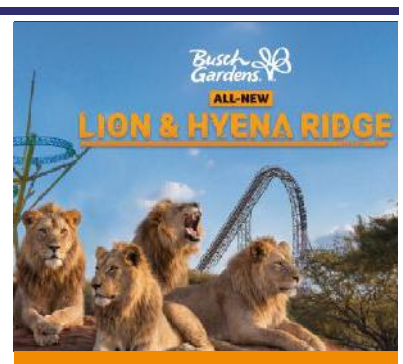
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VETERANS FIND WEEKLY SUPPORT AND CAMARADERIE AT BRANDON BOB EVANS' BOB'S VETS

By Brad Stager

The crowd musters at 7 in the morning, just as the sun begins to heat the Brandon landscape surrounding the Bob Evans restaurant at 10119 Horace Ave. in Tampa, just west of the Interstate 75 and State Road 60 interchange.



Bob's Vets events have become an essential stop for those who want to connect with the local military community, such as government officials and political candidates like Bea Valenti, a Republican candidate for Florida's 14th Congressional District who attended a recent Brandon Bob's Vets breakfast.

What distinguishes this group of early-rising diners is that they share an affinity for uniformed service in the United States military, whether they're active-duty members, veterans, retirees, family members or community supporters, and they gather to share a collective experience in a welcoming environment.

There is no formal membership nor a requirement to pay dues, and it is a nonpartisan assembly where petty distractions of political ideology and dogma are avoided in favor of creating and strengthening connections. Besides being an opportunity to share stories of service, the breakfasts also provide a conduit for essential information delivered by guest speakers from relevant agencies and organizations, as well as elected officials and political candidates looking to connect with the area's large veteran community.

Whatever the message of the day may be, everyone with a military connection is welcome to hear it, according to KeishaMarie Douglas, one of the Brandon Bob's Vets facilitators.

"Whether someone served for four years or thirty, whether they're newly transitioned or have been out for decades, everyone is welcome. Our goal is simple: No one should have to navigate civilian life alone," she wrote in an email. She added, "People can simply show up, enjoy breakfast, meet great people and become part of a community that truly cares about one another."

You can learn more about the Brandon meet-ups of Bob's Vets by visiting the group's Facebook page, Bobsvetsbrandonfl.

Bob's Vets is open to everyone, and Douglas, who is an Air Force veteran, said she is also establishing a nonprofit organization with a specific group of veterans in mind.

"Veteran WingWomen Organization was created to address the unique experiences and challenges many women veterans face. Together, I hope both organizations continue strengthening the veteran community by ensuring no veteran feels isolated or forgotten."

Hosting Bob's Vets groups is among the ways Bob Evans restaurants support the warrior class, highlighted by the company's tradition of offering complimentary menu items to veterans on Veterans Day and partnering with organizations like the USO. The restaurant chain's namesake founder served in the Army during World War II.

MONTHLY MAGIC SHOW DEBUTS AT BRANDON PERFORMING ARTS

Staff Report



Get ready to experience a night of magic, comedy and illusion with the seemingly impossible tricks of Vic Vega.

On the first Monday night of every month at Brandon Performing Arts' new location, Vega will team up with another magical performer for an entertainment experience you can't find anywhere else in the area.

On July 6, Vega, along with magician Sterling Steel, opened the show with a Las Vegas-style light show featuring music, misdirection, audience participation and jaw-dropping illusions that kept the crowd guessing throughout the evening. The family-friendly performances are designed to entertain audiences of all ages while showcasing a different style of magic each month.



Experience the impossible happening right in front of you with Vic Vega and his guest magicians.

Vega said, "Our goal is simple: create the best Monday night in Brandon. Every month, audiences will experience a different headline magician, incredible illusions, comedy and surprises in an intimate theater where everyone feels like part of the show. There's something special about live magic — you can watch on television, but nothing compares to sitting just a few feet away and witnessing the impossible happen right in front of you. That's the experience we're creating with Monday Night Magic at Brandon Performing Arts."

Upcoming performance lineups include Orlando Hernandez on August 3, Laurence Frances on September 7, The Delusionists on October 5 and James Chartier on November 2. Sales are limited, and advance ticket purchase is strongly recommended.

Camille Hashem, co-founder of Brandon Performing Arts, said, "We're looking forward to making Monday Night Magic a tradition in Brandon and continuing to bring world-class performers to our stage every first Monday of the month. We can't wait for everyone to see the guest magicians coming up."

The new location of Brandon Performing Arts, home of the Macbeth and Cheese Playhouse, is located at 225 E. Brandon Blvd. in Brandon. The venue offers an intimate setting where audiences can experience live theater, comedy and specialty performances throughout the year. For more information, visit https://macbethandcheese.com/

IN THIS ISSUE:

NEW ECHO CEO.....PG 4
BACK 2 SCHOOL BASH.....PG 6
MACBETH & CHEESE.....PG 12
BRANDON HISTORY.....PG 31
POLITICAL GUIDE.....PG 27-34

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ECHO welcomes new leadership: Iris S. Thurman has been named the new CEO of ECHO (Emergency Care Help Organization). Thurman brings extensive experience in nonprofit leadership, health care management and community engagement. See full story on Page 3.



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PRECISION HEALTH MD BRANDON CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING

Staff Report

The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce proudly celebrated the grand opening of Precision Health MD with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 12, welcoming the new primary care practice to the Brandon business community.



Dr. Ashik K. Soni addresses guests, patients, and community leaders at the grand opening of Precision Health MD.

Members, guests and community leaders gathered to commemorate the occasion while enjoying refreshments, networking opportunities and raffle prizes. The event highlighted Precision Health MD's commitment to providing compassionate, patient-centered health care focused on prevention, trust and long-term wellness.

Brandon Riverview Chamber President Amber Aaron welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for supporting this exciting new business. Dr. Ashik K. Soni, M.D., M.P.H., founder of Precision Health MD, shared his vision for bringing personalized, quality health care to Brandon and creating meaningful relationships with patients built on trust and compassionate care. As part of the celebration, BRCC Ambassador and 2026 Honorary Mayor of Brandon Riverview Abraham Agosto presented a special proclamation officially declaring June 12 as Precision Health MD Day, recognizing the practice's commitment to improving the health and well-being of the community.

Located at 1017 Professional Park Dr. in Brandon, Precision Health MD is led by Dr. Soni, a board-certified internal medicine physician with six years of hospital medicine experience. The practice focuses on treating the whole person — not just symptoms — and offers comprehensive adult primary care, preventive screenings, wellness exams, chronic disease management, acute sick visits, care coordination and same-day or next-day appointments.

Precision Health MD places a special emphasis on serving adults ages 65 and older, providing ongoing support and management for chronic conditions including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, COPD, asthma and other complex health needs. Through a welcoming environment and a patient-centered approach, the practice strives to ensure every patient feels heard, supported and cared for.

"Small businesses and health care providers play a vital role in the strength of our community," said Aaron. "We are excited to welcome Precision Health MD to Brandon and look forward to seeing Dr. Soni and his team make a lasting impact through their commitment to compassionate, personalized care."

The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce congratulates Dr. Soni and the entire Precision Health MD team on their grand opening and extends its best wishes for continued growth and success.

For more information, visit the office website at www.precisionhealthmd.org.

ECHO WELCOMES IRIS S. THURMAN AS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Staff Report

ECHO (Emergency Care Help Organization) is proud to announce Iris S. Thurman as its new CEO, marking an exciting new chapter for the organization while reaffirming its unwavering commitment to serving neighbors in crisis throughout Eastern Hillsborough County.



Iris S. Thurman

As ECHO continues navigating change and continuing support, the organization's mission remains unchanged. For nearly four decades, ECHO has provided emergency food, clothing and life-stabilizing resources while helping individuals and families Bridge the Gap Between Crisis and Stability. Under Thurman's leadership, ECHO will continue building on this strong foundation by expanding community partnerships, strengthening programs and increasing its impact for the thousands of neighbors who rely on its services each year.

"ECHO's mission has always been about people," said Thurman. "I am honored to lead an organization that has served our community for nearly 40 years. Together with our dedicated staff, volunteers, donors and community partners, we will continue empowering neighbors in crisis by providing hope, resources and pathways to long-term stability."

An accomplished nonprofit executive, author, certified professional life coach, motivational speaker and founder, Thurman is dedicated to transforming lives through strategic leadership, emotional wellness and community impact.

A native of Miami, Thurman relocated to Tampa at the age of 10 with her mother and three siblings. As a divorced mother of four adult sons, she earned both a Bachelor of Arts in business management and a Master of Business Administration in health care management from the University of Phoenix, demonstrating the resilience and determination that continue to define her leadership.

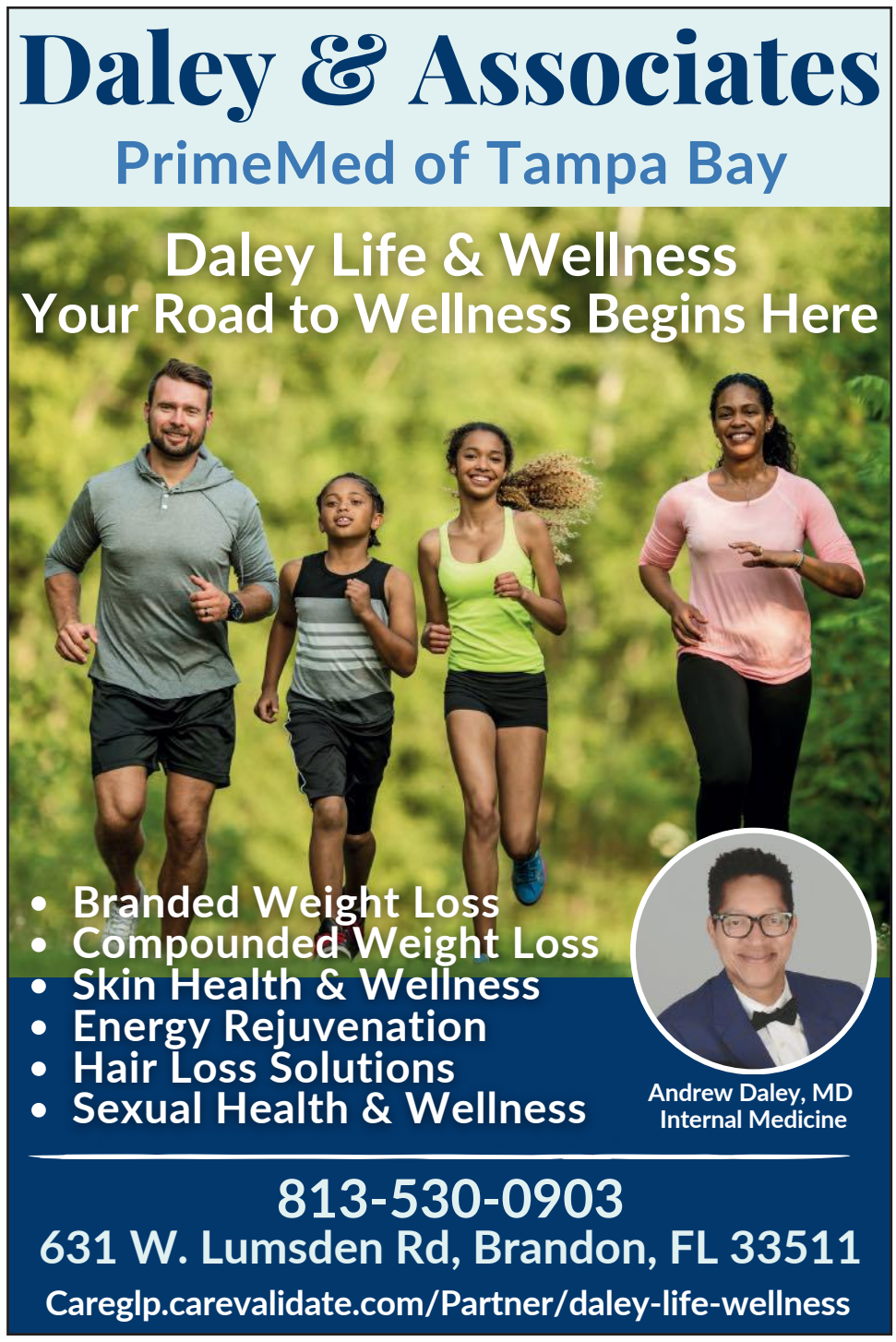
As chief executive officer of ECHO, Thurman leads the organization's mission of empowering neighbors in crisis by providing emergency assistance and pathways to long-term stability for families throughout Hillsborough County. Her leadership focuses on strategic growth, community partnerships, organizational excellence and expanding ECHO's impact across the region.

In addition to her role at ECHO, Thurman is the founder of Urlinked Enterprises, LLC, doing business as IS Transformation Coaching, and Urlinked Charities Inc., home of the I AM ME Movement. Through these organizations, she equips individuals with the tools, resources and mindset needed to heal, grow and thrive. Her work spans emotional wellness, leadership development, youth empowerment, community engagement and transformational coaching.

While ECHO enters a new season of leadership, its promise to the community remains steadfast. Yesterday, today and tomorrow, ECHO will continue to provide compassionate support, essential resources and opportunities that help families move from crisis toward long-term stability.

For more information, visit the website at www.echofl.org.





AWARD-WINNING STRANDHILL PUBLIC INTRODUCES NEW BRUNCH MENU

By Emily Harper



Strandhill Public owner Rory Martin .



Strandhill Public is a locally owned restaurant that pays tribute to traditional Irish cuisine and the charm of an Irish pub. At this restaurant, you can expect great food, excellent cocktails, and warm hospitality while being surrounded by Irish culture.

Owner Rory Martin is originally from a small coastal village in northwest Ireland called Strandhill. During his childhood, he spent his time surfing and learning the ropes of running a pub from his parents. In Strandhill, Martin lived above the family pub, owned by his parents. He said, "The pub was truly an extension of our home."

When first moving to the United States, Martin worked at some of the busiest bars in New York City. Over time, he decided to relocate and open a modern-day Irish pub in Tampa. Today, Martin's restaurant Strandhill Public honors his Irish roots and his hometown Strandhill.

"I am very proud of what Strandhill Public has become. I won the best burger which is the Irish whiskey burger. I use Creekstone Farm, grass fed beef, Dubliner cheddar, caramelized onions, bacon and an Irish whiskey BBQ sauce. I use two different styles of Irish whiskey to make the sauce. Paddy's Triple Distilled and Connemara Peated Irish Whiskey," said Martin, speaking about winning Tampa Bay's No. 1 Burger.

In June, Strandhill Public introduced its new brunch menu, offered on Saturdays and Sundays. This brunch menu features dishes such as the Traditional Irish Breakfast, Smash That Breakfast Burger, Pistachio Chocolate Torte, along with a variety of spritz cocktails.

In addition to the restaurant's outstanding food, Strandhill Public has the largest selection of Irish whiskey in the state of Florida. Also, on Wednesdays guests can enjoy half-price bottles of wine.

Strandhill Public has two locations, one in Brandon, located at 10288 Causeway Blvd. Tampa, FL 33619, and the other in Tampa Heights, located at 309 W. Palm Ave. Tampa, FL 33602.

To learn more about the restaurant and view its extensive menu, visit online at www.strandhillpublic.com.

HCA FLORIDA BRANDON HOSPITAL HOSTS OFFICE RIBBON CUTTING AND TOURS

Staff Report



HCA Florida Brandon Hospital recently celebrated the opening of the new HCA Florida Brandon Medical Offices with a ribbon cutting and tours of the 70,000-square-foot medical office building. The building is located at the corner of Moon Avenue and Oakfield Drive, across the street from HCA Florida Brandon Hospital, located at 119 Oakfield Dr. in Brandon.

"With the opening of this new medical office building, HCA Florida vascular specialists and HCA Florida cardiac surgical specialists will begin seeing patients in a convenient location near HCA Florida Brandon Hospital," said Laura Ehlen, vice president of operations at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital. "The building will continue to expand access to outpatient care and provide dedicated space for our growing graduate medical education program."

The new medical office building reflects Brandon Hospital's focus on helping patients access connected care close to home, from hospital-based services to outpatient follow-up and specialty care. Brandon Hospital also has plans to construct a pedestrian bridge spanning Oakfield Drive that will connect the new medical office building to the hospital's main campus. The bridge will provide a safer and more convenient route for patients, physicians and hospital staff traveling between the two facilities, further enhancing connectivity across the hospital's expanding campus.

The office building also serves as the home of HCA Florida Brandon Hospital's Graduate Medical Education (GME) program, providing state-of-the-art technology and dedicated learning environments designed to support the next generation of physicians. Brandon Hospital offers Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)-accredited training programs in internal medicine, emergency medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pathology, transitional year, surgery, addiction medicine, interventional cardiology and cardiovascular disease. The hospital's GME program currently includes nearly 200 residents and fellows.

The new GME space was thoughtfully designed to enhance both education and well-being, featuring advanced simulation laboratories where residents and fellows can practice and refine clinical skills in a realistic environment. Additional amenities include modern classrooms, collaborative office space, on-site sleeping quarters, a fitness area and dedicated spaces for relaxation and wellness, creating a comprehensive learning environment that supports academic excellence and physician development.



CHAMBER CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING OF LMCU'S NEW BRANCH

Staff Report



The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce proudly celebrated the grand opening of Lake Michigan Credit Union's (LMCU) newest branch in Valrico with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony, welcoming community members, chamber leaders and local supporters to commemorate the occasion.

LMCU is a member-focused financial institution dedicated to helping individuals, families and businesses achieve financial success. Built on a foundation of trust and community investment, LMCU continues to expand its presence throughout Central Florida, now serving the Tampa Bay region with 10 branches, including its newest location in Valrico.

Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce President Amber Aaron welcomed guests and thanked everyone for attending the celebration before introducing Mary Boyd, market leader and vice president of LMCU. Boyd expressed her appreciation for the warm community welcome and shared remarks about the credit union's commitment to providing exceptional financial services while strengthening the communities it serves.

Adding to the celebration, Brandon Riverview Honorary Mayor and Chamber Ambassador Abe Agosto presented a special proclamation officially declaring June 23 as LMCU Day, recognizing the organization's dedication to community growth, financial empowerment and local partnerships.

The new Valrico branch represents another milestone in LMCU's continued expansion and reinforces its mission of making a positive impact through personalized financial solutions and meaningful community involvement.The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce congratulates LMCU on the successful opening of its new Valrico branch and looks forward to seeing the positive impact the organization will continue to make throughout the community.

About Lake Michigan Credit Union

Lake Michigan Credit Union is a full-service financial institution open to everyone, offering personal and business banking, mortgages, loans, investments and financial services. With a commitment to trust, exceptional member service and community engagement, LMCU helps individuals, families and businesses achieve their financial goals while investing in stronger local communities.

Visit www.lmcu.org.







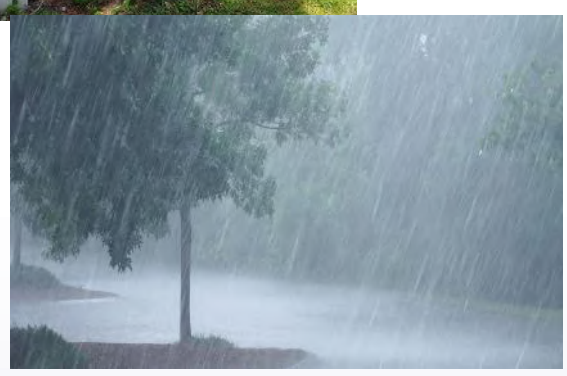




GET THE DIRT: RAIN HAS ARRIVED!

BY LYNN BARBER, URBAN HORTICULTURE AGENT





Rainfall can easily be captured in a rain barrel, a device used to collect rainwater mainly for landscape irrigation.

One workshop attendee said, "I like using natural resources that are free and beneficial to the environment. Capturing rainwater prevents stormwater runoff which displaced the soil, mulch and plants under my roofline."

Benefits: Reduce potable (drinking) water used for landscape irrigation; decrease erosion, stormwater runoff and water source pollution.

Facts: One inch of rain from a 1,000-square-foot roof yields 625 gallons. Considering our 50-53 inches of rainfall annually, we could capture 31,000-plus gallons of rainwater.

Location: Locate the barrel near a downspout. If you do not have downspouts/gutters, place the barrel under the area where the roof forms a V.

Materials: Food-grade container/drum, drill, 15/16-inch drill bit, brass boiler drain, PVC cement and concrete blocks.

Platform stability: Two or four concrete blocks placed horizontally under a barrel work well. Do not stand the blocks vertically. For more than one layer of blocks, stack in a crisscross pattern. Make sure the ground under the blocks is level and packed down. This takes more time than any of the other steps. One gallon of water weighs 8.3 pounds, so a full 55-gallon rain barrel weighs 456.5 pounds.

Installation: To transition from the gutter/downspout to the rain barrel opening, use a cross piece of downspout material or a flexible downspout extender.

Clean barrel prior to installation: Use a green cleaning solution or one-eighth cup of bleach and 5 gallons of water.

Painting: Before installation, prime the barrel, then use outdoor acrylic paint. If you don't prime the barrel before painting, use paint specifically for plastic. After painting, let it dry according to the directions; then put one to two coats of polyurethane over the paint for protection.

We offer rainwater harvesting workshops on the first Saturday of the month from February through November. Check our website at https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/hillsborough/ for dates/times.

BACK 2 SCHOOL BASH COMING TO COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS ON AUGUST 1

Staff Report



Families from across Hillsborough County are invited to kick off the new school year at the 2026 Back 2 School Bash, taking place on Saturday, August 1, from 9 a.m.-12 Noon at the Hillsborough County Fairgrounds, located at 215 Sydney Washer Rd. in Dover.

The annual community outreach event brings together the Hillsborough County Fair, Hillsborough County Public Schools, local nonprofits, churches, businesses and community partners with one common goal: helping students begin the school year prepared for success.

This free event will feature:

• A backpack and school supply giveaway (while supplies last).

• Resources from Hillsborough County Public Schools.

• More than 100 community vendors.

• Family-friendly activities.

• a kid zone and bounce houses.

• Information on educational and community support services.

Registration for the 2026 backpack giveaway will be walk-up only, making it easier than ever for families in need to receive assistance.

"The Back 2 School Bash is much more than a school supply giveaway," organizers said. "It's an opportunity for our community to come together and ensure every child begins the school year with confidence, encouragement and the resources they need to succeed."

Each year, thousands of children and families attend the event, making it one of the largest back-to-school outreach efforts in Hillsborough County. In addition to receiving backpacks and school supplies, families can connect with organizations offering valuable educational, health and social service resources.

Community members, businesses, churches and civic organizations are encouraged to support the event through sponsorships, school supply donations or volunteering.

Additional information, sponsorship opportunities, volunteer registration and a list of needed school supplies are available at www.hillsboroughcountyfair.com/p/back-to-school-bash.



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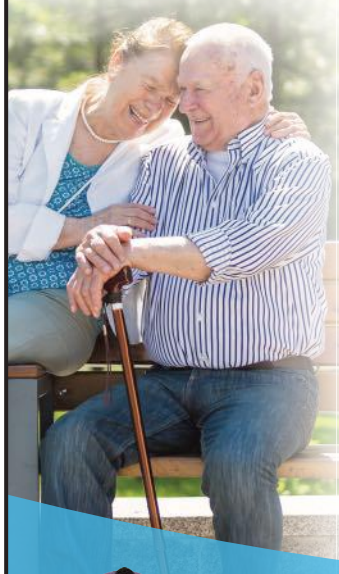
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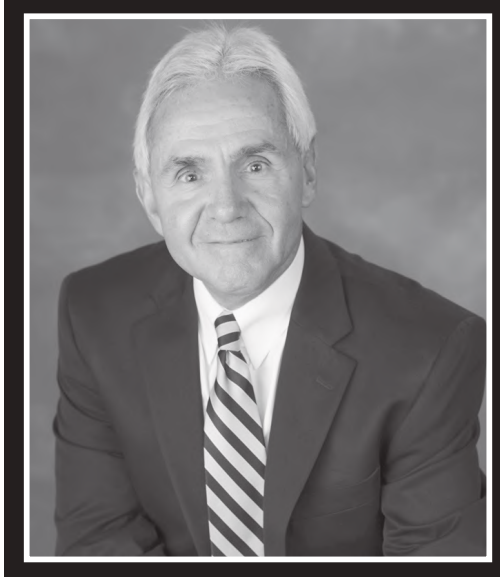
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HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS WELCOMES BLINDED ARMY VET TO HIS ADAPTED HOME

By Brian Bokor

Army Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Cornelius received the keys to a mortgage-free, specially adapted custom home in Lithia on June 13, becoming the recipient of Homes For Our Troops' (HFOT) 50th home built and donated in Florida.

Cornelius was blinded in an IED blast during his third combat deployment in Iraq in 2008. The custom-built home is designed to provide the safety, accessibility and technology needed to help him navigate the next chapter of his life with greater independence.



Representatives from Homes For Our Troops, the community and neighbors gathered to welcome Army Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Cornelius and his daughter Gabby to their new home in Lithia.

The milestone home reflects the mission of Homes For Our Troops, a nonprofit organization that builds specially adapted homes for severely injured post-9/11 veterans.



Built by Elizabeth Evans Custom Homes, the residence was tailored specifically to Cornelius' needs and incorporates a variety of features that make everyday tasks safer and more accessible.

Features include a home automation package with voice-activated controls, smart locks, security cameras, smart blinds and voice communication systems. The home also includes driveway delineators, tactile paving near the street, a chair rail system, larger cabinet hardware, magnetic door stops throughout, smart appliances and an induction cooktop equipped with built-in safety features.

For Cornelius, the day marked the culmination of nearly three years of planning and anticipation.

"It was kind of a lot of anxiety at first, uncertainty," Cornelius said. "But as things got closer and closer, and coming into the home and learning about everything that's here and that's going to help me, it settled everything and made me more comfortable."

"I think this is just going to be a blessing moving forward," he added. "I can be at peace and help others in my life. I'm just so excited about this place. It's incredible."

One of the reasons Cornelius chose Florida was to be closer to his daughter, Gabby.



When asked what it means to have family nearby as he enters this new chapter, Cornelius said, "It gives me more self-confidence and comfort to move forward."

He added, "A big portion of her is the reason why I changed my life and refocused myself."

Gabby said watching her father receive the home after years of waiting was a special moment.

"I know he was a little nervous, but I think he's super excited," she said.

Asked which features she was most excited about, Gabby pointed to the home's safety and accessibility features.

"I think, for one, the security," she said. "And for two, the cooking features. He's able to make more things for himself."

Despite losing his sight, Cornelius has continued to pursue an active lifestyle and challenge himself in new ways.

"Since we spoke, I actually went to Montana and skied down Big Sky Mountain," he said.

He is already preparing for his next challenge.

"I'm getting ready to go up to Boston and run a 5K," Cornelius said.

The ceremony also featured a special presentation of Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses, which are now being made available to eligible legally blind veterans through a newly announced partnership between Meta and the Blinded Veterans Association. The AI-powered glasses can assist users by reading text, identifying objects, recognizing colors and helping with everyday tasks through voice commands.

Cornelius said he expects the technology to make a significant difference in his daily life.

"I think it's going to be a wonderful addition," he said. "I can read things myself. I can see what color things are. I can read money. It just opens up a big door for me to do many things I used to do."

Founded in 2004, Homes For Our Troops builds specially adapted custom homes to help injured post-9/11 veterans rebuild their lives. The organization currently has 70 active projects nationwide, including six in Florida, and recently dedicated its 441st home in El Paso, Texas.

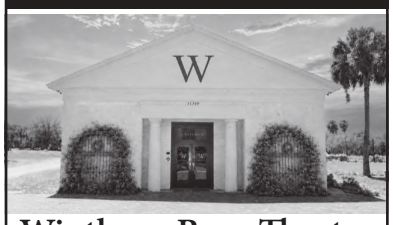
As he prepares to settle into his new home, Cornelius remains focused on the future.

"I'm excited to move forward now with this new chapter," he said. "I'm just so excited and blessed to have these tools with me."



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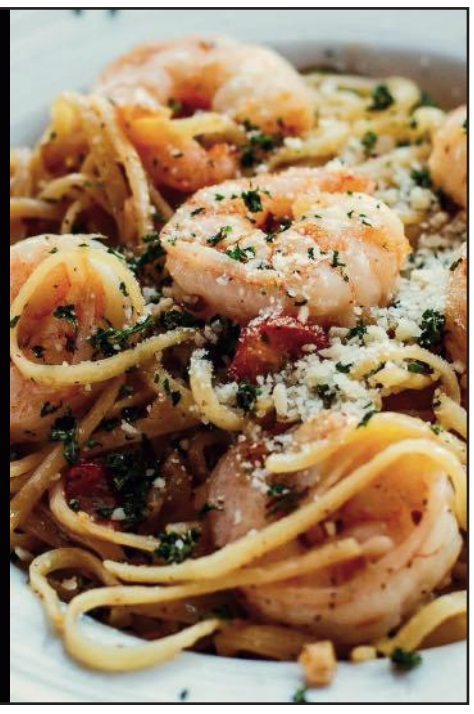
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ALL-NEW MONSTER JAM FREESTYLE MANIA IS COMING TO TAMPA

Staff Report



Get ready for the summer event that will change everything you thought you knew about freestyle — Monster Jam Freestyle Mania. New event format for the first time ever in Tampa, where Monster Jam trucks team up with freestyle motocross (FMX) bikes to deliver gravity-defying skills and thrills. Cheer for your favorite team with four action-packed events at Benchmark International Arena from Friday through Sunday, August 14-16, as they pull off stunts you've never seen before. The energy, the action and the next-level thrills will keep you on the edge of your seat. It's an adrenaline rush you can only experience live.

Monster Jam Freestyle Mania features one-of-a-kind FMX bikes for this epic team competition, each with the bold, iconic look of your favorite Monster Jam trucks, like the legendary Grave Digger, El Toro Loco, Sparkle Smash and more. It's all happening at Monster Jam, where your outside voice is allowed, and every big moment comes with an even bigger smile. Monster Jam Freestyle Mania — two times the freestyle action. Full-send family fun!

Get ready for nonstop excitement as Tampa roars to life with gravity-defying stunts, heart-pounding races and plenty of big air. The world's best Monster Jam drivers combine forces with fearless FMX riders in an eight-team lineup to wow the crowd with big air jumps, crazy tricks and unbelievable backflips. Teams look to take each overall event championship title in five total competitions. Monster Jam trucks go all out in Racing, 2-Wheel Skills and Freestyle competitions, while FMX bikes face off in Best Whip and Best Trick competitions. Fans will be right in the middle of the action, helping to crown the Team Event Champion as they get to score the athletes in real time based on their skills, stunts and saves.

The day of fun starts at the Monster Jam Pit Party on both Saturday and Sunday, your first stop for selfies with the trucks and bikes, high fives and autographs from drivers and riders and family-friendly activities. It's the perfect way to start a day of adrenaline-charged fun, plus get an insider's look at how these 12,000-pound trucks are built to stand up to the competition.

These aren't just any athletes; they're world-class male and female athletes who have mastered controlling these 12,000-pound beasts and dynamic FMX bikes. Whether pulling off insane backflips, nailing crazy tricks and whips or in all-out racing, these athletes are ready to wow fans with the most mind-blowing live motorsports action around.

Tickets for this event are on sale now at www.ticketmaster.com. Advanced parking passes are available at www.parkwhiz.com. Visit www.benchmarkintlarena.com or call 813-301-2500 for more information.

For more detailed local info, please visit the Tampa event page on www.monsterjam.com. Follow Monster Jam on its social media pages on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Subscribe to the Monster Jam YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/monsterjam.

GLORY DAYS GRILL CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF FOOD, FUN & COMMUNITY

By Libby Hopkins



Glory Days Grill & Sports House of Brandon is the perfect gathering spot with a fun atmosphere and fresh, made-in-house food for everyone, such as different jumbo chicken wing styles with endless flavorful sauces, hand-crafted burgers, fan-favorite entrees like its Fabulous Fish Fry and limited-time seasonal offerings — all at a value that'll leave you feeling victorious.



"We just celebrated our 30th anniversary this past April," said Jen Ulmer, chief marketing officer for Glory Days. "We are going to celebrate all year round, and we are thrilled the community is joining us in our celebrations."

In 1996, Glory Days Grill began in Burke, Virginia, and was founded by Richard Danker, Robert Garner and Jeff Newman. In 2023, the Florida franchise, owned and run by Bob Basham, Outback Steakhouse co-founder, purchased the 22 mid-Atlantic restaurants, bringing together all Glory Days Grill locations under one company with his brother, original co-founder Richard Danker. Together, Basham and Danker are excited to be expanding the brand through the Southeast region providing an appeal for sports fans and families, serving quality food in a fun atmosphere.

"Still to this day our focus is offering a family-friendly experience that is welcoming of all ages, with a menu and entertainment options that appeal to a wide range of preferences," Ulmer said. "Just like when you host a watch party in your own living room, Glory Days Grill aims to provide a real, fun sports experience with our multitude of televisions broadcasting sports games and other entertainment."

With the recent World Cup happening, Glory Days had all the games being shown at the Brandon location, with an outstanding menu to match the World Cup festivities. "Our limited-time tournament menu celebrated the spirit of the game with globally inspired food pairings and select beverages sourced from around the world," Ulmer said. "We really wanted all the countries that played in the World Cup represented with our food and drink selections."

"At Glory Days Grill, we're proud to support our local communities through sponsorships and our Dining for Dollars program," Ulmer said. "We believe in giving back and fostering strong relationships with the neighborhoods we serve."

Locally, Glory Days supports the Brandon Cowboys, Valrico High School, Armwood High School and North Brandon Little League.

"We also support our local heroes with a 10 percent discount," Ulmer said. "Tunnels to Towers is another program Glory Days supports in the Tampa Bay community. T

It is located at 11310 Causeway Blvd. in Brandon. Visit www.glorydaysgrill.com/locations/fl-brandon/ for more information.

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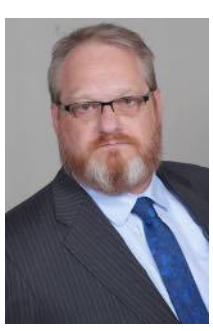
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HIGH 5 INC. NEW COMPETITIVE DIVE PROGRAM HAS NEW COACH

By Emily Harper



Head Coach Anjel Clemente.

High 5 Diving is excited to announce its brand-new competitive dive program. This program welcomes divers of all ages and diving abilities to reach their full potential.

The program is divided into four groups where divers will practice with others of similar skill levels to reach their individual goals.

Leading the program is Head Coach Anjel Clemente.

Clemente stated, "I want to create a very inclusive and supportive community here at High 5 where every athlete is measured for success not by where they stand on a podium but by their ability to grow as an individual, face adversity and break their own mental barriers."

Clemente's passion for diving has been a part of his life since he began the sport in eighth grade. He continued mastering his craft throughout high school and competed collegiately at Manchester University in North Manchester, Indiana.

Throughout his time at the university, Clemente set many school records, including the six-dive record on 1-meter board, the eleven-dive record on 1-meter board, and the six-dive record on 3-meter board. Furthermore, he was a two-time NCAA Regional Championship finalist and finished his collegiate career as an Academic All-American during his senior year.

Recognized for his leadership and success in sports, Clemente was inducted into his high school's hall of fame in January for soccer, diving and track and field.

After moving to the Tampa Bay area, Clemente served as the head coach of Academy at the Lakes (2022-25) and Cypress Creek High School (2023-present). As a coach, his athletes have broken over 30 combined swimming and diving school records, and he has qualified multiple athletes for the FHSAA State Championships.

"I love the sport of diving because to me it is an art. Our ability to create, focus, control and use our athleticism to create something so beautiful while leaving people in awe at the gracefulness has always been an art form to me. Diving requires so much focus and discipline and rewards with such beautiful executions," said Clemente.

To ensure each individual is placed in the appropriate group, Clemente is conducting tryouts/evaluations based on inquiries submitted through High 5's website. This is a great opportunity for both families and Clemente to meet and determine if the program is the right fit.

To learn more about this program or to submit an inquiry, visit https://high5inc.org/diving/.







GRAND OPENING OF NEW MACBETH & CHEESE PLAYHOUSE

By Srishti Tripathi



The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce proudly celebrated the grand opening of the new MacBeth & Cheese Playhouse, marking an exciting new chapter for Brandon Performing Arts Inc. and the local arts community.

Chamber members, community leaders, supporters and guests gathered to celebrate the opening of the organization's expanded performance space, which will serve as a hub for live theater, entertainment and community engagement in the Brandon area.

Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce President Amber Aaron welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for joining the celebration before introducing MacBeth & Cheese Playhouse co-founders Camille 'C.J.' Hashem and Amy Windle. Hashem shared the organization's vision for its new home, emphasizing its commitment to creating immersive, accessible and memorable live theater experiences while expanding opportunities for local performers and audiences to connect through the arts.

Honorary Mayor of Brandon Riverview and Brandon Riverview Chamber Ambassador Abe Agosto of United Direct Lending presented a special proclamation officially declaring June 24 as MacBeth & Cheese Playhouse Day, recognizing the organization's contributions to the local arts and cultural community.

Brandon Performing Arts Inc., doing business as MacBeth & Cheese Playhouse, is an all-volunteer community theater dedicated to producing bold, engaging stage performances throughout the Tampa Bay area. Known for psychological thrillers, classic productions and original adaptations, the organization creates theatrical experiences designed to immerse audiences in every performance.

The newly opened venue represents an exciting expansion for the organization and will offer far more than live theater. In addition to stage productions, the space will host comedy shows, open-mic nights, acting classes, special events and other community-centered programming, creating an inclusive environment where creativity and connection can thrive.

"The arts play an important role in bringing communities together," said Aaron. "We are proud to celebrate MacBeth & Cheese Playhouse as they expand their impact in our community. Their passion for storytelling, creativity and creating meaningful experiences enriches the quality of life for residents throughout the Tampa Bay area."

For more information about MacBeth & Cheese Playhouse, upcoming performances, and community events, visit its website at https://macbethandcheese.com/ or follow it on social media. The playhouse is located at 225 E. Brandon Blvd. in Brandon and is building a calendar including comedy, plays and classes for the performing arts community.

HGTV'S HOMETOWN DREAM TEAM CELEBRATES SIXTH SEASON SUCCESS

By Libby Hopkins



Brian and Mika Kleinschmidt are HGTV reality TV stars and local real estate business owners.

Brian and Mika Kleinschmidt of Riverview met in high school chorus class, but they didn't become a couple until years later after high school. Mika spent a decade working in the fitness industry helping clients achieve their personal goals, while Brian went to attend the University of Central Florida, where he spent his spring breaks and weekends volunteering for Habitat for Humanity. He fell in love with building homes as he gained lots of hands-on experience as well. After graduation he started flipping homes on his own.



The 2008 housing crash made a way for Brian and Mika's paths to cross. Since the housing crash left Brian unable to flip homes, he started opening a chain of fitness clubs. This led to him connecting Mika and them becoming a couple, and a romance and business were born. While Mika was becoming one of the top realtors in the area, Brian had the itch to get his hands dirty again with construction.

"Life has been amazing and we have done so much since we were in the fitness industry," Brian said.

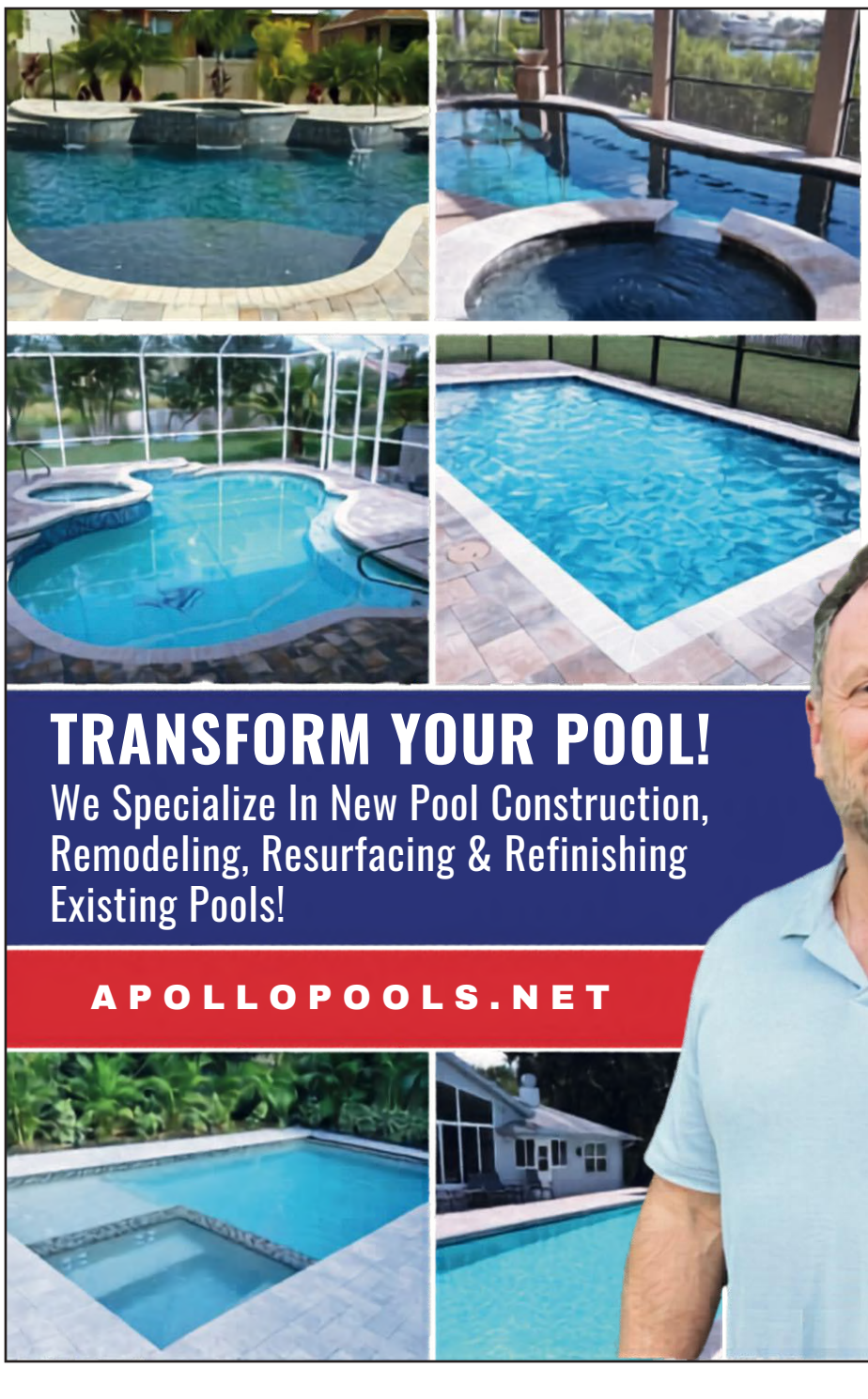
The couple just wrapped up season six of their HGTV show, *100 Day Dream Home*. Mika is also a mentor on the HGTV show *Battle on the Beach*, which premiered in June. Additionally, the couple has a local realty company, Dirt 2 Design.

"We built this together from the ground up," Mika said. "We are local realtors in the area, and we do a ton of projects with our local community. Most of the things we do are not on TV."

At Dirt 2 Design, their 'Dream–Design–Build–Start' approach brings their clients' entire real estate journey together in one seamless experience. Whether it's helping them buy or sell in the Tampa Bay area, designing spaces that reflect their vision or building custom homes with trusted local partners, the Kleinschmidts are with their clients every step of the way.

"With a personalized approach, strong local connections and a commitment to exceptional service, we make it easy to turn your ideas into reality and confidently take the next step," Brian said.

For more information, visit the website at https://dirt2design.com/ or call 813-400-3910.



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Compiled by Jenny Bennett
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Plant City Entertainment To Perform *Oklahoma!*

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Join Plant City Entertainment Inc., located at 101 N. Thomas St. in Plant City, where 'the wind comes sweeping off the plains' for three weekends, from now through Sunday, August 2. Tickets are available at its website, www.plantcityentertainment.com.

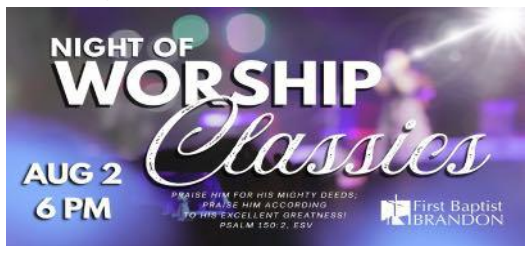
Delta Delta Chapter Of Beta Sigma Phi Meeting

The sisters of Delta Delta Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi gathered on June 27 at the home of Phyllis Bradbury in Plant City for a thoughtfully planned brunch meeting. The morning provided an opportunity for fellowship, meaningful conversation and reflection on the chapter's ongoing mission.

In addition to enjoying a well-prepared brunch, members focused on planning for the year ahead. Fundraising efforts were also a key topic of discussion. Members collaborated on developing practical and creative Ways and Means projects to support their charitable goals, demonstrating a continued commitment to community engagement.

Delta Delta is one of several Beta Sigma Phi chapters serving the Tampa Bay area. The organization welcomes women ages 18 and older who are interested in building connections, personal growth and community involvement.

For more information or to inquire about membership, please contact Julia Pickens at juliapickens88@gmail.com.



Night Of Worship At First Baptist Brandon

Join First Baptist Brandon for its annual Night of Worship on Sunday, August 2, at 6 p.m. in the sanctuary. This year's theme, Classics, will highlight beloved songs from the history of First Baptist Brandon's choir and orchestra ministry. Come be part of a meaningful evening as we remember God's faithfulness through the years and lift our voices together in worship and praise.

First Baptist Brandon is located at 216 N. Parsons Ave. in Brandon. Visit its website at www.fbcbrandon.org for additional information and events.



Neil Waid, Mark A. Coté, ESE specialist Heidi Meyer, Howard Baum, Principal Sara Schwanzl, Rick Anello, Steve Martinez and Grand Knight Tim Ashcraft. (Photos by Neil Waid.)

Knights From Mother Seton Council Supports Lopez Exceptional Student Center

Lopez Exceptional Student Center provides developmental training for children that are either physically or mentally challenged and unable to attend class in a typical school environment. Through the use of physical, visual and audio means, it is able to communicate with and help these children lead a more meaningful life. One of its newer classrooms is set up like a home. There, children, who are able, learn social skills, such as using table utensils, setting a table and washing dishes — simple everyday tasks that we take for granted but for them are a challenge.





On June 16, Knights from Mother Seton Council 6724 presented Sara Schwanzl, principal of Lopez Exceptional Student Center, a check for $2726.10. This money was collected during three Council Tootsie Roll Drives conducted this year at local Publix stores.

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MOM TURNS TRAGEDY INTO HOPE WITH NEW OVERDOSE SUPPORT GROUP

By Libby Hopkins



Shownеen Hall of Riverview lost her son, Walter Shumaker, on October 22, 2023, at just 27 years old. He died from a fentanyl overdose.

Shownеen Hall of Riverview got a call on October 22, 2023, that no parent ever wants to get. The call she got was to let her know that her son, Walter Shumaker, had died of an overdose. To make matters worse, because Walter had been incarcerated a few times in his life, she did not receive support from her community in her time of need.

"After losing my son to fentanyl addiction, my family and I were met with judgment and stigma by the very community that should have embraced us," Hall said. "The stress and harm caused by that treatment deeply affected my health and contributed to my suffering a heart attack."

Hall's son was just 27 years old at the time of his death.

Hall looked for support to help with her grief and found Tonya Aber of Ohio's Facebook post about an organization she started for families who were grieving the loss of loved ones who passed from drug overdoses.

"Tonya told me about her losing her daughter, Jessie, who also died from a fentanyl overdose," Hall said. "She also told me about the nonprofit she started to help families in the same situation as mine."

Aber's nonprofit is called 4 Them We Fight, and its mission is to love, support, advocate and educate veterans, addicts, those in recovery, those with mental illness and anybody else who may need a voice.

"We want to bring the veteran's story of their heroism to the public, show those lost in addiction through those in recovery that hope is possible and bring strength and love to those who just feel beaten down," Hall said. "This is why I started a Tampa chapter of 4 Them We Fight."

"We are here to remind parents, especially mothers of addicted angels, that it is OK to not be OK," Hall said. "There is no shame in loving a child who battled addiction, regardless of their past or their record."

Through 4 Them We Fight, Hall has become a certified NARCAN provider and is currently looking for local businesses that would allow her to put free NARCAN boxes at their locations to help raise awareness about fentanyl overdose.

"NARCAN nasal spray competes with opioids to bind with the same receptors in the brain, reversing the effects of an opioid overdose in two to three minutes," Hall said. "This can save lives."

"I will be hosting support meetings once a month, and they are free to attend," Hall said. "We are also looking for toiletry items to be donated so we can give out toiletry bags to the homeless in our area."

To learn more, visit its website at https://4themwefight.org/ or contact Hall at 813-270-6896.

EASTERSEALS HOSTS INCLUSIVE SUMMER CAMP FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

By Chloe Wagner



The Easterseals School for Limitless Learning is hosting its summer program designed for young neurodiverse learners and those with other disabilities in kindergarten through second grade.

The hands-on experience provides interactive STEAM-related (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics) activities for children to learn and grow in an inclusive, supportive environment.

Easterseals Florida has served individuals from all walks of life with all kinds of disabilities across Florida since 1948. This includes services such as workforce development, early intervention, autism services, mental health services and recreation and camps. The school, located in the Bloomingdale area, was founded in 2024.

Easterseals School for Limitless Learning's school administrator, Dr. Janine Stewart, heads both the school and the summer camp programs.

"The summer program was created in response to the need for meaningful, structured activities during the summer for special needs children," Dr. Stewart said.

According to Dr. Stewart, Hillsborough county faces a growing need for specialized education services, with 35,000 students, or 15 percent of the county population, needing individualized education programs.

"We believe every child deserves meaningful access to STEAM experiences, and we provide the individualized supports to help each camper succeed," Dr. Stewart said.

The program currently has 22 campers, but Dr. Stewart and the school have plans to expand the summer program to hopefully accommodate more students in the future.

Activities for the camp are thought fully planned out with the support for each child's various needs. It is designed to foster an environment in which the children feel safe, understood and successful. Some activities at the camp include sensory activities, themed crafts, STEM exploration, music and movement, story time, outdoor play, gross motor activities and imaginative play.

The most beloved tradition at camp are the Friday Water Days, where campers end their week with water-related festivities such as sensory friendly water play, sprinklers, splash activities and outdoor fun.

"Because our campers are neurodiverse, every child has different interests and sensory preferences. Some love messy sensory play, while others enjoy movement activities, music, building, or hands-on exploration," Dr. Stewart said. "We intentionally offer a variety of sensory rich experiences, so every camper has opportunities to engage in activities they enjoy."

Easterseals School for Limitless Learning is currently enrolling for its Early Learning and Lower Elementary programs.

To learn more or to schedule a tour, visit https://florida.easterseals.com/ or contact Dr. Stewart at jstewart@esfl.org or 813-236-5589. Easterseals School for Limitless Learning is located in Valrico at 2460 Bloomingdale Ave., Ste. 170.

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DANCING FOR A DIFFERENCE MARKS 10TH ANNIVERSARY WITH OPEN HOUSE

By Olivia Clark



Dancers perform during a recital.

Dancing for a Difference (D4D), a local nonprofit dance studio based in Brandon, has spent the past 10 years making dance and music accessible to people of all ages and abilities throughout the Tampa Bay area while giving back to the community.

To celebrate its 10th season, the studio will host an Open house and ribbon-cutting celebration on Saturday, August 15, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. The event will feature vendors, face painting, character appearances, snow cones, a book sale, balloon animals and more.

The studio began as a small dance class with a mission to serve the community. In her first class, founder Sara Battaglia accepted canned goods as payment. Since then, the program has grown into a nonprofit organization that offers free programs for children with disabilities and children in foster care, as well as reduced-cost programs for families in need.

Battaglia serves as the studio's director and teacher, bringing years of experience as a dancer, performer and educator. Trained at renowned institutions, including the Sarasota Ballet and the School of Russian Ballet, she has performed professionally and taught throughout Florida. With certifications in dance education, youth protection, yoga and acro training, Battaglia is dedicated to creating a safe and inclusive environment where dancers can grow with confidence, acceptance and joy.

Student Jenna Clark shared her appreciation for the studio, saying, "I love how D4D brings so many different people together into one community where we are all thought of and appreciated."

Dancing for a Difference offers classes in a variety of dance styles, including ballet, tap, jazz, acro, hip-hop, pom jazz, lyrical, pointe and pre-pointe. The studio also offers additional movement and performance programs, such as Obstacle Ninja Course, Dance Team and Voice Team.

The studio has earned praise from parents and families for its welcoming atmosphere and commitment to inclusion.

Valerie, whose daughter, Victoria, attends the studio, said, "I love D4D because it is so much more than a dance studio. It's truly a village. The dancers receive excellent training, work hard, compete and celebrate many accomplishments, but what makes D4D special goes far beyond trophies and titles.

"D4D focuses on inclusion, integration and creating meaningful experiences for every child. The dancers build genuine friendships and learn the value of teamwork, encouragement and supporting one another both on and off the stage. The studio creates a family atmosphere where every child feels seen, valued and part of something bigger than themselves.

Dancing for a Difference is located at 1076 E. Brandon Blvd., Ste. 109, in Brandon. For more information, call 813-601-3009 or email office@dancing4adifference.com.

VETERANS GATHERED IN TAMPA FOR NATIONAL GOLDEN AGE GAMES

By Zofia Osterman



More than 1,400 veterans from across the country recently traveled to the Tampa Bay area as the National Veterans Golden Age Games made their Tampa debut.

Hosted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the 41st annual National Veterans Golden Age Games took place from June 27 through July 2, featuring five days of athletic competition, wellness activities and opportunities for veterans ages 55 and older to stay active while connecting with fellow service members.

The games are the VA's premier adaptive sports competition for older veterans and are built around the theme of "fitness for life," encouraging participants to maintain healthy, active lifestyles through sports and recreation. Since the program began in 1985, it has helped thousands of veterans improve their physical and mental well-being while demonstrating that healthy aging is possible at every stage of life.

More than 1,400 athletes competed in 21 events across ambulatory, wheelchair and vision-impaired divisions. Competitors are grouped into five-year age categories beginning at age 55, allowing veterans of similar ages and abilities to compete while showcasing the inclusive nature of the games.

Athletes participated in a wide variety of sports, including basketball, cycling, archery, powerlifting, swimming, golf, pickleball, boccia, volleyball and track and field. Competitions were held at venues throughout Hillsborough County, including the Tampa Convention Center, the University of South Florida, Bay Pines VA Medical Center and additional locations in the Tampa Bay area.

Among those competing was Connie White, a retired member of the Women's Army Corps who served from 1967-87. White competed in the ambulatory division in the 75-79 age group, and she is proud to have participated in an event that honors veterans while encouraging lifelong health and fitness.

Beyond competition, the Golden Age Games highlight the important role physical activity plays in improving overall health, rehabilitation and quality of life. The VA incorporates recreation therapy and sports medicine into the event, giving participants the opportunity to build strength, confidence and lasting friendships while celebrating their service to the nation.

Participation is open to veterans age 55 and older who receive care through a VA medical facility.

For more information about the National Veterans Golden Age Games, visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' National Veterans Golden Age Games website at https://department.va.gov/veteran-sports/national-veterans-golden-age-games/ or follow @Sports4Vets on Facebook, Instagram and X.

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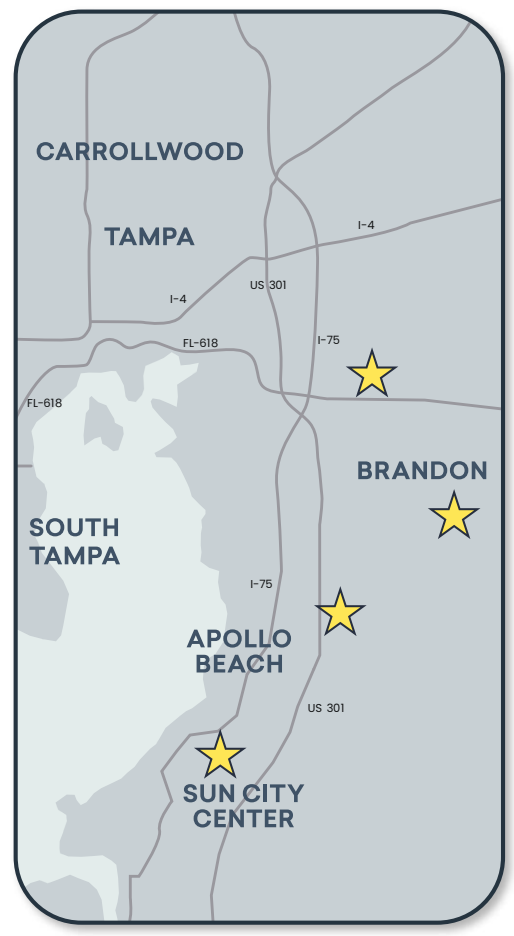
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INVESTING IN YOUNG MEN, STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY

By State Attorney Suzy Lopez



One of the most important ways we can strengthen our community is by investing in our young people, especially young men who need positive role models and opportunities to succeed.

I was recently honored to speak at the Gentlemen's Quest Awards Gala. 'GQ' is a Hillsborough County mentoring organization that helps young men develop leadership skills, build confidence, and prepare for their future. During the event, I met an impressive young man named Don'Trevius Gadson.

At just 6 years old, Gadson watched his father being taken to jail. Experiences like that can leave lasting scars, but they do not have to define a child's future. Through the support of his mother, mentors and programs like Gentlemen's Quest, Gadson found direction and purpose. This spring, he graduated from Spoto High School. This fall, he will attend Florida A&M University with plans to become a criminal defense attorney.

His story is a powerful reminder of why mentorship matters.

The good news is there are many opportunities in Hillsborough County for young men to find that guidance. I was the keynote speaker at the Scouting America luncheon in Plant City last month, where we discussed the importance of positive adult influences in the lives of young people. The room was filled with leaders who understand that strengthening our community starts with investing in our next generation. Whether it is Scouting America, Gentlemen's Quest, youth sports or a program at church, mentorship comes in many forms. And we can all play our part.

As state attorney, I often see the consequences when young people make poor decisions. What the public doesn't always see are the success stories that happen because a coach, mentor or teacher took time to help a student realize his potential. Those stories may not make headlines, but they are helping build a safer and stronger community every day.

That is why I offered internships and job interviews to students at the Gentlemen's Quest Gala. We want these young men to see themselves in the courtroom one day as an attorney, a bailiff or a judge. Because sometimes the difference between success and failure is not talent or intelligence. It's whether someone is given a chance.

One day, I believe Gadson will walk into a courtroom as an attorney. Not only because he is smart and ambitious, but also because he has people in his corner who have helped him get there. That combination is powerful, and it is exactly why mentorship matters.

The State Attorney's Office of the 13th Judicial circuit encompasses all of Hillsborough County, including the cities of Tampa, Temple Terrace and Plant City. The office staff consists of approximately 320 dedicated public servants including 130 prosecutors, as well as investigators, victim advocates and support staff. The office handles approximately 50,000 cases every year. To learn more about the organization or apply to become part of the team, visit www.sao13th.com.

CHANGING NARRATIVE: INSIDE BRANDON'S YOUTH GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAM

By Srishti Tripathi



When Keisha Wheeler's husband passed away, she was suddenly a widowed mother of seven navigating a world of profound loss. She quickly realized that grief ignores age, watching her 1 and 3-year-old children deeply feel their father's absence. When the local grief support group that helped her family heal ceased operations, Wheeler knew she had to act. Driven by faith, community and necessity, she founded Hand in Hand, a grassroots nonprofit dedicated to supporting grieving children and caregivers.

Every Tuesday evening, Hand in Hand transforms a local space into a comforting haven. The night begins with a shared light meal, followed by age-appropriate activities like art, storytelling and peer discussions. Simultaneously, a caregiver group provides adults with tools to support their children while navigating their own sorrow. Wheeler intentionally cultivates an environment where joy and grief coexist freely, ensuring no emotion is hidden.

"At Hand in Hand, there is no pressure to share before you're ready," Wheeler noted. "We simply offer a safe place to be with people who understand."

The organization's profound impact has expanded far beyond Florida. Thanks to University of South Florida (USF) interns, Hand in Hand now reaches families in states such as Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Georgia through virtual support groups and personalized touches like handwritten cards. Wheeler views her own children as 'grief ambassadors' who help lead this mission, embodying the spirit of service they practiced alongside their late father.

"Serving others has become part of their healing," Wheeler shared. "It reminds them that even in the midst of loss, there is still purpose."

Operating entirely on donations and volunteers, Hand in Hand aims to welcome 25 additional families in Brandon through the generosity of St. Andrew's United Methodist Church. To secure sustainable funding, the organization is looking forward to its annual October fundraising gala, Art Heals the Heart, hosted by The Regent, which showcases artwork from local artists and participants.

Looking ahead, Wheeler envisions 'The Oasis of Hope,' a 3 to 5-acre healing farm in Hillsborough County where families can find quiet retreat. Ultimately, her mission is to completely reshape how society views loss.

"I always tell the children, 'Your grief is welcome here,'" Wheeler said. "My hope is that one day they won't need a special place to hear those word, that every grieving child will grow up in a community that understands grief."

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THERAPIST RELEASES FIRST BOOK, EXPLORING THE KOSHAS IN YOGA

By Jamie Lu



LaMor Clements, a yoga teacher and therapist of 20 years, debuted her first book, Exploring the Koshas in Yoga Therapy: An Embodied Approach for Client and Classroom, in June. The book is targeted toward individuals with experience in yoga and yoga therapy instructors looking to deepen their understanding of yoga's foundational principles.

Clements is a longtime Brandon resident who graduated from Brandon High School and currently teaches yoga at BayCare Fitness Center, The Yoga House of Brandon, and Valrico Yoga Sanctuary. She first became interested in yoga as a treatment for motion-related injuries in her hip caused by running and biking.

"And from that, I just fell in love with the practice of yoga," Clements said. "I wanted to learn more because there is more to yoga than just the poses, or what we call asana."

Clements went on to practice yoga therapy, which involves working one-on-one with individuals to design sessions best suited to their needs and goals. As Clements continued to practice and study yoga, she documented what she learned in a spreadsheet which ultimately became the foundation of the book. She described the process of compiling her research as "quilting."

"My mother was a wonderful quilter," Clements said. "She was part of the Brandon Quilt Guild many, many years ago. So, this is my version of quilting, right, that made me feel connected to my mom through this process."

Clements spent about three years writing her knowledge into her book, which focuses on bringing the kosha model from the foundation to the forefront of yoga therapy.

According to Clements, koshas are elements of the human experience, and there are five in total: body, thoughts and emotions, energy levels, intuition, and an inner sense of peace.

"You might also think of the koshas as looking through a kaleidoscope of yourself," Clements said. "The pieces and colors are always the same, but with each turn we see ourselves from a different perspective. ... When we pay time and attention to all five aspects of ourselves, we approach our living and healing from a holistic perspective."

Upcoming Author Event

An upcoming "Meet and Practice with the Author" event will take place on Sunday, August 2. The event will include a book discussion, embodied activities for each dimension, practice, meditation, book signings, and refreshments.

Who it's for: The event provides CEUs for yoga professionals but is open to anyone eager to practice and learn. Registration: $45. To find out more details and secure a spot, visit The Yoga House Brandon and Valrico Yoga Sanctuary.

Clements will be releasing her second book, Coming Home to the Self: A Five-Week Journey Through the Koshas, this winter or in spring 2027. This book is intended for anyone interested in meditation, journaling, or practicing yoga at an easy, personal pace. To stay up to date on Clements' work, purchase her book, or learn more about her, visit her website at www.yogilamor.com.

LOCAL INSTRUCTOR BRINGS MAHJONG TO LOCAL TABLES

By Marie Gilmore



Valrico resident Dina Greenwell is introducing more people across the Brandon, Valrico and Lithia communities to one of the country's fastest-growing social games through her business, Tampa Mahj Collective.

What started as Greenwell's personal passion for American mahjong has grown into a thriving business that offers beginner-friendly classes, private group lessons and community play events designed to bring people together.

"Tampa Mahj Collective is about much more than learning a game," said Greenwell. "It's about bringing people together, creating friendships and building confidence around the mahjong table."

American mahjong, a tile-based game that blends strategy, memory and luck, has experienced a resurgence in popularity in recent years. Greenwell said the game's appeal goes beyond competition, creating opportunities for meaningful social interaction in an increasingly busy world.

Tampa Mahj Collective welcomes players of all experience levels. During lessons, participants learn the fundamentals of the game, including how to read the National Mah Jongg League playing card, understanding game strategy and proper etiquette in a relaxed, supportive environment.

In addition to regularly scheduled classes, Greenwell offers private lessons for neighborhood groups, book clubs, birthdays, ladies' nights, corporate team-building events and other social gatherings. She travels to homes and venues throughout the Brandon area, providing everything needed for the experience, including mahjong sets, racks, mats and instructional materials.

To ensure each participant receives individual attention, private lessons are limited to eight players and typically last between two and two and a half hours.

Greenwell also teaches evening mahjong classes at AR Workshop in Brandon, where beginners can learn the game while enjoying a fun and welcoming atmosphere. The two-hour workshops provide another opportunity for newcomers to discover the game and meet other local players.

Whether guests are picking up a mahjong tile for the first time or looking to sharpen their strategy, Greenwell strives to create an environment where conversation, laughter and new friendships naturally develop.

As interest in American mahjong continues to grow nationwide, Tampa Mahj Collective is seeing that enthusiasm reflected locally through sold-out classes and increasing demand for private events.

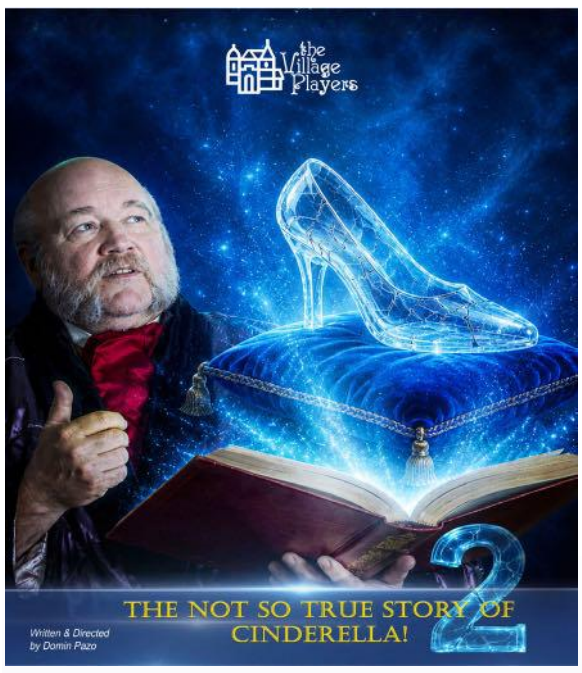
Greenwell hopes even more residents will discover the game's unique combination of strategy, fellowship and fun.

For upcoming class dates, private lesson availability and pricing, visit Tampa Mahj Collective on Facebook at www.facebook.com/p/Tampa-Mahj-Collective-61577413624376/ or Instagram @tampamahjcollective.



THE VILLAGE PLAYERS BRING BACK *THE NOT-SO-TRUE STORY OF CINDERELLA* FOR FUNNY SEQUEL

By Erin Taylor



The Village Players theater is bringing audiences back to the kingdom this August with *The Not-So-True Story of Cinderella, Part 2,* a comedic sequel that proves happily ever after is often just the beginning of the trouble.

Directed by Domin Pazo, the production continues the 2023 story after the glass slipper fit and the ball was a hit. Cinderella may have found her prince, but trouble has a way of finding her. As new royal problems emerge and villains begin causing chaos, the kingdom discovers that happily ever after may require a lot more work than expected.

Newcomers are welcome to the kingdom's latest adventure, as the story stands on its own. Filled with offbeat humor, unexpected twists and plenty of royal drama, the show delivers another round of fairy-tale fun with a PG-13 edge.

"The audience really embraced the humor and energy of the first show," said Pazo. "We wanted to build on that by bringing back the characters people loved while raising the absurdity and the fun."

Performances will take place at the historic James McCabe Theater, located at 506 N. Fifth St. in Valrico. Built in 1915 and listed on Hillsborough County's Registry of Historic Places, the theater serves as the home of The Village Players and provides a unique setting for live community theater.

Performance dates:

• Evening performances at 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, August 7-8, 14-15 and 21-22.

• Matinee performances at 3 p.m. on Sunday, August 9 and 16.

Doors open at least 30 minutes before curtain.

Ticket Information

General admission tickets are $23. Seniors, students and military personnel receive discounted admission at $20. Tickets are available through TicketLeap at https://thevillageplayersvalrico.com/. For additional ticket information or box office inquiries, call 813-480-3147.

About The Village Players

The Village Players is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) community theater based in Valrico. The organization trains, rehearses and performs at the historic James McCabe Theater, a building constructed in 1915 and listed on the county's Registry of Historic Places.

AFFORDABILITY TAKES CENTER STAGE AT LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP EVENT

By Brian Bokor

Long before congressional redistricting, county commission races or school superintendent elections entered the conversation, one word dominated the Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce's Legislative Wrap-up breakfast: affordability.



State Representative Danny Alvarez (left), BRCC President Amber Aaron and Ron Pierce, president and CEO of RSA Consulting Group, pose following the chamber's Legislative Wrap-up breakfast.

It wasn't framed as politics. It was the reality facing Florida families dealing with rising insurance premiums, grocery bills, utility costs and property taxes.

State Representative Danny Alvarez (R-Riverview) didn't ease into the topic.

"Everywhere I go as a state representative, the number one thing someone asks me about is affordability. I'm tired of my power bill. I'm tired of my fuel bill. I'm tired of my insurance, my rent, my mortgage, my interest rate," Alvarez told the audience.

That message set the tone for a discussion led by Alvarez and Ron Pierce, president and CEO of RSA Consulting Group, reviewing the 2026 legislative session and issues expected on Hillsborough County's November ballot.

Pierce said the 2026 legislative session required three special sessions to complete the state budget, congressional redistricting and property tax reform.

Much of the discussion focused on a proposed constitutional amendment expanding Florida's homestead exemption while lowering the annual assessment cap on many nonhomestead properties. If approved by at least 60 percent of voters, the changes would take effect in 2027.

Pierce encouraged residents to understand the proposal's potential impact before voting. "Local governments just don't concede they lose that revenue," Pierce said. "They will try to come up with ways to increase revenue."

Alvarez agreed voters should make that decision. "There wasn't a chance that I was not going to give you the ability to say yes or no," he said.

"The citizens are tired. They're super exhausted from getting nickeled and dimed to death while they're trying to survive," he said. "This is not really a Republican and Democrat thing. This is a Floridian thing."

Audience questions covered construction permitting, the widening of Lithia Pinecrest Road and the future of the Tampa Bay Rays.

Pierce said approximately $100 million has been committed to the Lithia Pinecrest Road expansion, with construction expected to begin within the next several years.

Pierce closed by reminding attendees, "Pay attention to these local offices. In many cases, the decisions they're making have much more impact on your day-to-day lives ... than what we're doing in Tallahassee or Washington."



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PARKS & RECREATION FINALIST FOR BEST PARKS PROGRAM IN COUNTRY

Staff Report



For the fourth time in five years, Hillsborough County has been honored as having one of the top parks and recreation programs in the country.

Hillsborough County Parks & Recreation is one of four national finalists in the Class 1 category for the 2026 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management, the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration announced. Class 1 includes the nation's largest parks and recreation departments, serving populations of more than 400,000.

Only one department will receive the highest award, the Grand Plaque, in October. Each finalist sends the judges a short video highlighting their department.

Achievements and highlights from Hillsborough County Parks & Recreation include:

• Effectively managing 180 parks, 223 sports fields, 118 playgrounds, 54 recreation centers, 47 athletic complexes, 11 dog parks, nine splash pads and four cultural/performing arts centers, spanning over 3,500 acres.

• Adding 40 new pickleball courts and six new splash pads and fitness zones in underserved communities.

• The Adaptive Sports program, which has grown by more than 200 percent since 2021, expanding from 26 programs serving 300 athletes to 68 programs reaching 955 athletes. The latest innovation is a dedicated Buddy Baseball field serving athletes ages 8-22.

• Collaborating with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to revitalize seven recreation centers through a $4.5 million investment.

• Launching the Swim Safe Initiative for children enrolled in Hillsborough County's Head Start program. In partnership with the City of Temple Terrace, the Tampa YMCA, the City of Tampa and High 5 Inc., children ages 3-5 are taken to nearby pools to receive free swim lessons.

• Hosting 336 performances last year at the New Tampa Performing Arts Center (NTPAC), ranging from The Florida Orchestra to fully staged musical theater, ballet, modern dance, stand-up comedy and jazz.

• Partnering with the American Heart Association to expand emergency preparedness across the park system, securing $125,000 to purchase nearly 100 automated external defibrillators (AEDs). These devices were strategically placed with youth sports partners, high-use parks and rural locations.

Founded in 1965, the Gold Medal Awards program honors park and recreation agencies in the United States and military installations worldwide that demonstrate excellence in parks and recreation through long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development and more.

COLLEGE RECEIVES $120,000 STUDENT TRAINING GIFT FROM ADVANCE AUTO PARTS FOUNDATION

Staff Report



The Hillsborough College (HC) Foundation has received a $120,000 donation from the Advance Auto Parts Foundation to support students in the college's workforce programs, including the Automotive Service Technology and Diesel Systems Technician programs. The gift includes funding for industry-recognized certifications, specialty tools and instructional resources designed to help students build successful careers in the automotive repair and maintenance industry.

"We are proud to partner with and help support the automotive technology program at Hillsborough College and its students, as there's a growing demand for skilled automotive technicians," said Todd Davenport, president of the Advance Auto Parts Foundation and senior vice president, real estate and development at Advance Auto Parts. "Through this partnership, students will have expanded access to industry-recognized certifications, professional-grade tools and hands-on training that allows them to grow into skilled technicians dedicated to getting vehicles back on the road safely."

The gift includes $40,000 to help students earn additional Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certifications — a key credential for advancing toward master technician status. The Advance Auto Parts Foundation will also provide three top-performing students with professional-grade tool sets containing about 800 tools, valued at approximately $15,000.

In addition, a $60,000 specialty tool fund will provide approximately 80 students with advanced tools commonly used in today's automotive and diesel repair facilities, and $5,000 in Advance Auto Parts gift cards will support the purchase of training materials and equipment.

"This generous investment from the Advance Auto Parts Foundation will have a lasting impact on our students and the communities they will serve," said Garrett Weddle, executive director of the Hillsborough College Foundation. "By helping students earn industry certifications and access the tools they need to succeed, this partnership removes barriers to opportunity while strengthening the pipeline of skilled technicians for Tampa Bay's workforce."

Students, faculty and representatives from the Advance Auto Parts Foundation celebrated the partnership during a gift presentation event on June 25 at the HC Ybor City Campus Training Center, located at 5610 E. Columbus Dr. in Tampa.

About Hillsborough College

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

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FRONTIER CLASSROOMS TO LASTING LEGACIES



Before Eastern Hillsborough County became a landscape of busy roads, subdivisions and crowded school campuses, its first classrooms rose from pine flatwoods and sandy trails. Some were plain, one-room wooden buildings. Others shared space with churches. But to the families who built them, a school was never just a place for reading, writing and arithmetic. It was a promise that their settlement had a future.

That promise took early root in Limona. In 1876, Judge Joseph Gillette Knapp founded the community along an old Seminole trail, shaping a settlement out of a remote and rugged landscape. As families arrived, the essentials of community life followed: a cemetery, a church and then a school. By the early 1880s, directories listed a common school serving about thirty families, and by 1882 what became known as Limona Academy had become part of the town's identity. Limona later faded after the Great Depression, but its name still lives on at Limona Elementary School.

Nearby, Brandon's school story was shaped by persistence. John Brandon settled in New Hope in 1857, and by 1861, New Hope Church was serving as both sanctuary and schoolhouse. After Brandon's death in 1886, his widow, Victoria Brandon, helped keep education alive by opening her home to teachers. Her hospitality gave children a chance to keep learning until the community built a proper schoolhouse on Parsons Avenue in 1905.

As Brandon grew, its ambitions grew with it. A combined grade school serving all 12 years opened in 1916, and Brandon High School, established in 1914, graduated its first class in 1923. For a town that had counted only 100 residents in its first census just a year earlier, those graduates represented more than academic success. They marked Brandon's arrival as the community's determination to last.

To the southeast, in the old cotton country once known as Long Pond, Bloomingdale's school began with the persistence of Ludwig Wilhelm Buchholz, a German immigrant who spent years convincing scattered neighbors to invest in education. His effort paid off on September 23, 1884, when Bloomingdale's grade school opened. Like many rural schools, it served families spread across miles of thinly settled land and helped draw them into a shared community. Though the original schoolhouse closed in 1920, the Bloomingdale name endured and later returned with Bloomingdale High School.

The buildings themselves are gone, folded into memory and the larger county school system. Yet their legacy remains visible every morning when children walk onto campuses bearing the names Limona, Brandon and Bloomingdale. These early schools were built by determined people — a judge, a widow, an immigrant and the neighbors who believed with them. Together, they turned isolated settlements into communities with roots, purpose and futures worth preserving.



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Dr. Leila Shafiq
TGH Senior Center of Riverview

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27NORTH REALTY BUILDS ITS BRAND ON CONFIDENCE, CLARITY AND CARE

By Kelly Wise Valdes



27 North Realty's Shawna and broker/owner Gregg Calvert.

In a fast-moving Tampa Bay real estate market, 27North Realty has carved out a reputation built on something simple but increasingly rare: putting people before transactions.

"We believe people are looking for something different than they were even a few years ago," said broker/owner Gregg Calvert. "They want honest advice, local expertise and someone who will tell them the truth, even when it's not the easiest conversation."

Calvert said that philosophy is the foundation of 27North Realty, where agents are encouraged to prioritize relationships over commissions.

"Clients continue to choose us because they know we genuinely care about the outcome, not just the sale," said Calvert.

That approach is reflected in the company's guiding phrase, 'navigate home,' which Calvert described as a commitment to clarity and care throughout the buying or selling process.

"Buying or selling a home can feel overwhelming," he said. "'Navigate home' means helping people understand their options so they can make confident decisions."

Guidance often includes educating clients on flood zones, insurance costs, waterfront considerations, builder contracts, HOA rules and longterm financial implications.

"We want our clients to feel informed, prepared and supported every step of the way," Calvert said.

As Tampa Bay continues to grow, Calvert said buyers are becoming more intentional.

"The days of making rushed decisions are largely behind us," he said.

Buyers are weighing value, insurance costs and lifestyle more carefully. Waterfront sellers, meanwhile, are focusing on presentation and pricing as competition increases.

"SouthShore attracts families who want more space, newer homes and a strong sense of connection," he said.

Calvert's promise to "outwork, out-prepare and out-care" shows up in ways that rarely appear on a closing statement.

"We've coordinated contractors, inspections, estate sales, moving companies, attorneys, title issues and repairs long before a home ever reaches the market," he said.

For newcomers to Florida, the team spends time explaining communities, schools, flood zones and lifestyle differences.

"We want them to choose the right community, not just the right house," he said.

"Real estate is ultimately about people," he said. "Homes matter because of the lives that happen inside them. Our goal is to help people navigate those moments with confidence, clarity and care."

For more information visit www.27northrealty.com or call 813-645-4663. 27North Realty's office is located at 6138 N. U.S. 41 in Apollo Beach.

AVELO AIRLINES ANNOUNCES FOUR NEW NONSTOP ROUTES

Staff Report

Avelo Airlines today announced four new routes from its Central Florida airports to Charlotte/Concord, North Carolina, and Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Avelo is the only airline offering nonstop service on these routes.

Avelo will operate these routes using Boeing Next-Generation 737 aircraft. These exclusive routes expand Avelo's affordable, convenient and industry-leading reliable air service introduced to Central Florida in November 2021. Travelers can book at www.aveloair.com.

Avelo Airlines Founder and CEO Andrew Levy said, "We're excited to make it easier than ever for Florida travelers to experience everything the Charlotte region and Aguadilla have to offer with these new nonstop routes. Whether it's exploring the Queen City's vibrant food scene, growing business community or nearby mountain getaways, these routes provide a convenient and affordable way to visit one of the Southeast's fastest-growing destinations. At the same time, our new service from Lakeland to Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, gives Florida travelers another seamless option for reaching the Caribbean. Together, these new routes expand access, increase flexibility and continue our commitment to delivering low fares and a smooth, reliable travel experience."

Flight Dates and Frequency Information

Charlotte/Concord, North Carolina, via Concord-Padgett Regional Airport (USA) to:

• Orlando via Orlando International Airport (MCO) begins on Wednesday, November 18, with service four days per week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

• Fort Myers via Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) begins on Thursday, November 19, with twice-weekly service on Thursdays and Sundays.

• Tampa via Tampa International Airport (TPA) begins on Friday, November 20, with twice-weekly service on Mondays and Fridays.

Lakeland via Lakeland International Airport (LAL) to Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, via Rafael Hernández Airport (BQN) begins on Wednesday, November 18, with twice-weekly service on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

For more information, visit www.aveloair.com.

Avelo Airlines operates a major commercial base out of LAL, providing budget-friendly, nonstop flights connecting Central Florida to multiple destinations across the United States. As the exclusive commercial carrier at LAL, the airline provides a lower-stress alternative to the crowded nearby hubs in Tampa and Orlando. LAL Avelo offers point-to-point, nonstop service between LAL and several key cities: Atlanta, GA (ATL); Boston/Manchester, NH (MHT); Charlotte/Concord, NC (USA); Detroit, MI (DTW); Grand Rapids, MI (GRR); Nashville, TN (BNA); New Haven, CT (HVN); New York/Long Island, NY (ISP); Philadelphia, PA/Wilmington, DE (ILG); and San Juan, Puerto Rico (SJU). Avelo is located at Lakeland Linder International Airport at 3900 Don Emerson Dr. in Lakeland.

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ROTARY'S CAMP FLORIDA NAMES ELEANOR SAUNDERS AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Libby Hopkins



Eleanor Saunders will become the new Director of Rotary's Camp Florida on July 13 of this year. Saunders is a Brandon resident, a Rotarian and the former Executive Director of E.C.H.O. of Brandon.

Rotary's Camp Florida has been a part of the Brandon community since the 1950s. It was originally a camp used by the United Methodist Church, but in 1991, Rotary's Camp Florida was incorporated to acquire, operate and maintain a year-round camp facility for children with special medical needs. The property on which Rotary's Camp Florida sits was purchased on December 26, 1991, and extensively remodeled. As the church camp was built in the 1950s, it was not designed for special-needs children.



"It a local hidden gem, and I don't want it to be hidden anymore," said Rotary's Camp Florida's new director, Eleanor Saunders.

Saunders is a Brandon resident, a Rotarian and the former executive director of ECHO of Brandon. She begins her new journey as the camp's director on Monday, July 13.

"I was at ECHO for 11 years and I prayed very hard about taking the first step for the position at Rotary's Camp Florida," Saunders said. "The first step was submitting my resume, and from that point it all seemed to fall into place."

The mission of Rotary's Camp Florida is to provide a safe, fun space to learn, grow and play for groups whose members need supportive accommodations.

"Rotary's Camp Florida is a 21-acre, ADA-compliant campsite, and I can't wait to start promoting the camp's mission to the community and beyond," Saunders said. "It is a place that has so much potential, and I love helping local nonprofit organizations realign and grow."

"I love that the camp has something for everyone," Saunders said. "My hope for the camp is that it will become very well known in the local market as an option for retreats and events, and that earned revenue will fully support our campers, so kids with special needs can come to camp without money being a concern. They can just come to camp and be a kid."

For more, visit the camp's website at https://rotaryscampflorida.org/ or call 813-654-4042. The camp is located at 1915 Camp Florida Rd. in Brandon.

A LOOK INTO HIGH 5 INC.'S ADULT DAY TRAINING (ADT) PROGRAM

By Emily Harper



High 5 Inc.'s Adult Day Training (ADT) Program is centered around adults with disabilities. The main focus of this program is to promote independence and self-reliance in everyday life.

When the program began in 2025, the organization wanted to provide a program with a safe and caring environment for individuals in the community who are sometimes overlooked and treated differently by others.

Currently, this program has more than 60 adults enrolled learning life skills to improve their everyday experiences and encouraging others to join.

"As the director, my goal is to work with as many adults with disabilities as possible within the community and to have as much impact daily in each of their lives while assisting them to reach as many of their goals as possible. At High 5, we would like to see every person with the desire and corresponding abilities to go out and live life to the fullest extent and ultimately to provide this program and services to as many people as possible," said Joe Somers, director of ADT.

The ADT Program is generally focused on individuals ages 22 and older, as that is the age that the Agency for Persons with Disabilities services normally begin at. To help bridge the gap between high school and adulthood for young adults ages 18-22, High 5 partnered with Livingstone Academy's Transition Program. Through this partnership, Livingstone Academy prepares them for adult-style programs, before High 5's program.

Every experience is tailored to each specific individual's needs. The High 5 team is dedicated to understanding each participant and making accommodations to encourage growth, independence and connectioån.

"For me personally, being able to see what this program does for so many people and their families on a daily basis and what it means for not only their futures but those individuals we have not even had the opportunity to meet, teach and care about. None of this would even be possible without the amazing staff and instructors who work tirelessly every day to provide the best experience possible while they themselves are still growing and learning to be amazing and thought-provoking leaders within the community," said Somers.

To learn more information about this program, visit its website at https://high5inc.org/adt/.



BRANDON WOMAN RECEIVES FIRST TYPE 1 DIABETES SERVICE DOG

By Chloe Wagner



Tampa-based nonprofit Dogs Inc. has gifted a Brandon resident with the organization's first Type 1 diabetes service dog, kickstarting the organization's new Type 1 program.

Dogs Inc., created in 1982, has a variety of nationwide programs for service dogs, including guide dogs, service dogs for veterans suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder, Gold Star family dogs and more. The Type 1 service dog program is brand-new, with Latha Dawn Sullivan being the first recipient.

Sullivan was diagnosed with Type 1 when she was 3 years old. Growing up, Sullivan struggled with diabetes "ruling her life," as well as her siblings and parents' lives, she said.

"I was considered a 'brittle diabetic' because my blood sugar levels were constantly fluctuating based on my emotions, stress, excitement and daily activities," Sullivan said. "I was very

blessed to have a wonderful family that always made life as normal as possible."

She began her Type 1 service dog research in 2022, quickly hitting financial and locational roadblocks. The only program that met her standards was Dogs Inc., which had not advertised a Type 1 service program.

Sullivan reached out to the nonprofit and was informed that it had recently launched a program for Type 1 diabetics and jumped on the opportunity to be added to its waitlist at the end of 2025. While wait times for service dogs vary, Sullivan's service dog, a black Labrador lovingly named Rita, was placed within her care at the beginning of 2026.

Dogs Inc. was able to provide Sullivan with Rita free of cost, as all of its programs come at no cost to the service dog recipient. Dogs Inc. is fully funded off donations and is operated by volunteers.

Alysia Santos is the scent detection program manager for the Type 1 program at Dogs Inc., overseeing the entire process of training and homing of the dogs.

The total training period for the dogs lasts around two years. Volunteer puppy raisers provide the puppies with foundational training till they are about 16-18 months.

Type 1 trainers will teach the dogs to put their paws on them and eventually pair that cue with the scent of low blood sugar, which is followed by more advanced, nuanced tasks. The smells are obtained by volunteers with Type 1 who donate scent samples, such as perspiration or saliva.

Rita has greatly impacted Sullivan and the management of her Type 1 diabetes. She was constantly on alert with her diabetes before receiving Rita, carrying an emergency bag full of medications, snacks and juices everywhere she went. She has been able to live her life with less stress with Rita, as she is trained to detect blood sugar level changes and notifies Sullivan 10-20 minutes before her electronic medical devices can.

For more information and to get involved, visit https://dogsinc.org/.

ARMY VETERAN AND FATHER OF SIX RECEIVES KEYS TO NEW HABITAT HOME

Staff Report



The Nakamura family has a new home in Windhorst Commons. The home provides much-needed space for the family of eight, made possible through the Veterans Build program and support from Old Republic Title.

After months of building alongside volunteers, U.S. Army veteran Brian Nakamura received the keys to his family's new Habitat for Humanity of Tampa Bay Hillsborough home during a special dedication ceremony on June 24. The home was made possible through Habitat's Veterans Build program with support from Old Republic Title.

Nakamura, his wife and their six children have been living in a crowded three-bedroom townhouse and are looking forward to the stability, space and security of a home of their own in Habitat's Windhorst Commons community. The new five-bedroom home will give the growing family room to thrive, including dedicated space for their son Bradley, who has autism and will benefit from having a quiet room of his own.

The shortage of affordable housing remains one of the most pressing issues for veterans across the country. In January 2024, 32,882 veterans were living without stable housing, reflecting high rental costs, limited availability and gaps in support services that leave many struggling to provide safe homes for their families.

Like all Habitat homeowners, Nakamura invested hundreds of hours of 'sweat equity,' helping build Habitat homes, completing homeownership education and purchasing his home with an affordable mortgage that fits his family's budget.

During a visit to Windhorst Commons in December 2025, Florida Lt. Gov. Jay Collins toured Nakamura's future home to learn firsthand about the housing challenges veterans face and Habitat for Humanity's role in providing affordable, safe housing for families like Nakamura's.

Windhorst Commons is a 23-home Habitat for Humanity of Tampa Bay Hillsborough neighborhood providing affordable houses built with reinforced construction and hurricane-resilient features for veterans and working families. The remaining homes are expected to be completed by early 2027.

About Habitat for Humanity of Tampa Bay Hillsborough

Habitat for Humanity of Tampa Bay Hillsborough builds and renovates homes in partnership with people in need of decent, affordable housing and has worked with local homeowners and the community on more than 650 homes since 1987. Habitat affiliates around the world have helped more than 62 million people build or improve the places they call home. For more information, visit www.habitathillsborough.org.



UNITED FOOD BANK EXPANDS HUNGER RELIEF WITH NEW TRUCK, FORKLIFT

By Libby Hopkins



United Food Bank & Services (UFB) is expanding its ability to fight hunger in Eastern Hillsborough County with the addition of a new refrigerated box truck and forklift, thanks to the support of community partners and local government.

The nonprofit celebrated the new equipment during a ribbon-cutting and reveal ceremony held on June 23 at its Plant City headquarters. Community leaders, funding partners and supporters gathered to mark the milestone, which officials say will strengthen UFB's ability to rescue, transport, store and distribute fresh food to families in need.

The new refrigerated truck was made possible through funding from Publix Super Markets Charities and The Mosaic Company, while Hillsborough County provided funding for the organization's new forklift.

District 4 Hillsborough County Commissioner Christine Miller joined representatives from the sponsoring organizations and United Food Bank & Services leadership for the ceremony, highlighting the importance of partnerships in addressing food insecurity across the region.

According to UFB, the refrigerated truck will significantly increase the organization's capacity to safely transport perishable food items, including fresh produce, dairy products and other refrigerated goods. The addition will allow the food bank to rescue more food that might otherwise go to waste while ensuring it reaches local families safely.

The new forklift will improve warehouse efficiency by making it easier to move, organize and distribute large quantities of food. Together, the two pieces of equipment are expected to increase the organization's overall distribution capacity and help meet the growing demand for food assistance throughout Eastern Hillsborough County.

The investment comes as United Food Bank & Services continues to serve a growing number of residents facing food insecurity. During the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the nonprofit distributed the equivalent of 3,534,951 meals to children, families, seniors and individuals across the community.

Organization leaders said the additional equipment will help expand that impact for years to come by increasing operational efficiency and allowing staff and volunteers to reach more neighbors with fresh, nutritious food.

United Food Bank & Services, located at 702 E. Alsobrook St. in Plant City, provides hunger relief, nutrition education and community support programs throughout Eastern Hillsborough County. Its mission is to provide dignified access to food and essential resources for those in need while helping families build healthier, more secure futures.

United Food Bank & Services is a nonprofit organization serving Eastern Hillsborough County through hunger relief, nutrition education, and community support programs. For more, visit www.UFBPC.org.

STRAWBERRY HOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST HAS NEW OWNERS

By Libby Hopkins



Talesha and Gary Grant are the new owners of the Strawberry House Bed and Breakfast in Plant City.

Talesha and Gary Grant have been called a bit of a renaissance couple as they are involved in many things.

"We are both artists, musicians and we've been life coaches for our company, Heroic Life Strategies, for 20 years, where we help people find their purpose and create a fulfilling life as well as corporations in their vision," Talesha said. "Gary is a writer currently working on our book for our company. He's a martial artist and a guide to men, teaching them to find their heroic heart. He has an amazing ear for music production. I'm a painter, wood worker, singer, songwriter and make pottery, and I love helping women move their heart through art."

The Grants are the new owners of the historic Strawberry House Bed and Breakfast in Plant City. The Strawberry House is a Dutch Colonial house built in 1910 by the Albert and Ula Miles.

"From the stories we've heard, their children and grandchildren all grew up within these walls," Talesha said. "The home is located in the historic district of Plant City, just a mile from I-4. The previous owners, Carol and Ken Canty, who own the state theater right here in Plant City, are lovely people who protected the beautiful integrity of this historic home and themed the rooms, which we just love! The home at some time became a bed and breakfast; it made perfect sense to call it the Strawberry House."

The historic bed and breakfast has hosted hundreds if not thousands of travelers, and many are already reserving their room for the upcoming Strawberry Festival season.

"Prior guests still send strawberry-themed items to be included in the home's decor," Talesha said. "We love the Strawberry House, and we want to continue to keep its history and let people know she's here."

The Strawberry House has four themed spaces for rent: the Wild West Room; the Strawberry Festival Room; the Henry B. Plant Room; which the couple lovingly refer to as the train room; and the Strawberry Cottage, which has two bedrooms including a state theater theme. There is a beautiful oasis in the backyard, a sparkling pool with lots of greenery, umbrellas and lounging areas and a garden which is growing, small but mighty.

"We will definitely be doing high tea events and afternoon teas," Talesha said. "Our tearoom is available for rent for baby showers, bridal showers and small parties and intimate events."

To learn more about the Strawberry House Bed and Breakfast, you can visit its website at https://strawberryhouse.co/. It is located at 805 N. Wheeler St. in Plant City.





STEVE YOUNG NAMED CEO OF HCA FLORIDA BRANDON HOSPITAL

Staff Report

HCA Healthcare has named Steve Young as its new chief executive officer. Young returns to Brandon Hospital after serving as chief executive officer of HCA Florida Blake Hospital and HCA Florida Englewood Hospital, bringing more than 18 years of progressive health care leadership experience within HCA Healthcare.



Steve Young, new CEO of HCA Florida Brandon Hospital.

Young most recently led HCA Florida Blake Hospital, where he oversaw one of the state's premier Level II trauma centers and burn centers. Under his leadership, the hospital achieved record levels of patient, physician and colleague engagement while significantly expanding access to emergency care through the opening of freestanding emergency departments in Palmetto and South Bradenton. He also strengthened Blake Hospital's trauma and burn programs, ensuring more patients across Florida's Gulf Coast had access to advanced, lifesaving care.

Young is also familiar with the Brandon community, having previously served as chief operating officer of Brandon Hospital from 2019-20. During that time, he helped oversee numerous strategic expansion projects, including emergency department growth, operating room expansion, women's services enhancements, graduate medical education initiatives and multiple freestanding emergency departments serving the region.

As CEO, Young will lead HCA Florida Brandon Hospital, the largest acute care hospital in HCA Healthcare's West Florida Division. The hospital includes six freestanding emergency departments across Hillsborough and Polk counties, in addition to the hospital's main adult emergency department and children's ER. Together, these facilities provide care for nearly 220,000 patients annually, including more than 165,000 emergency visits.

"Steve is an accomplished leader with a proven track record of delivering exceptional patient care, building strong cultures and expanding access to health care," said Justin Brewer, chief operating officer at Brandon Hospital. "His previous leadership experience at Brandon Hospital, combined with his outstanding success leading hospitals across West Florida, makes him the ideal person to lead our team."

"I am honored to return to HCA Florida Brandon Hospital and rejoin a team that is deeply committed to serving this incredible community," said Young.

Young was born and raised in Sarasota and is a graduate of Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School. He and his wife, Katherine, have been married for nine years and have two children, Emily (7) and Scarlett (5).

Young earned a Master of Business Administration from Saint Leo University and a bachelor's degree in applied physiology and kinesiology from the University of Florida. He has been recognized for his leadership and commitment to health care excellence, including receiving the Tampa Bay Business Journal's Up & Comer Award.

NBA CHAMPION TO LEAD FLORIDA POLY MEN'S BASKETBALL

Staff Report

Few coaches can match a resume that includes winning an NBA championship alongside Michael Jordan and leading a college program to sustained success on the national stage. Dennis Hopson has done both.



Florida Poly's first-ever men's basketball coach Dennis Hopson.

Now, Florida Polytechnic University has named the NBA champion and longtime coach as the inaugural head coach of its men's basketball program, adding a leader whose career spans the highest levels of the sport as the university continues building Florida Poly Athletics.

Hopson brings decades of experience as both a player and a coach, highlighted by an NBA championship with the iconic 1991 Chicago Bulls team. A former first-round NBA Draft pick, Hopson also played with the New Jersey Nets, the Sacramento Kings and professional teams overseas before transitioning into an accomplished coaching career.

Before joining Florida Poly, Hopson coached multiple teams, including most recently at Lourdes University, where the Gray Wolves won nearly 100 games in five seasons, made three straight national tournament appearances and achieved a 99 percent student athlete graduation rate.

"I think my background means a whole lot to this process and I will use it to get players to come here," he said. "I used to be them, and I know the importance of going to a school that's in a great situation with a great location and sound academics that also has a strong basketball program."

Hopson said he wants Florida Poly Basketball to reflect six core values: family, integrity, balance, respect, attitude and leadership. And he wants his players to learn that basketball is about much more than competition.

"School work and other things can be stressful, so we want to make this to where it's not about the sport; it's about what the sport can do for you," Hopson said. "They're going to have a lot of fun and we're going to learn a lot of life lessons through the game of basketball because you're going to live a lot longer than you play the game."

Derek Lower, Florida Poly's athletic director, said Hopson is a perfect fit for the university.

"Coach Hopson is the best person to lead us in our inaugural basketball season," Lower said. "Dennis knows how to build winning programs that last, and his professionalism, leadership and experience make his role as a coach and mentor to student athletes invaluable."

For Hopson, success starts with finding the right players and making sure they can excel on campus before setting foot on the court.

"We want high-character people," he said. "We want to make sure we get people who we don't have to worry about at night; people who can get it done in the classroom."

Recruiting is already underway, and Hopson said Florida Poly's first-ever men's basketball team is close to filling its 14-member roster. Visit https://floridapoly.edu/news/.

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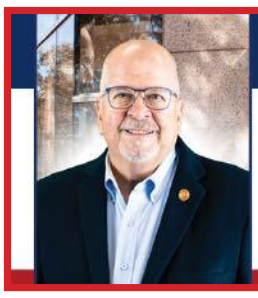
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MEET YOUR CANDIDATES

SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE

Know The Key Dates And The Three Ways To Vote Ahead Of Florida's Primary Election

Staff Report



FROM THE DESK OF...

Craig Latimer
Supervisor of Elections

In order to be an effective voter, you must be an informed voter. You need to know the key dates, know the three methods of voting available to every voter in Hillsborough County and wear your "I Voted Sticker" proudly.

Are You Ready To Vote?

The 2026 primary election is right around the corner, so I want to know — are you ready to vote? You still have time to register to vote, request a vote-by-mail ballot and make changes to your voter information.

Primary Election Dates & Deadlines

Deadline to register/change party: Monday, July 20.

Deadline to request a vote-by-mail ballot: Thursday, August 6, 5 p.m.

Votes by mail: Due to our office no later than 7 p.m. on Tuesday, August 18.

Early voting: Monday, August 3, through Sunday, August 16, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Election day:

Tuesday, August 18, 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

Call our office at 813-744-5900 or visit our website and use the Voter Information Lookup tool at www.votehillsborough.gov to check your status and make any updates.

The deadline for candidates to qualify for the ballot was June 12. Visit the Local Candidates & Committees page of our website to see local candidates who qualified with our office, and the Candidates and Races database on the Division of Elections website at https://dos.elections.myflorida.com/candidates/ to see who qualified with them. Sample ballots showing the races that will be on your primary election ballot will be available on our website next month.

Understanding Primaries

During the primary, political parties nominate state and local candidates to move on to the general election. The races that appear on your ballot depend on where you live and what party you belong to.

Florida has closed primaries, which means that you must be registered with a political party to vote in that party's primary races. However, the primary election will also include nonpartisan contests that everybody votes on, whether affiliated with a party or not.

There will be three different ballots: a Republican ballot, a Democratic ballot and a nonpartisan ballot. Nonpartisan judicial and school board races will be on everyone's ballot, and voters in State Senate District 16, State House District 62 and State House District 63 will have a Universal Primary Contest on their ballot. Universal Primary Contests occur when all candidates for a seat have the same party affiliation and the winner would be unopposed in the general election.

Voters living in Temple Terrace and some special taxing districts will also have a referendum on the ballot.

Take a look at this quick video that explains Florida's closed primaries: https://vimeo.com/676448886.

Legislative Updates For 2026 — What's Changed?

You may live in a different congressional district because the legislature changed the district boundaries this year. Those changes affect which candidates will be on your ballot. We're sending new voter information cards to all voters so you can see all of your voting districts at a glance.

What Hasn't Changed?

Florida's voter registration and voting ID requirements haven't changed for the 2026 election. If you plan to vote in person, go to www.votehillsborough.gov and search "What to Bring" to find the list of acceptable ID.

The Last Word

Your signature can change over time — and the signature on file is used to verify your identity on vote-by-mail ballots, provisional ballots and petitions. Call us at 813-744-5900, go to www.votehillsborough.gov or visit any of our offices or public libraries to get a voter registration application (https://registertovoteflorida.gov/home) and update your signature so that you are #ElectionReady for 2026.

REQUESTING A VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT IS EASY:

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3. By Fax: (813) 744-5843
4. In Person: at any of our Supervisor of Elections

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1. Your name and home address
2. Your date of birth
3. Your mailing address, if different from home address (Ballots cannot be forwarded. Be sure to provide your current mailing address.)
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POLITICALLY SPEAKING

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER DISTRICT 2



Brittany Lyssy
www.votebrittanylyssy.com



Daniela Simic
www.danielaforschools.com



Chris Taylor
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SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER DISTRICT 6



Kenneth Gay
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Sally Harris Williamson
www.sallyharris.org



Karen Perez
www.keepkarenperez.com



COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3



Twanda E. Bradley
www.votetwandabradley district3.com



Gwen Myers
www.votegwenmyers.com

COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 5



Donna Cameron Cepeda
https://donnacameroncepeda.com



Stacy Hahn
www.votestacyhahn.com

COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 7



Aileen Rodriguez
www.voteaileen2026.com



Cindy Stuart
www.facebook.com/VoteCindyStuart

13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GROUP 7



Luis Aguila
www.louieforjudge.com



Sara Peacock
www.sarapeacockforjudge.com



13TH JUDICIAL COURT GROUP 13



Nina McGucken Alvarez
www.electnina.com



Jim Wimsatt
www.jimforjudge.com







WHO'S GOT YOUR VOTE?

SARA PEACOCK
13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, GROUP 7

Staff Report



Few judicial candidates bring the combination of experience, community involvement and professional respect that Sara Peacock offers. A Tampa native, Peacock has spent her life in the community she now seeks to serve as a circuit judge.

Inspired by her parents, who are both attorneys, for the past 15 years Peacock has built a legal career that has prepared her for the responsibilities of the bench. Her experience includes family law, criminal defense and civil litigation, giving her a broad understanding of the issues that come before the circuit court. She has handled matters affecting individuals and families, earning a reputation for fairness, professionalism and sound judgment.

The respect Peacock has earned throughout her career is reflected in the broad support she has received from the legal community. Her endorsements include a retired chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court, numerous retired appellate and circuit court judges, the retired Hillsborough County public defender and more than 30 former presidents of local and statewide bar associations. Those who have worked with Peacock and observed her career firsthand recognize in her the qualities of an outstanding judge.

Away from the courtroom, Peacock is deeply involved in her community. She is married to Jason Bartos, and they have two children. She volunteers at her children's school, serves as 'Cookie Mom' for her daughter's Girl Scout troop, sings with the Tampa Oratorio Singers, volunteers with efforts to help children facing food insecurity and serves as an elder at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church, where she has been a lifelong member. Her commitment to service reflects the same values of responsibility and leadership that have guided her legal career.

Peacock understands that judges make decisions that affect real people and real families. She believes every person deserves to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect, and that every case deserves careful preparation and thoughtful consideration.

Those qualities have defined Peacock's career and make her the right choice for circuit judge.

For more about Peacock, visit her website at www.sarapeacockforjudge.com.

MIKE BELTRAN
FLORIDA CONGRESS, DISTRICT 14

Staff Report



Former Conservative Republican State Representative Mike Beltran is running for Congress District 14 - a newly configured district that includes all of South and East Hillsborough, including Brandon, Riverview, Valrico, Lithia, Bloomingdale, Durant, Sun City Center, Apollo Beach, Ruskin, Wimauma, Balm, Gibsonton, Plant City, Dover, and Seffner as well as South and West Tampa.

For six years, Beltran served the people of Southern and Eastern Hillsborough County as their voice in Tallahassee. Beltran is a leader on issues related to the judiciary and constitution and is a fierce advocate for Hillsborough County. He was appointed by Governors Rick Scott and Ron DeSantis to the Judicial Nominating Commission for Florida's Thirteenth Circuit Court in Hillsborough County.

"I'm running for Congress to fight to defend the Constitution, preserve individual liberty, uphold the rule of law and preserve the American Dream for my sons' generation." Beltran is Pro-life, Pro-Trump, will be tough on violent crime and illegal immigration, and has promised to pursue a constitutional amendment to redress birth tourism and anchor babies. Beltran is endorsed by Gun Owners of America, over 20 current or former Florida State legislators, including Former Senate President Tom Lee, over a dozen local officials, including Commissioner Josh Wostal, over ten former judges or JNC members, over ten local Republican Club officials, four previous candidates for FL-14, four Trump lawyers, including a former Ambassador, and many veterans and high-ranking officers and law enforcement personnel, including two Generals and three Colonels.

Beltran is also an Eagle Scout and takes pride in this formative experience he had growing up. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and graduated in 2005 with a B.A. and honors in international relations, magna cum laude. He then went on to earn his law degree from Harvard Law School in 2008 before moving to Florida in 2010, where he served as a law clerk to a federal district judge. Beltran has been recognized as an Outstanding Young Florida Lawyer. He is still a practicing business attorney by trade, and he is happily married to his wife, Hope. The couple have two young sons, Michael and Ross.

For more, visit Beltran's campaign website at www.beltranforcongress.com.



PREPARED • KNOWLEDGEABLE • FAIR

Sara Peacock has been practicing law for 15 years with experience in criminal defense, family law, civil litigation, and insurance litigation. She's tried 68 jury trials, including both criminal and civil cases.

She is involved in our community and volunteers for deserving causes. A Hillsborough County native, Sara is married with two children and is an elder at her church.

ELECT SARA PEACOCK FOR CIRCUIT JUDGE

SaraPeacockforJudge.com

Political advertisement paid for and approved by Sara Peacock for Circuit Court Judge, Circuit 13

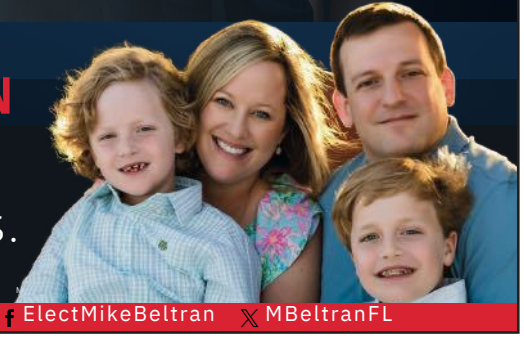


- CUT spending & LOWER costs for Florida families.
- BALANCE the budget & CLEAN UP Washington.
- FINISH the wall & DEPORT criminals.
- SAFEGUARD our Second Amendment rights.
- PROTECT innocent life at EVERY stage.
- END the woke military agenda & ensure peace through STRENGTH.
- KEEP parents - NOT bureaucrats - in control of their child's education.

MIKE BELTRAN for U.S. Congress 14th District

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POLITICALLY SPEAKING

NINA ALVAREZ
13TH JUDICIAL COURT, GROUP 13

Staff Report



For Nina McGucken Alvarez, serving the people of Hillsborough County is both a professional calling and a personal mission. As a third-generation Tampanian and lifelong resident of Hillsborough County, Alvarez has spent her life building strong connections within the community she proudly calls home. Her commitment to fairness, justice and public service has guided a legal career spanning more than 17 years and has earned her a reputation as a compassionate advocate and skilled attorney.

Alvarez brings a diverse range of legal experience to her work. For the past decade, she has been the owner of McGucken Alvarez, P.A., a law firm concentrating in family law, probate and guardianship matters. Through her private practice, she has helped families navigate some of life's most challenging circumstances with compassion, professionalism and a steadfast commitment to protecting their rights.

In addition to her private practice, Alvarez serves as assistant regional counsel with the Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel in Tampa. She is privileged to serve as the only attorney in Hillsborough County appointed to represent indigent clients with developmental disabilities. This unique role reflects both her specialized legal knowledge and her passion for advocating for vulnerable members of the community. Her work in public service has provided her with extensive courtroom experience and reinforced her belief that every individual deserves equal access to justice, regardless of their circumstances.

She has also served for 15 years on the Hillsborough County court-appointed registry for incapacity, guardianship and guardian advocacy matters, gaining valuable insight into the legal and personal challenges faced by families and individuals requiring court protection.

Beyond her professional achievements, Alvarez is deeply rooted in family values. She has been married for 19 years and is the proud mother of two daughters. Her career and family have shaped her understanding of the issues that matter most to local families and strengthened her commitment to ensuring every person has a voice and a fair chance at justice.

With experience, integrity and a lifelong dedication to Hillsborough County, Nina McGucken Alvarez remains focused on our community with fairness, impartiality and respect for the rule of law.

SALLY HARRIS
SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, DIST. 6

By McKenzie Brown



Longtime educator, business owner and community leader Sally Harris has dedicated her life to improving educational opportunities for children and families throughout Hillsborough County. Now, she hopes to continue that work by bringing her experience and ideas back to public service.

Harris founded Circle C Ranch Academy in Tampa in 1985, launching what would become one of the area's most respected early childhood education programs. For nearly four decades, the academy has earned local, regional and national recognition for excellence, receiving repeated national accreditations and maintaining the Florida Department of Children & Families Gold Seal of Excellence since 1999.

Beyond her work in education, Harris has been actively involved in the community. She has been a member of the South Tampa Chamber of Commerce since 1984 and served as its president from 1988-89. She has also held leadership positions with several professional and civic organizations, including the Florida Vocational Association, the Business and Professional Women's Association and the Hillsborough Association for Child Care Professionals.

Harris previously served on the Hillsborough County School Board from 2014-18 and later served as board chair. During her tenure, district graduation rates increased by 15 percent, reaching 83 percent in 2018. She also championed teacher pay raises, supported workforce development and apprenticeship programs.

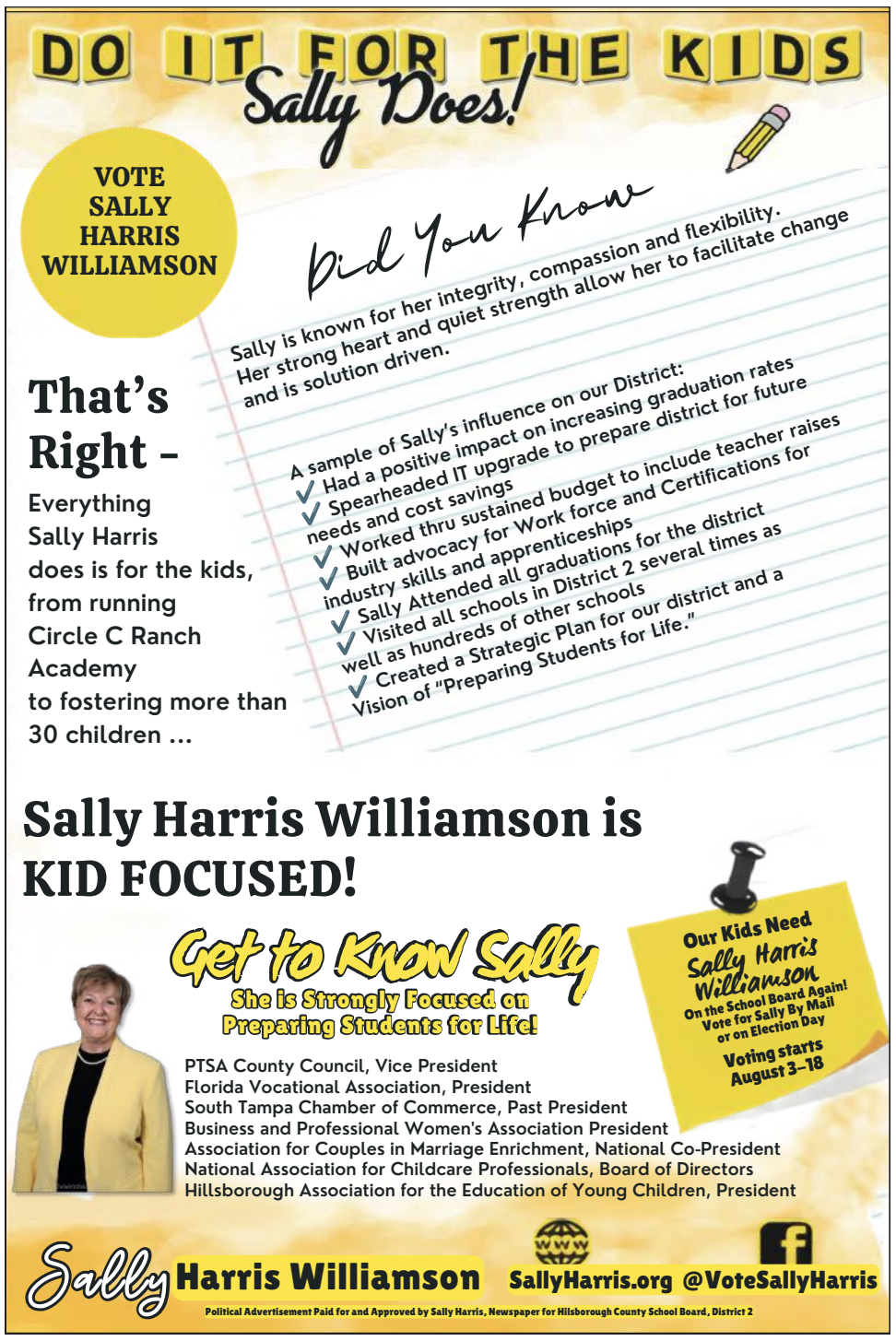
Harris said she decided to run because she believes she can still make a meaningful difference in the lives of students and educators. "I felt like I still had some great ideas and work that could make a difference."

Among her priorities is improving kindergarten readiness. Harris noted that only about 50 percent of children enter kindergarten fully prepared and believes expanding access to the county's free Voluntary Prekindergarten program could help address the issue.

A mother of five, foster parent to more than 30 children and grandmother of nine, Harris has built a career centered on service, leadership and a commitment to helping children succeed.

Contact Sally Harris at 813-766-8429 or visit her online at www.sallyharris.org.





WHO'S GOT YOUR VOTE?

JIM WIMSATT
13TH JUDICIAL COURT, GROUP 13

Staff Report



Jim Wimsatt understands that when people walk into a courtroom, they are often facing some of the most important moments of their lives. Decisions about children, families, homes, finances and futures can have lasting consequences. Those decisions deserve a circuit judge with experience, judgment, compassion and integrity.

Wimsatt has spent the last 22 years building a legal career that reflects those values. A graduate of Georgetown University Law Center, he has earned a reputation as a thoughtful attorney, a respected advocate and a dedicated member of the legal community.

For the past decade, Wimsatt has concentrated on family law, handling cases that affect the future of children, loved ones, homes, jobs and income. That experience is especially important because family law cases account for roughly 40 percent of all circuit court cases in Florida. He understands that behind every case file is a family seeking fairness, stability and justice.

His peers have recognized both his legal ability and his character. Wimsatt has been named to Best Lawyers in America for four consecutive years and Super Lawyers for two consecutive years. He also holds the prestigious AV Preeminent rating from Martindale-Hubbell, an honor awarded to less than 5 percent of attorneys who demonstrate the highest levels of professional excellence, ethics and legal skill.

Outside the courtroom, Wimsatt believes in serving the community he hopes to serve on the bench. He volunteers with organizations that help families in need, serves in community leadership roles and gives his time to mentoring young people through Scouting. He and his wife, Lauren, have been married for 15 years and are raising their two children, Lucy and Beck, in Hillsborough County.

Voters deserve judges who will approach every case with fairness, preparation and respect for the people whose lives are affected by their decisions. Wimsatt has spent his career earning that trust. He has the experience, temperament and integrity to serve the people of Hillsborough County with distinction.

Please vote Jim Wimsatt for circuit judge.

For more information about Wimsatt and his campaign for circuit judge, visit https://jimforjudge.com/.

LUIS 'LOUIE' AGUILA
13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, GROUP 7

Staff Report



Luis 'Louie' Aguila is a lifelong Tampanian, dedicated public servant, and experienced prosecutor committed to protecting the community he proudly calls home.

Born and raised in Tampa, Aguila attended St. Lawrence Catholic School, graduated from Tampa Catholic High School and earned degrees from Florida College, the University of South Florida and Barry University School of Law.

Aguila's story reflects the American Dream. His father, grandparents and uncle immigrated from Cuba in the early 1960s seeking opportunity and a better future. Through hard work, sacrifice and determination, Aguila's grandfather built a successful family business that became a Tampa tradition. La Ideal and Aguila Sandwich Shop were more than local restaurants — they represented the values of faith, family, perseverance and service that continue to guide Aguila today.

From a young age, Aguila learned that success is earned through hard work and integrity. Those values inspired him to pursue a career in public service.

Since becoming an attorney in 2014, Aguila has devoted his career to seeking justice and protecting families. During eight years with the Hillsborough County State Attorney's Office, he prosecuted serious crimes, including homicide, domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and drug trafficking. Today, he serves in the Florida Attorney General's Office as a member of the Cold Case Unit, working to solve unsolved homicides and bringing answers to families who have waited years for justice.

Beyond the courtroom, Aguila is a devoted husband and proud father of two daughters. He is a parishioner of St. Timothy Catholic Church and remains deeply involved in his community. Aguila coaches his daughters' Little League softball team, helping teach the next generation the values of teamwork, discipline and respect.

Luis 'Louie' Aguila is a qualified attorney, proven leader, devoted family man and proud son and grandson of Cuban immigrants. He has spent his career serving the people of Hillsborough County with honor and integrity. Now, he is ready to continue that service as your next circuit court judge.



Families Matter to Jim Wimsatt

Jim Wimsatt is a highly skilled family law attorney. That's important when Family Law Cases make up roughly 40% of all circuit court cases in Florida. Citizens deserve a judge who is knowledgeable, prepared, compassionate and fair when they go to court and the future of the children, loved ones, house, job and income is on the line. ***Jim Wimsatt is the judge you want when you go to court.***

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- Handled cases involving violence against children as a member of the Special Victims Unit
- Proud husband, father and Little League softball coach

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Political advertisement paid for and approved by Luis "Louie" Aguila for Circuit Court Judge, Circuit 13, Group 7

POLITICALLY SPEAKING

STACY HAHN
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DIST. 5

By Libby Hopkins



Stacy Hahn has called Hillsborough County home for 25 years.

"My husband, Jeff, and I raised our three sons here because we believe in this community and the opportunities it offers families," Hahn said. "For the past eight years, I've had the privilege of serving on the Hillsborough County School Board, overseeing one of the nation's largest school districts, managing a multibillion-dollar budget and working to protect taxpayer dollars while improving outcomes for students."

Throughout her service, she has listened, turned conversations into action and built partnerships that solve complex challenges. Before serving in elected office, she was professor at the University of South Florida.

"Public service has always been about giving back to the community that has given so much to my family, and I'm committed to continuing that service by helping Hillsborough County remain a place where families and businesses can thrive," Hahn said.

Hahn earned a reputation for fiscal responsibility, transparency and delivering high-quality outcomes for students. She is now running for County Commission, District 5, to bring the same disciplined, results-driven leadership to the community.

"I'm running for county commission to bring that same leadership, accountability and problem-solving approach to the decisions that will shape our community's future," Hahn said. "My priorities are straightforward: protect taxpayers, improve infrastructure, support law enforcement and first responders and ensure growth is planned responsibly so our quality of life is protected."

"Through initiatives like the Early Childhood Literacy Fair, Storytime Online, the Early Childhood Literacy Bus and community book distributions, we've helped thousands of children develop a love of reading before they enter the classroom," Hahn said.

"If elected, I want people to know they have a commissioner who is accessible, prepared, fiscally responsible and committed to making thoughtful decisions that strengthen our community for generations to come," she said. "When we work together, we create deeper, more lasting impacts."

To learn more about Hahn or become involved in her campaign, you can visit her website at www.votestacyhahn.com.

COME MEET YOUR CANDIDATES AT THE 2026 CANDIDATE CONNECTION

Staff Report



The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce is proud to present the 2026 Candidate Connection, formerly known as the Hob Nob, on Thursday, August 6, from 6-8 p.m. at The Regent, located at 6437 Watson Rd. in Riverview. This year's event, presented by Curry Law Group and powered by RSA Consulting Group, will also commemorate America's 250th birthday, providing a meaningful opportunity for civic engagement while celebrating our nation's history.

Candidate Connection is designed to connect voters with the individuals seeking to serve their communities. The event offers a welcoming, nonpartisan environment where attendees can meet candidates, visit sponsor and community organization booths, learn about local initiatives and public services and engage in meaningful conversations with neighbors and community leaders.

For attendees seeking a more in-depth experience, VIP admission includes early entry from 5-6 p.m. and exclusive small-group conversations with participating candidates. These sessions provide an opportunity to hear directly from candidates about their visions, priorities and policy positions in a more personal setting.

Candidates currently scheduled to participate include Sara Peacock, judge candidate; Daniela Simic, Hillsborough County School Board; Sally Harris Williamson, Hillsborough County School Board, District 6; Nina McGucken Alvarez, circuit judge; Louie Aguila, judge candidate; Bob Henriquez, Hillsborough County property appraiser; Joshua Wostal, Hillsborough County Commission, District 7; Cindy Stuart, Hillsborough County Commission, District 7; Stacy Hahn, Hillsborough County Commission, District 5 (countywide); Brittany Lyssy, Hillsborough County School Board; Aileen Rodriguez, Hillsborough County Commission, District 7; Kevin Steele, U.S. Congress; and Bea Valenti, U.S. Congress.

Additional candidates may be announced prior to the event.

"Candidate Connection is one of our community's most important civic engagement events," said Amber Aaron, president and CEO of the Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce. For ticket information and event details, visit www.centralhillsboroughchamber.com.

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2026 PRIMARY ELECTION
Deadline to Register or Change Parties: July 20

Three Ways To Vote

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SENIORS BRING SKILL & SPIRIT TO BRAIN & BODY CHALLENGE

Staff Report



Photo Courtesy of Hillsborough County

The Dance Challenge champions were the Ruskin Monsters of Mayhem.

More than 400 energetic seniors age 50+ came together for Hillsborough County Aging Services' annual Brain and Body Challenge, transforming the event into a playful showdown between superheroes and supervillains. The day was packed with high-energy activities, plenty of laughter, and a strong sense of community pride.

This year's Challenge highlighted how older adults across the county continue embracing active, connected lifestyles. Aging Services emphasized that pairing physical movement with mental engagement supports overall wellness, sharpens cognitive skills, and helps maintain daily vitality. The upbeat environment underscored how accessible, social activities can motivate seniors to stay active and involved.

"This was my first time attending, and I really enjoyed it. It was wonderful meeting new people and seeing the care and attention given to seniors," said Ruskin Senior Center resident Roman Delosseentos. "You can tell they truly look after their community. My favorite part of the day was playing basketball."

Participants arrived dressed as their favorite heroes and villains, setting the stage for friendly competition throughout the day. Seniors took on a World Cup style penalty kick challenge and an NBA-inspired basketball free throw contest, showed off their best moves during a lively danceoff, and tackled quiz-style mental games designed to boost memory, focus, and problemsolving.

Top honors for team competitions went to:

- Champions: Progress Village Black Panthers
- 2nd Place: Town 'N Country Crimson Avengers
- 3rd Place: Plant City Spicy Strawberries

The Dance Challenge champions were the Ruskin Monsters of Mayhem.

Individual winners also shined in soccer and basketball challenges, as well as two timed brain competitions - color stacking and puzzle completion - with standout participants representing Progress Village, Oaks at Riverview, Ruskin, Brandon, Plant City, and JL Young.

The success of this year's event was made possible thanks to the support of 15 dedicated sponsors.

By bringing together participants from multiple senior centers, the Brain and Body Challenge strengthened friendships, encouraged new connections, and celebrated how communitydriven wellness continues to empower older adults throughout Hillsborough County.







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Brandon/Winthrop Edition

July 2026, Vol. 21, Iss. 7

Sponsored by: Osprey Observer — Your Community Newspaper



Edited by: Jenny Bennett

EYE ON BUSINESS

To Submit Business News & Press Releases Mail Attn: Business Editor, 2109 Lithia Pinecrest Rd., Valrico, FL 33596
Fax 657-4469 | Email: jbennett@ospreyobserver.com
Deadline: 15th of each month.

Chill Cawfee & Quig's Kava Lounge Moves From Valrico To FishHawk

Chill Cawfee & Quig's Kava Lounge is a family-owned community gathering place designed to bring people together throughout the day. In the morning, guests can enjoy handcrafted coffee, espresso drinks and a welcoming cafe atmosphere. As the day transitions into evening, Quig's Kava Lounge provides a relaxing, alcohol-free social environment featuring premium kava beverages, community events and entertainment. Its goal is to create a place where friends, families, professionals, entrepreneurs and neighbors can connect, work, relax and build relationships. Whether you're looking for your morning coffee or a comfortable place to meet friends, enjoy live entertainment, participate in community events or simply unwind after a long day, Chill Cawfee & Quig's Kava Lounge offers a unique experience that combines hospitality, wellness and community under one roof.

Chill Cawfee is now located at 16741 FishHawk Blvd. in Lithia after moving from its Valrico location. For additional information, visit its websites at https://chillcawfee.com/ and https://quigskavalounge.com/.

HealthSource Chiropractic Of Valrico Ribbon Cutting

At HealthSource Chiropractic of Valrico, its goal is to help every patient get back to doing what they love. Whether you're recovering from an injury, managing chronic pain or looking to improve your overall health and mobility, it is committed to providing the tools, treatments and support you need to keep moving forward. Alongside personalized care focused on long-term wellness and recovery, services include spinal decompression therapy, high-powered laser therapy, functional rehabilitation, chiropractic adjustments, shockwave therapy and wellness care designed to address the root cause of pain and dysfunction.

HealthSource Chiropractic of Valrico is located at 1995 E. SR 60 in Valrico. For additional information, visit its website at www.healthsourcechiro.com/location/valrico/ or call 813-315-8491.



Rosemary Real Estate Team At Flip Side Realty By Design

Rosemary Leist specializes in 55-plus residential home sales and lives locally in Sun City Center. She has an extensive professional background in the legal/regulatory arena which has led to valuable skills in the art of negotiation. Having practiced real estate in Florida, Tennessee and Washington, D.C., she has acquired a unique balance of southern charm and northeastern tenacity. As an ordained minister, her core beliefs provide a solid foundation of integrity and trust. She looks forward to earning your business.

To contact Leist, call 301-399-4332. For more information, visit https://rosemaryrealestateteam.com/.



AYR Cannabis Dispensary Celebrates Grand Opening With Ribbon-cutting Ceremony In Brandon

The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce proudly joined AYR Cannabis Dispensary in celebrating the grand opening of its newest location at 1409 W. Brandon Blvd. in Brandon with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 3. The event marked an important milestone for the company as it continues to expand access to medical cannabis services throughout Florida.

Smylie Legacy Law Celebrates Move With Ribbon Cutting

Smylie Legacy Law celebrated a move to Ware Boulevard, close to Adamo Drive.

Owner Scott Smylie lives in Valrico and is passionate about giving families the gift of order and peace instead of chaos when a loved one passes away. Smylie Legacy Law is an estate planning and elder law boutique firm that focuses on helping clients create and understand their estate plans.

Smylie Legacy Law is located at 410 Ware Blvd., Ste. 818, in Tampa. To learn more, visit https://smylielegacylaw.com/ or call 813-667-6808.



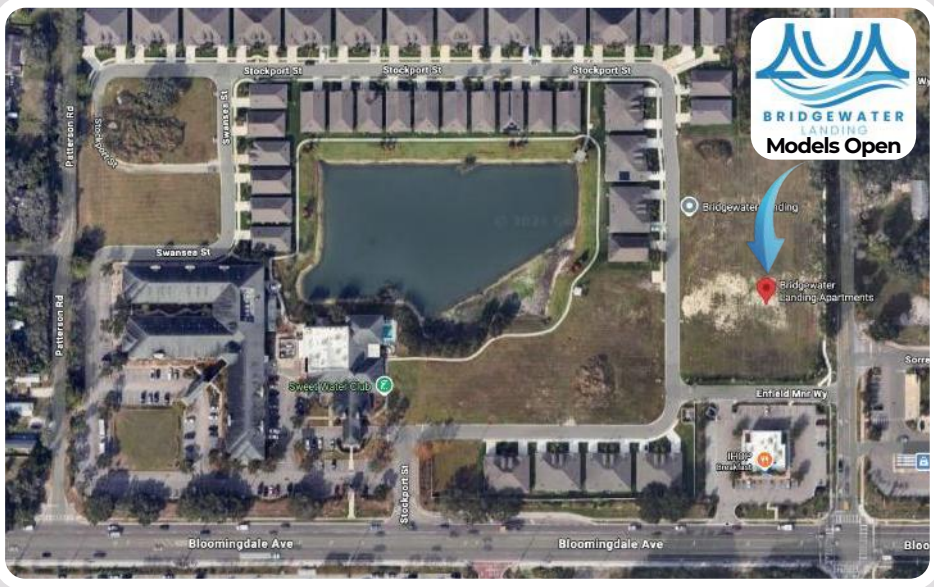
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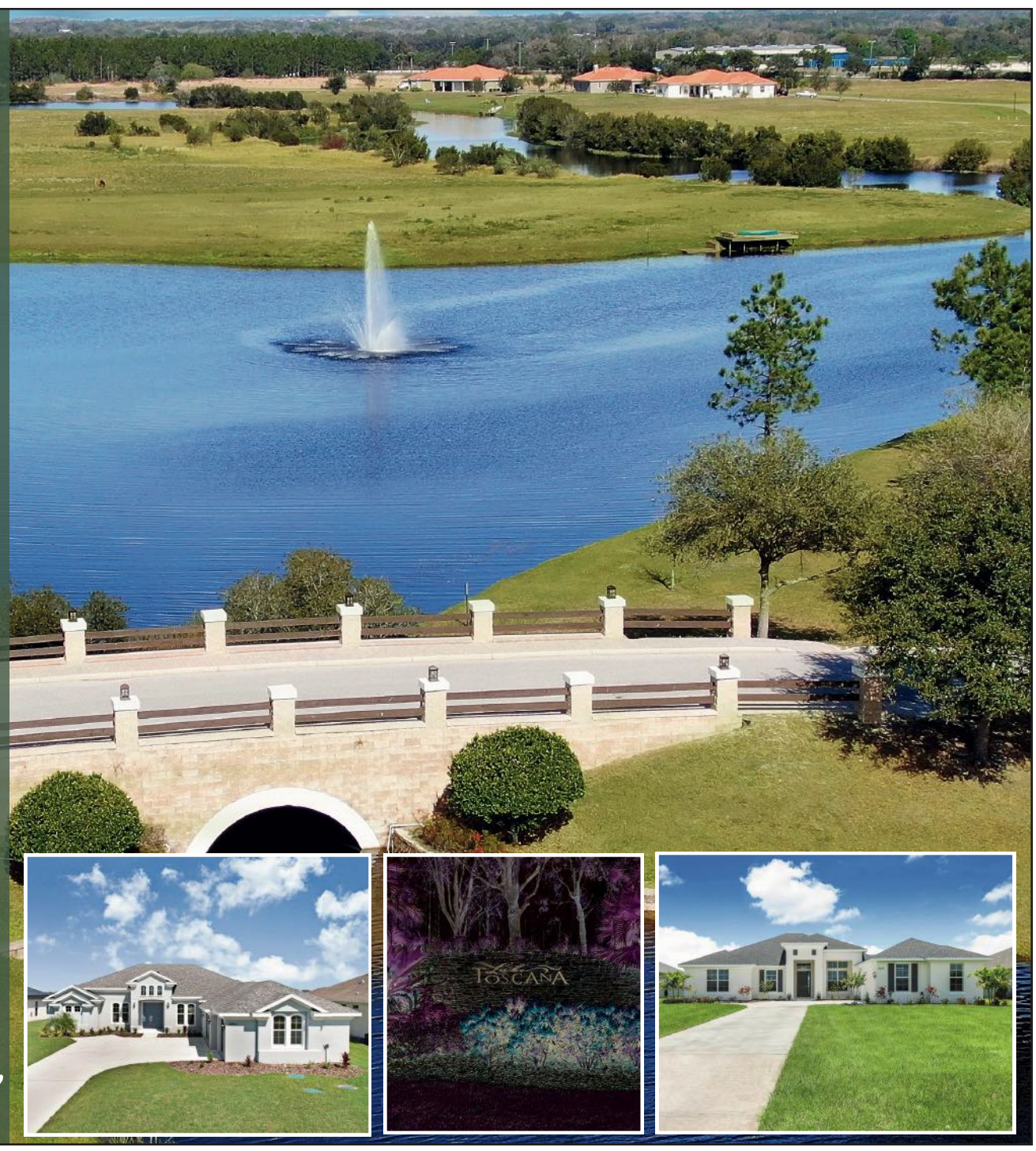
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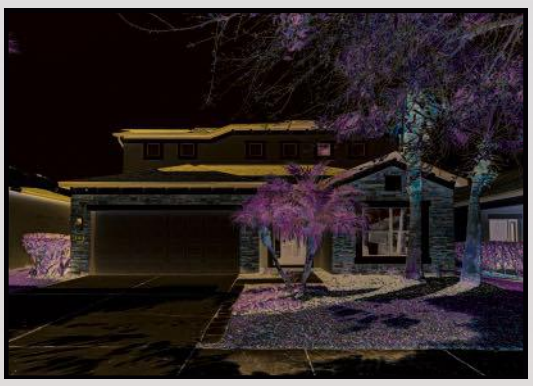
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3143 PLEASANT WILLOW CT
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4822 PORTOBELLO CIR
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$529,000



2718 GARDEN FALLS DR
4BR/2.5BA/2CAR + LOFT + FENCED YARD
$398,000



306 E LANGFORD DR
3BR/1BA + CARPORT + FENCED YARD
$250,000



208 ELM VIEW CT
3BR/2.5BA/2CAR + GATED COMMUNITY
$337,500

DELIVERING RESULTS YEAR AFTER YEAR

BRENDA WADE
KELLER WILLIAMS SOUTH TAMPA
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