at Lowry Park and tech prizes, including AirPods Pro, a Nintendo Switch Lite and an Echo Show. Prize drawings will take place on Saturday, August 1, with winners having until Monday, August 31, to claim their items.

The program also includes partnerships like 'Reading with the Rays,' where youth can pick up a game card at their local library branch to track reading progress baseball-style. Completed cards can be redeemed for prizes and a savings voucher at Suncoast Credit Union locations.

Additionally, readers can participate in 'Score Through Stories,' another incentive-based program that rewards reading time. Rogers noted that hours logged count across all programs, giving participants more chances to win.

While the program emphasizes youth literacy, Rogers said adults play a critical role.

"It's so important for us to keep our minds engaged so that we are constantly learning," he said. "We're constantly making a better community and a better society."

To sign up and learn more, visit https://hcplc.org/summer.



DAVID WEEKLEY HOMES MARKS 30 YEARS OF BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Staff Report



David Weekley Homes, one of the largest privately held national home builders, is celebrating 30 years of home building in the Tampa area this year. The company was founded in Houston, Texas, in 1976, and expanded to Tampa in 1996. Today, the company builds in more than 35 communities.

"Celebrating 30 years in the Tampa market is a milestone we're truly grateful for," said Kristina Lloyd, division president of David Weekley Homes in Tampa. "We're proud of the communities we've built, the people behind them and enhancing the lives of our customers and those in the communities where we work and live through our volunteer efforts. This journey has been incredibly rewarding, and we look forward to continuing that momentum in the years ahead."

Over the company's 30 years in Tampa and surrounding areas, the builder has enjoyed several notable milestones. Since opening in 1996, the company has closed more than 6,900 homes in the Tampa area. The company has built in many communities throughout Tampa, including Encore at FishHawk Ranch, Waterset, Barrington Preserve, Hidden Lakes and Magnolia Creek. David Weekley Homes has earned more than 150 Tampa-area awards, including more than 120 for product design.

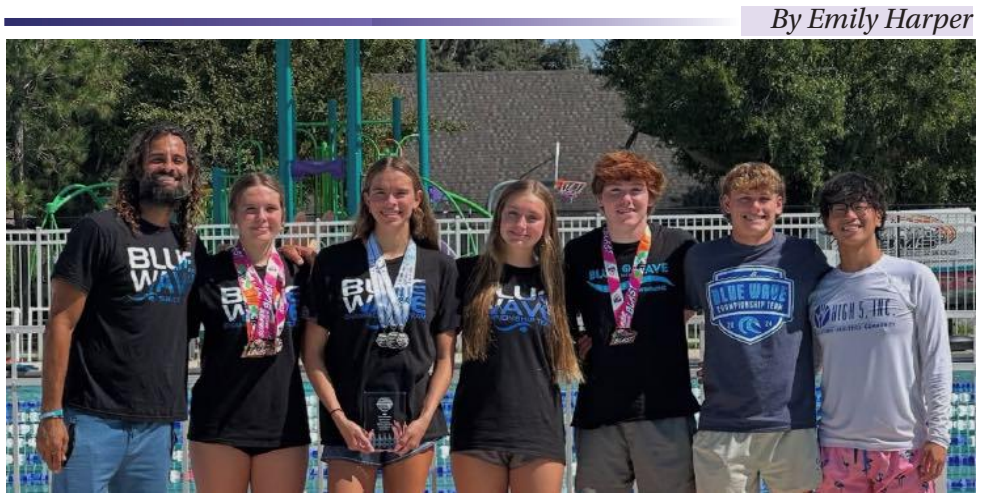
In addition to a commitment to excellence in home building and customer satisfaction, David Weekley Homes prides itself on enhancing lives by giving back to the community. The company's outreach program, CARE, is a charitable and volunteer program that joins team members with homeowners, homebuyers, community partners and local nonprofit organizations to live out the company's purpose of 'building dreams, enhancing lives.' This is accomplished by team members volunteering countless hours to different organizations in their communities and Dovetail Impact Foundation donating more than $340 million in the past 35 years.

Locally in Tampa, David Weekley Homes partners with many organizations, including BridgePoint Church – Building Beds, Feeding Tampa Bay, United Way Suncoast, Gigi's Playhouse Tampa, 9/11 Day of Service, Ronald McDonald House Charities Tampa Bay, ShowerUp Tampa Bay and OneBlood. The division also participates in companywide events, such as Build Month, the School Supplies Drive and the Giving Thanks, Giving Back Thanksgiving Drive.

For more information about David Weekley Homes in Tampa, contact 813-774-4155.

MEET PETERKIN: HIGH 5, INC AQUATIC DIRECTOR AND FORMER OLYMPIAN

By Emily Harper



Jamie Peterkin is the aquatics director and head coach of Blue Wave Swimming at High 5 Inc. He started with the organization almost five years ago as the head age group coach. Since then, he has worked his way up to the roles he holds today.

Peterkin was born in Barbados and raised in Saint Lucia. Growing up in the Caribbean, he has many memories of going to the beach, being outside and playing different sports. At age 16, he was awarded an Olympic Solidarity scholarship for swimming at Pine Crest High School in Fort Lauderdale and was coached by Jay Fitzgerald.

Two years later, at age 18, Peterkin was selected to represent Saint Lucia in the 2000 Sydney Olympics. There, he and his teammate, Sherri Scobbie Henry, became the first male and female swimmers to represent Saint Lucia at the Olympics.

"This opportunity sparked my desire to give back to my country, and it guided me to become a swim coach, as well as being raised by a swim coach, my dad, David," said Peterkin.

He started to coach in 2007, which opened up many more opportunities for him to represent his country. He became Saint Lucia's national team coach and eventually returned to the Olympic stage as a coach.

Because of his reputation in the swimming world, he was invited to provide live broadcast commentary for the swimming events of the 2008 and 2010 Olympics for the Caribbean. Additionally, Peterkin hosted several sports radio shows in Saint Lucia, along with a weekly show with his father called AquaScope, to promote aquatic sports and safety. Now, he co-hosts a podcast called Cinco Squad with his close friends, which he has been doing for the past four years.

Peterkin uses his past experiences in the sports world, specifically swimming, to succeed in his role with High 5 Inc. He strives to not only be a caring coach but also to build camaraderie within his program, creating a second family for his athletes.

"Coaching isn't for the faint of heart, but getting to really know these families and kids and becoming part of their life beyond the pool is awesome," said Peterkin.

For more info on swim and aquatic programs, visit www.high5inc.org/

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GA2FL MUSIC WORKSHOP RETURNS WITH GOSPEL CONCERT AND FELLOWSHIP

Staff Report

Church singers, musicians and worship leaders from across Florida will gather in Riverview this summer for the second annual GA2FL Music Workshop, a three-day event focused on gospel music, ministry and fellowship.



Hosted by The Gospel According II Florida Inc., the workshop will take place Thursday through Saturday, June 4-6, at Disciples of Christ Christian Fellowship located at 11116 Rhodine Road, Riverview, FL 33579.

Organizers said the event is designed to unite church ministries from around the region through uplifting music, educational sessions and spiritual encouragement. The workshop will feature instruction led by experienced gospel music professionals, offering participants opportunities to strengthen musical skills while deepening their connection to worship through music.

"The workshop will bring together church ministries from across the region for four days of uplifting gospel music, enriching workshops and valuable fellowship," organizers said in a statement. "Our sessions are designed to enhance musical skills, inspire worship teams and deepen the spiritual connection through music."

The annual gathering is expected to attract singers, instrumentalists and worship teams representing churches throughout the state. Sessions will include collaborative rehearsals, music ministry development and worship-focused instruction.

Early bird registration for the workshop was available from April 15-30 for $45 and included lunch. Standard registration, which remains open through June 6, is $60 and also includes lunch for participants. Discounted hotel accommodations are available upon request for those traveling from outside the area.

In addition to the workshop sessions, the public is invited to attend the Gospel According to Florida Concert on Saturday night, June 6. The concert is free and open to the community.

Organizers hope the event will continue building connections among Florida gospel ministries while creating an atmosphere of encouragement and worship.

For more information or to register, visit DOCCF.org or call (813) 677-8600. Additional information is also available through workshop coordinator Mary Jo McKay at (813) 758-8587.

HIGH 5 INC. REOPENS OLYMPIC-SIZE POOL, EXPANDING AQUATICS OPPORTUNITIES IN BRANDON

By Olivia Clark



The newly reopened 50-meter Olympic-size pool at High 5 Inc. provides space for competitive training, swim instruction and aquatic programs.

High 5 Inc., a community-based nonprofit in Brandon, has officially reopened its rehabilitated 50-meter pool, restoring a key asset for competitive swimmers, families and aquatic programming across the area. The Olympic-size facility is once again positioned to support training at the highest levels while also serving as a hub for local instruction and recreation.

The 10-lane, 50-meter pool is part of a broader aquatics complex that includes a 25-yard, temperature-controlled pool, a diving well with 1-meter and 3-meter boards and a dedicated lesson area for shallow water instruction. The outdoor setup ensures consistent air quality, while heated water allows for year-round use.

High 5 Inc.'s aquatics programming is anchored by its Blue Wave Swimming and Diving program, which utilizes the full scope of the facility for both competitive and developmental training. The organization also offers swim lessons for all ages, adult fitness swimming and specialized programming designed to build water safety skills. The facility also supports year-round conditioning programs for youth athletes preparing for regional and national-level competition events. Coaches emphasize technique, endurance and safety in all training sessions.

The reopening comes at a time when water safety remains a critical issue for families. High 5 Inc. will host the World's Largest Swimming Lesson on Thursday, June 25, from 10 a.m.-12 Noon. The free event is open to children ages 3 and older and aims to raise awareness about drowning prevention through hands-on instruction and community engagement.

As a nonprofit, High 5 Inc. focuses on impacting lives through educational and athletic programming that supports physical, mental and social well-being. Beyond aquatics, the 12-acre campus offers tennis courts, pickleball, youth camps and open recreational spaces, making it a central gathering place for families throughout the Greater Tampa area.

Facility rentals are also available for events, such as birthday parties, corporate outings and group gatherings, further extending the reach of the organization within the community.

With the return of its 50-meter pool, High 5 Inc. continues to strengthen its role as a leader in aquatic training and community wellness, offering expanded opportunities for residents to stay active, learn essential safety skills and connect through sports.

High 5 Inc. is located at 405 Beverly Blvd. in Brandon. For more, call 813-689-0908 or www.high5inc.org.

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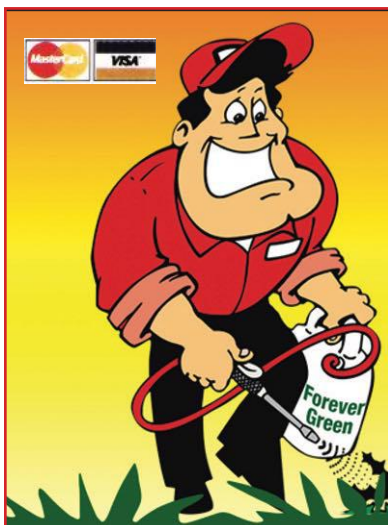
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AMERICAN SEWING GUILD BRANDON WINS BIG AT STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

By Libby Hopkins



Members of the Brandon/Eastbay Chapter of the American Sewing Guild (ASG) competed in the sewing competition at the Florida Strawberry Festival. Many of the guild's members took home ribbons this year from the competition.

The 91st Florida Strawberry Festival took place this past February. One of the highlights at the festival was the Neighborhood Village's sewing competition for adults 18 and up. The 2026 festival's annual theme of 'Still Growing' was incorporated into every category, including sewing.

Members of the Brandon/East Bay Chapter of the American Sewing Guild (ASG) competed in the sewing competition, and many of the guild's members took home ribbons.

"There were a variety of categories to enter," said Judy Rich of the Brandon/East Bay Chapter of ASG. "The categories that most of our members entered were quilting, wearing apparel and accessories, hand embroidery and needlework, home decor, and embellished-upcycleable. Several of our members assisted with the intake process for quilts and hand sewing. Under home decor, some members entered wall hangings and table runners, both quilted and machine embroidery. For wearing apparel and accessories, members entered children's clothes, machine embroidered and constructed bags of all varieties. One member entered a refurbished bench cover; another entered a bag with multiple zippers to use for sewing supplies."

The American Sewing Guild's headquarters is located in Houston, Texas, and serves as a link between its chapters. ASG's mission is dedicated to advancing sewing as an art and life skill.

"The national organization started in 1978 as the American Home Sewing and Crafting Association," Rich said. "In 1983, it became a nonprofit organization, and in 2001 ASG opened their national headquarters in Houston. The Brandon/East Bay Chapter was incorporated in 2003 when the charter was signed. We currently have two of the founding members in our group."

There were 12 quilts entered into the sewing competition from various ASG members.

"It was the most quilts entered into the sewing competition over the last 12 years," Rich said. "I am amazed at the talent that our group has. Many hid their light under a basket. We are always excited to have new members whatever their level of sewing is. We were all beginners at one point."

The group meets on the first Wednesday of the month at Brandon Community Center, located at 502 E. Sadie St. in Brandon, from 10 a.m.-12 Noon.

"There are smaller neighborhood groups that meet in Sun City, Brandon and Riverview," Rich said. "At the moment, our chapter has more than 110 members, and they come from as far as Wimauma and Wesley Chapel to be a part of our group."

The chapter's meetings consist of a sewing tutorial, and then members have time to share their current projects with the group to inspire fellow members.

"We love seeing what other members are working on," Rich said. "It gives us the opportunity to get our creative juices flowing."

If you would like to learn more about ASG, you can visit its website at www.asg.org. If you would like to learn more about the Brandon/East Bay Chapter of ASG, you can contact Rich at judyrich49@gmail.com or visit its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/brandoneastbayasg.



LOCAL NONPROFIT SOUNDING JOY HELPS AREA CHILDREN WITH ACCESS TO HEARING AIDS

By McKenzie Brown



Sounding Joy, a non-profit organization, focused on providing hearing aids to children who's families can't afford them, so they can be the best they can be. The main goal of Sounding Joy is to try and reduce then chance of the kids later in life to become addicted to substances and to reduce the chances of suicide as a young adult.

At the age of 11, the founder of the organization, Christy Vogel was diagnosed as hard of hearing and unconciously taught herself to read people's lips. Because she occasionally responded slowly when having conversation, people assumed she was not smart, which damaged her confidence. Having no access to hearing aids because of challenges presented by finances, she struggled until her 20s, when she was finally able to buy her first pair. They transformed her life, helping her flourish professionally. In 2021, Christy founded Sounding Joy, working with providers such as Tampa Children's ENT, USF Audiology, and John Hopkins All Children's, the organization that has helped more than 100 children in the Tampa Bay area get hearing aids.

Dr. Cecilia Camacho is a board member and an audiologist who has fitted more than 70 of the kids through Tampa Children's ENT. She shared a story about a 14 year old boy named Logan. She said, "His experience changed the way I work and provide the best to all children." Logan had an initial test done when he was three, but they showed very slight hearing loss when he started kindergarten, and Camacho recommended a classroom system in order to hear his teachers better, but she didn't think that he had enough hearing loss at the time to justify hearing aids. Camacho reported that Logan loved the classroom system and told her, "I want to hear well ALL the time, not just at school." Camacho says, "Ever since then, I look at all kids with slight hearing losses as being potential candidates for hearing aids. He has done great with his aids and uses them every day. His last set of hearing aids was funded through Sounding Joy, and he uses them to hear his family cheer for him from the stands when he is playing baseball, which he didn't hear before he had hearing aids."

Vogel mentions that there are two days in the kids' Sounding Joy journey. The first day they say is called "Approval Day," where the kid's parents are told they have been approved to have their hearing aids paid for by Sounding Joy. The second day is when they get their hearing aids and they get pictures and stories about the fitting.

Sounding Joy is located at 330 3rd St S Unit 1706, St Petersburg, FL 33701. For additonal information, you can email them at info@soundingjoy.org or call them at 813-526-1870.

AGENCIES AND RESIDENTS GEAR UP FOR HURRICANE SEASON

By Brad Stager



The lingering humidity and rising temperatures indicate this year's hurricane season is upon us, and before the wind and rain blow, local residents have the opportunity to get ready and prepare for foul weather.

Emergency officials and their agencies are also preparing, and two events hosted by the Southshore Disaster Council will highlight those efforts to the public.

One of the biggest changes is the updating of evacuation zones that determine when residents need to vacate their homes and businesses.

Hillsborough County has expanded its hurricane evacuation zones, and the revisions significantly increase zones affecting Osprey Observer readers, placing many areas in an evacuation zone for the first time.

Zone A, the first to evacuate, expanded further inland into Apollo Beach, while Zone C grew into Palm River. Officials remind residents that all mobile and manufactured homes remain classified as Zone A, regardless of location. Residents should verify their updated zone at https://hcfl.gov/heat.

Deputies of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office control the safety and security of local streets during a disaster, but when those streets become rivers, Hillsborough County Fire Rescue has three new airboats to enhance its response to flooding from heavy rains and hurricanes.

The airboats are designed for extreme conditions, allowing responders to navigate submerged roads and neighborhoods that traditional vehicles cannot reach. According to county officials, the new boats will improve response times and expand rescue capabilities for communities isolated by flooding.

The Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has also been busy funding improvements to disaster-related infrastructure, such as emergency power for pump stations and improving drainage. Commissioner Joshua Wostal spoke in support of the less glamorous but necessary improvements that the Hillsborough County Board of Commissioners have recently approved with the aim of keeping residents safe and dry.

"I know it's tough to get excited about sewer systems, but I'm sad there's not more people excited about the double pressure sewer system overhaul we're going to do," he said during the May 6 BOCC meeting.

The SouthShore Disaster Council will host its readiness symposiums with information residents can use to get ready for stormy weather on Saturday, May 30, from 10 a.m.-12 Noon at Calvary Lutheran Church, located at 1250 E. Ruskin Ave. in Ruskin, and on Thursday, June 11, from 10 a.m.-12 Noon at Sun City Center United Methodist Church, located at 1971 Haverford Ave. in Sun City Center.



MACBETH & CHEESE ANNOUNCES NEW THEATER HOME IN BRANDON

Staff Report

Brandon Performing Arts, also known as MacBeth & Cheese, is proud to announce its expansion into Brandon with the acquisition of a new performance space located at 225 E. Brandon Blvd., next to the Fox and Hound. Renovations are currently underway to transform the venue into an intimate and immersive theater space that will serve as the organization's primary home.

This new location marks a major milestone for the growing community theater, which will continue producing performances in Ruskin while establishing Brandon as its central hub for live entertainment, education, and creative programming.

"We've always believed in building something that truly belongs to the community," said Amy Windle, president of Brandon Performing Arts. "This new space allows us to expand that vision, bring more stories to life and create a place where people can experience theater in a powerful, up-close way."

Coming off its recent production of Detective Columbo and the highly successful run of A Few Good Men, the organization continues to build a reputation for high-quality, award-winning productions. Its performance of A Few Good Men earned multiple honors across the local community theater circuit, including Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director, Best Co-Director, Best Costume Design and Best Production.

"With this new venue, we're not just growing, we're leveling up," said Camille Hashem, co-founder of MacBeth & Cheese. "We're excited to bring even more ambitious productions to the stage and give our audiences an experience that feels both professional and personal."

The upcoming season will feature the original thriller Murder Denied this September, followed by Murder on the Orient Express, It's a Wonderful Life for the holiday season and Romeo and Juliet, among others.

In addition to theatrical productions, the new Brandon venue will host acting classes and improv training led by Joe Davison, known for his work on Stranger Things and his current role in Sorority of the Damned. These programs are designed to support performers of all experience levels while fostering the next generation of local talent.

The space will also serve as a community-driven entertainment venue, offering comedy shows, open-mic nights and special events.

Enhancing the theatergoing experience, the neighboring Fox and Hound will provide food and beverage service, creating a unique dinner-and-show atmosphere for guests.

Brandon Performing Arts has a strong history of producing diverse and engaging performances, including Deathtrap, The Odd Couple, Alice's Wonderland, Murder on the Nile and Steel Magnolias, showcasing a wide range of storytelling that continues to resonate with audiences throughout the Tampa Bay area.

With renovations underway and an exciting season ahead, Brandon Performing Arts/MacBeth & Cheese is set to become a cornerstone of the Brandon arts community.

For updates, show announcements and ticket information, visit the website at https://macbethandcheese.com/.

BRANDON ROOTS PROJECTS HELP GROW NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS

By Olivia Clark



Volunteers from Brandon Roots Group work to restore the Brandon Family Cemetery.

Brandon Roots Group, a local nonprofit organization, continues to build momentum in the community through acts of service, most recently completing its third cleanup project at the historic Brandon Family Cemetery. Founded five years ago by Robert 'Stanley' Goins, the organization was created to unite residents through random acts of kindness and volunteerism while strengthening community pride.



With a leadership team that includes Goins as founder and president, Charlie Horne as vice president and Devan Moretti as chief financial officer, Brandon Roots has steadily expanded its reach and impact. Its mission centers on fostering a strong and reliable network of volunteers dedicated to improving the local community while also preserving its history for future generations.

The recent cemetery cleanup reflects a long-standing goal for the group. According to Goins, restoring the Brandon Family Cemetery has been a priority since the organization's inception. The effort brought together 10 volunteers who spent the day clearing debris, removing overgrown vegetation and carefully cleaning headstones to restore dignity to the site. The project concluded with a full mowing of the grounds, completing a comprehensive revitalization effort and improving overall accessibility.

"As our network of volunteers continues to grow, we are constantly evolving and expanding our community engagement," said Goins.

Beyond cemetery restoration, Brandon Roots has completed a variety of service projects, including pressure washing and tree removal for elderly residents in need, as well as hosting free summer barbecues that encourage neighbors to connect. The organization also actively participates in local events such as the Fourth of July parade, where it earned first place in 2025, along with both the Plant City and Brandon Lighted Christmas Parades.

The group's continued growth highlights its commitment to building meaningful connections through service. By focusing on both immediate community needs and long-term preservation efforts, Brandon Roots is creating a lasting and visible impact throughout the area.

"We want the community to know that Brandon Roots is here to foster connection through service," said Goins. "We are always looking for more volunteers and support to continue our mission."

Residents interested in getting involved can connect with Brandon Roots through its social media platforms.

For more information, contact Stangoins0821@gmail.com or call 813-359-4800.





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HCA BRANDON AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS, INCLUDING TWO $20,000 AWARDS

Staff Report



Madeline Estabrook
Bloomingdale High



Shayla Commons
Brandon High



Izabel Wiltz
Lennard High



Aditi Menon
Middleton High



Emma Kasting
Newsome High



Bradon Martis
Riverview High



Claudia Maguire
Riverview High

HCA Florida Brandon Hospital recognized seven high school seniors from across Hillsborough County with college scholarships totaling $45,000. Five students received the HCA Florida Brandon Hospital Healthcare Achievement Award, worth $1,000 each, and two students received the HCA Florida Brandon Hospital and Physicians Healthcare Scholars Award, worth $20,000 each. Students from approximately 30 public and private high schools, as well as homeschooled students, were considered.

"Each of these students shared their personal 'why' behind choosing health care as a future profession," said Dr. Anthony Furiato, emergency room physician at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital. "Their dedication, hard work and diverse career goals will enrich the health care community. Some are inspired by loved ones who received life-changing care, while others are drawn to specialties such as anesthesiology, occupational therapy and cancer treatment. HCA Florida Brandon Hospital and our medical staff are proud to collaborate in recognizing this outstanding group of future health care leaders."



HCA Florida Brandon Hospital and Physicians Healthcare Scholars Award

The HCA Florida Brandon Hospital and Physicians Healthcare Scholars Award is a highly competitive $20,000 scholarship jointly funded by HCA Florida Brandon Hospital and its medical staff. Recipients must plan to attend the University of South Florida.

Recipients:

- Bloomingdale High School: Madeline Estabrook
- Middleton High School: Aditi Menon.

Hospital leaders will present the award to Estabrook and Menon during their respective school awards ceremonies.

The HCA Florida Brandon Hospital Healthcare Achievement Award recognizes students for strong academic performance, extracurricular involvement and a demonst rated interest in pursuing a career in health care. Each recipient received a $1,000 scholarship.

Recipients:

- Brandon High School: Shayla Commons
- Lennard High School: Izabel Wiltz
- Newsome High School: Emma Kasting
- Riverview High School: Claudia Maguire and Bradon Martis.

Members of the HCA Florida Brandon Hospital leadership team will present the Healthcare Achievement Awards to each student.

All scholarship recipients submitted essays describing how they hope to make a difference through a career in health care.

For more information, visit https://www.hcafloridahealthcare.com/locations/brandon-hospital.









ABWC HONORS 18 STUDENTS WITH SCHOLARSHIPS AT FINAL LUNCHEON

Staff Report



East Bay High School scholarship recipients alongside the ABWC Scholarship Committee.



Lennard High School scholarship recipients alongside the ABWC Scholarship Committee.

The Apollo Beach Woman's Club (ABWC) proudly awarded $31,500 in college scholarships to 18 outstanding local high school graduates on May 13 at the Ruskin Moose Lodge 813. More than 90 members, recipients and their families attended the celebration honoring these students' achievements. Each recipient received $1,750 to support tuition, books and lab fees. Funding came from the club's dedicated fundraising efforts and generous donations, including family memorials. Recipients were selected through interviews conducted by the ABWC Scholarship Committee: Sharon Vasquez (Chair), Kim Alkins, Brenda Fricks, Janet Moses and Ann Robbins.

The luncheon was especially meaningful as it marked the club's final gathering, concluding a legacy that began in 1959. For many members, supporting scholarships was the heart of their service. While no records confirm when the scholarship program began, longtime member Marlene Hall noted that scholarships were already being awarded when she joined in 1990.

Past recipients have shared how these awards eased financial burdens and strengthened their confidence. Though the club is disbanding, its impact will live on through the many students it has supported, encouraged and empowered for generations to come.

East Bay High School recipients include:

Chase Longenecker (Florida Southern College, Business Management), Keaton Neill (University of Central Florida, Biology/Biological Sciences), Laurel NeSmith (University of South Florida, Political Science), Santiago Pereira (University of Tampa, International Business/Marketing or Finance), Sadie Sherman (University of South Florida, Medical Biology), and Naylani Smith (Florida A&M University, Animal Science or Biology).

Lennard High School recipients include: Payton Bull (Florida State University, Exercise Science), Caroline Duncan (University of Central Florida, Aerospace Engineering), Tane Goldson (University of South Florida, Bioinformatics/Data Science), Omar Halwani (University of South Florida, Biology), Nathan Jorden (University of South Florida, Nursing), Noah Jorden (University of South Florida, Nursing), Gina Mesh (Florida State University, Biological Science), Noelia Morales (Florida State University, Biological Sciences), Lena Phillips-Osgood (Florida Southern College, Psychology with a minor in Biology), Sascha Overduijn (Florida State University, Pre-Law), Natalia Sinilo (St. Petersburg College, Management in Human Resources), and Isabel Wiltz (University of South Florida, Nursing).

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS TRANSPORTATION TEAM SWEEPS TOP HONORS AT STATE SAFETY ROADEO

Staff Report

Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) is celebrating a standout performance by its Transportation Department after hosting and competing in the State School Bus Safety Roadeo, organized by the Florida Association of Pupil Transportation (FAPT).



The top finishers include: Juan Maldonado, first place, Area 1. Cassandra Varnes, second place, Area 5. Romy Taju, third place, Area 7.

HCPS welcomed transportation teams from Sarasota, Manatee and Gadsden counties for the statewide event, which tests school bus operators on driving skills via a challenging obstacle course, safety knowledge and precision. HCPS rose to the top, earning first, second and third place overall.



Romy Taju serves Schmidt Elementary, Brandon High, Jennings Middle, Tampa Bay Technical High and Mann Middle Schools.

The top finishers include:

- Juan Maldonado, first place, Area 1.
- Cassandra Varnes, second place, Area 5.
- Romy Taju, third place, Area 7.

"These three professionals don't just represent HCPS on the leaderboard — they represent the heart of our Transportation Department," said Superintendent Van Ayres. "Their dedication to safety, skill and excellence reflects the high standards we set for serving students every day."

All three winners will go on to represent the State of Florida at the International School Bus Safety Roadeo this summer in Austin, Texas, competing against top drivers from across the nation.

Interested in joining the HCPS Transportation Team? Visit www.hillsboroughschools.org.

Juan Maldonado and Cassandra Varnes serve magnet schools.

Juan Maldonado serves the HDA magnet ramp, Jefferson High School, Tampa Heights Elementary Magnet School and Woodbridge Elementary School.

Cassandra Varnes serves the 40th Street magnet ramp, Young Middle Magnet School and Lockhart Elementary Magnet School.

Romy Taju serves Schmidt Elementary School, Brandon High School, Jennings Middle School, Tampa Bay Technical High School and Mann Middle School.

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HILLSBOROUGH COLLEGE TO HOST FUTURE HAWK REGISTRATION DAY EVENTS

Staff Report

Hillsborough College (HC) will host a series of Future Hawk Registration Days during May and June. Students admitted for the fall semester will have the opportunity to prepare for classes by connecting with HC staff, attending orientation and selecting courses to complete fall 2026 registration.

Future Hawk Registration Days are free to attend, but space is limited. Students must RSVP to secure a seat at https://events.hccfl.edu/en/5e2GUzf7/g/XMf3r-6r5Jy.

Tuesday, June 16, 4:30 p.m. — Ybor City Campus:

• Student Services Building at 1310 E. Palm Ave. in Tampa.

• Contact: Charlene Campbell, ccampbell36@hccfl.edu.

Wednesday, June 17, 5 p.m. — SouthShore Campus:

• SMPF 201/202 at 551 24th St. NE in Ruskin.

• Contact: Ryan Brown, rbrown62@hccfl.edu.

Tuesday, June 23, 5 p.m. — Plant City Campus:

• PTEC 116 and 118 at 1206 N. Park Rd. in Plant City.

• Contact: Sharlotte Henderson, pcenrollment@hccfl.edu.

Tuesday, June 30, 5 p.m. — Brandon Campus:

• BSSB Auditorium at 10451 Nancy Watkins Dr. in Tampa.

• Contact: Shamill Washington, swashington31@hccfl.edu.

Hillsborough College serves more than 46,000 students annually at its five campuses located throughout Tampa Bay. For more information, visit www.hcfl.edu.

Hillsborough College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate and baccalaureate degrees. Hillsborough College also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of Hillsborough College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097; by calling 404-679-4500; or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org).

Visit www.hcfl.edu/accreditation for more information.

For a complete listing of Hillsborough College press releases, visit https://news.hccfl.edu/press-releases/default.aspx.

PRO ATHLETES LEAD TAMPA DYNAMO YOUTH SOCCER CAMP IN RIVERVIEW

By Nick Nahas



The Tampa Dynamo FC organization, along with Shrader Athletics, is hosting a soccer camp from June 22–26 at Summerfield Soccer Park in Riverview.

The camp is headlined by Indianapolis Colts kicker Spencer Shrader and women's pro soccer player for Lyon, Korbin Shrader. The Tampa Dynamo FC - Shrader Athletics Summer Soccer Camp is directed by Sophie Shrader and assisted by veteran coach Peter Gutsche, college recruiting coordinator at Tampa Dynamo FC.

The U7 – U16 camp cost $290 per camper and goes from 8:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m. daily, with an optional parent and player Q&A from 11:30 a.m.– noon.

Sophie Shrader grew up in the Tampa area and started Shrader Athletics while attending Newsome High School. At Newsome, she set the goal–scoring record as a sophomore, and again as a junior. She played college soccer at USF and University of Tampa, and trained with PSG and Manchester City. She has run these soccer camps consistently for the past three years and is the sister of Spencer Shrader.

"What inspired me to start Shrader Athletics was a simple mindset — soccer is fun. I've always believed sports should be something kids genuinely enjoy, while also being a way to teach important life lessons like teamwork, discipline and confidence," said Sophie.

Spencer Shrader played soccer at Tampa Dynamo FC and multiple sports at Newsome High School. He then played football at USF and Notre Dame, before taking his talents to the NFL with multiple teams. He is currently on the Indianapolis Colts roster and is recovering from an injury. His experience in soccer and football will give insight to campers.

"I'll get to apply what I've learned throughout my sports journey to help kids become physically and mentally tougher and have an appreciation for sports," said Spencer. "I'm also excited to speak to the parents and encourage them and acknowledge them for the sacrifices they make for their children. It will be an honor to give back and share these lessons with the students."

U.S. Women's National Soccer Team gold medalist and pro soccer player for OL Lyonnes in France, Korbin Shrader, is Spencer's wife. The couple met through Notre Dame University where they both played in college. She was a First-Team All-American at Notre Dame. She looks forward to mentoring new players.

"I'm really excited to pour into the next generation," said Korbin. "I want to share what I've learned so they can succeed not just in sports, but in life. My goal is for them to leave inspired, growing, and becoming better people both on and off the field."

For registration or more information on the camp, visit shraderathletics.com/dynamo-summer-soccer-camp-2026.

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EYE ON BUSINESS

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Fax 657-4469 | Email: jbennett@ospreyobserver.com
Deadline: 15th of each month.

Freedom Plaza Named Among Best Senior Living Communities For 2026

LCS Community Operations has announced that Freedom Plaza has earned national recognition in the *U.S. News & World Report's* 2026 Best Senior Living Awards, receiving Best Assisted Living and Best Memory Care awards, along with accolades in the assisted living category for caregiving and activities and enrichment. The *U.S. News* Best Senior Living Awards are based on verified resident and family satisfaction surveys, making them one of the most trusted resources for comparing senior living options.

"This recognition is a powerful reflection of what matters most to us — the everyday experiences of the residents and families we serve," said LCS President and CEO Chris Bird. "The vote of confidence from a record number of our communities, many of whom who were recognized across multiple categories, speaks to the compassion and excellence our teams bring to our communities every day."

76 Fence Continues Expansion

76 Fence has announced its largest multiterritory commitment in Florida to date: seven territories awarded to Tom and Kate Donnelly. Tom Donnelly brings leadership and operations management experience, while Kate Donnelly contributes expertise in business administration and client relations. Together, they are building a family-operated fencing business designed to scale across multiple territories.



76 Fence provides top-quality gates and fences for home and business owners in the local community. With years of experience in the fencing industry, it has established a reputation for delivering high-quality personalized fencing solutions.

For more information, visit https://76fence.com/tampa.

David Weekley Opens Two New Model Homes In Apollo Beach

David Weekley Homes, one of the largest privately held national home builders, has opened two new model homes, The Rosbach and The Hornbeam, in the Apollo Beach community of Waterset Bungalow Series.

In Waterset Bungalow Series, buyers can select from four 1-story floor plans ranging in size from approximately 1,527-1,707 square feet of living space with three bedrooms, two full baths, one half bath and one to two-car garages. The homes are situated in clusters of four single-family homes that share a common driveway. The Rosbach model home showcases 1,550 square feet with two bedrooms, two full baths, a study and a two-car garage, while The Hornbeam model home features 1,707 square feet of living space with three bedrooms, two full baths and a two-car garage.

For more information about David Weekley Homes in Waterset, contact 813-774-4155.

BODYBAR Pilates

BODYBAR Pilates offers contemporary, high-intensity, low-impact reformer Pilates classes designed to strengthen, tone and improve flexibility for all fitness levels. Its classes focus on endurance and core strength, and it offers 14 reformers per studio with various class types. BODYBAR's goal is to offer supportive community environment where you can get an energizing and fun workout.

BODYBAR Pilates is located at 10437 Gibsonton Dr. in Riverview. Visit its website at https://bodybarpilates.com/studios/riverview for more information on the classes offered.

Sunset Estate Liquidations

Founded in 2026, Sunset Estate Liquidations was created to support seniors and their families during important life changes, particularly during estate transitions. Recognizing a need for trustworthy, streamlined services for estate sales, it built the company to provide guidance every step of the way. Sunset Estate Liquidations takes a personalized approach to every project, tailoring its services to meet the unique needs of each client during their estate transition, whether it involves conducting an estate sale or managing a professional estate liquidation.

Sunset Estate Liquidations is located at 4057 Forecast Dr. in Brandon. Call 813-460-1647 or visit its website at https://sunsetestateliquidations.com/ for additional information.

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SHAWNA'S MONTHLY MARKET UPDATE

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