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

By Olivia Clark



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LIVINGSTONE ACADEMY TRANSFORMS EDUCATION FOR UNIQUE LEARNERS

By Libby Hopkins



Livingstone Academy Seffner, Livingstone Academy Autism Center and Livingstone Academy Exceptional Center, are Hillsborough County's premier private schools for students with unique abilities.

In 2003, Chris and Bernadette Pello of Riverview felt called to open a faith-based private school for students with learning disabilities who learned differently. As the school's founders, they left their previous jobs, took a second mortgage out on their home, stepped out in faith and opened the school with one classroom and a handful of students in a small building on Bloomingdale Avenue in Valrico.

They quickly realized they were going to need more space to serve more students; so, in 2004, they moved to the campus of Bay Life Church in Brandon and changed the name to Bay Life Academy. In the first year as Bay Life Academy in 2004, the school had two classrooms with 36 students enrolled.

In 2007, the small school moved from the Bay Life Church campus to the property on Lenna Avenue in Seffner.

"It was then that we changed the name to Livingstone Academy," said Livingstone Academy's CEO, Kristin Lisi. "The need in the community was so great, and the word about our very special school that was founded on love, acceptance and accountability began to spread far and wide. At that time, we served students from kindergarten through eighth grade."

Livingstone Academy Seffner, Livingstone Academy Autism Center and Livingstone Academy Exceptional Center are Hillsborough County's premier private schools for students with unique abilities. Livingstone Academy is the county's largest private school program for students with the FES-UA, FES-EO and FTC scholarships. Its dedicated team of educators understands the unique learning styles of each student and makes all accommodations to meet their needs. Its strategy of a "small group learning model" ensures each student receives the individualized attention necessary to reach their greatest potential.

Enrollment for the 2026-27 school semester is currently open at Livingstone Academy.

"New students can expect a safe learning environment, where they will feel safe to ask questions and inspired to learn," Lisi said. "Many new students will find a true sense of acceptance and belonging, maybe for the first time ever in their school career. Students can expect to make true friends with their peers and classmates, and to build lasting and impactful relationships with their teachers and classmates. Our school foundation is built on love, acceptance and accountability, and our students will feel this from the moment they walk through those doors every day."

Livingstone Academy accepts students with learning disabilities who are struggling academically, as well as students without learning disabilities. Livingstone Academy is also a great fit for students at grade level who may not struggle academically but may have a challenging time in larger school settings or in social situations.

To register, visit Livingstone Academy's website at www.livingstoneschools.org.

IN THIS ISSUE:

NEW BRANDON THEATER..... PG 3
STRAWBERRY FEST WINS..... PG 6
TENNIS FOR FUN..... PG 14
SUMMER READING..... PG 24
EYE ON BUSINESS.....PG 30

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MACBETH & CHEESE ANNOUNCES NEW THEATER HOME IN BRANDON

Staff Report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BRANDON ROOTS PROJECTS HELP GROW NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS

By Olivia Clark



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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BRANDON MEALS ON WHEELS MARKS 50 YEARS OF SERVING NEIGHBORS

By Libby Hopkins



Greater Brandon Meals on Wheels provides nourishing midday meals from Monday through Friday for those in the Brandon community who are unable to serve themselves. Volunteers reach out to help home bound neighbors in need of a nutritious meal through the combined efforts of many local Brandon churches.

Greater Brandon Meals on Wheels coordinates the activities of the member churches. The menu, preparation and delivery of these meals is the responsibility of each of the member churches. Clients are referred to Greater Brandon Meals on Wheels through various organizations, churches, family, physicians, neighbors or friends.

The local nonprofit recently held its 50th anniversary this past April at Generations Church in Brandon. "Greater Brandon Meals on Wheels celebrated our 50th Anniversary this year," said Barbara Brooks, recording secretary for the Greater Brandon Meals on Wheels. "We were started on March 9, 1976, by St. Andrew's United Methodist Church and Limona Village Chapel. We currently have 17 member churches in the area who deliver almost 200 meals per day, Monday through Friday, to medically needy shut-ins in Brandon, Valrico and Seffner. In 2025, we delivered 48,191 meals. We are a 501(c)(3) and receive no government money."

Volunteers delivered meals through COVID and hurricanes as long as it was safe for its drivers. Many of these volunteers were honored at the recent celebration.

"We honored Lillian Foster of St. Andrew's for her 36 years of service, which included volunteer positions as president and general coordinator," Brooks said. "At age 92, we were delighted to have her in attendance."

Brooks joined the Greater Brandon Meals on Wheels in January 1996 as a cook but became New Hope's driver coordinator in 2006.

"I had just joined the church and was looking to get involved, attended a meeting and signed up to help immediately," Brooks said. "I have been the recording secretary for about 15 years. Our board of directors oversees the 17 churches, but each church coordinates their kitchen and cooks, including preparing their meals and mapping their routes."

Brooks and all the volunteers at the Greater Brandon Meals on Wheel hope to continue their mission as long as there is a need in the community.

"We currently are looking to add one more church on Tuesday to serve about 20 meals," Brooks said.

If you would like to volunteer or if you are a local church that would like to become involved with the organization, contact general coordinator Carol Shick at 813-404-1973.

FLVS FLEX OFFERS TUITION-FREE SUMMER COURSES FOR STUDENTS

Staff Report



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Course Offerings

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

Middle school courses include:

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

High school courses include:

- Career Research and Decision Making
- Critical Thinking and Study Skills
- Driver Education/Traffic Safety
- Fitness Lifestyle Design
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- Leadership Skills Development
- Life Management Skills
- Outdoor Education
- Personal Fitness

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ALL ABOARD: HENRY'S HIDDEN TRAIN HUNT BRINGS FUN TO PLANT CITY

By Brian Bokor



Families looking for a free, interactive way to explore downtown Plant City can hop aboard a new adventure that blends history, discovery and a bit of mystery.

Henry's Hidden Train Hunt invites residents and visitors to search for 10 hidden trains scattered throughout the downtown district. The self-guided activity begins at the Robert W. Willaford Railroad Museum, where participants can pick up a free map and clues or download a printable version in advance.

From there, the hunt is on.

Using the provided clues, participants will navigate downtown streets in search of each hidden train, solving fill-in-the-blank trivia along the way. Once all 10 trains have been located and the trivia has been completed, hunters can return to the museum during regular hours to claim a prize.

Organizers said the event is designed to be flexible and family-friendly, allowing participants to start their hunt at any time and explore at their own pace. It's also an opportunity to experience the charm of downtown Plant City while learning a bit about its railroad roots.

Participants are encouraged to share their experience on social media using the hashtag #HenrysHiddenTrains, though organizers ask that the exact train locations remain a secret to keep the challenge fun for others.

The event is presented by Historic Plant City Main Street, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving and revitalizing the city's historic downtown. As part of the national Main Street America network, the organization focuses on strengthening the local economy while celebrating the area's cultural heritage.

Known for hosting community favorites such as Oktoberfest, Last Friday and the Strawberry Drop, Historic Plant City Main Street continues to create engaging events that bring people together while supporting local businesses and attractions.

Henry's Hidden Train Hunt builds on that mission, offering a playful way for families to connect with the community, discover local landmarks and enjoy time together — no tickets required.

With clues to solve, trains to find and prizes waiting at the finish line, the event promises a memorable outing for all ages, right in the heart of downtown.

Visit the main street website at www.plantcitymainstreet.org/hiddentrains for the free downloadable train map.

MARRIED BAND DIRECTORS STRIKE A CHORD AT TWO LOCAL SCHOOLS

By Jane Owen



Middle and high school band students in Litha and Valrico are honing their skills under the direction of husband-wife musical power duo Jordan and Sara Fraze.

Jordan Fraze is the director of bands at Bloomingdale High School in Valrico. Wife Sara is the director of bands at Randall Middle School in Lithia. They both graduated from Florida State University (FSU) in 2022 with degrees in instrumental music education. The Frazes left college with the desire to work in the same community.

"It's hard to find the job you really want and love because there is only one band teacher at every school. So, for us to be in the same community and have same students, that was the dream. That was what we really wanted to do- work in the same community and work together," Sara said.

After school hours, it is not unusual for Sara to help at high school marching band rehearsals or for Jordan to be at middle school concert rehearsals. Their mutual passion for music and education is complimented by their close relationship and history of working together. They learned to balance professional responsibility and working together at Florida State University, where they were both drum majors with the FSU Marching Chiefs.

"I think we both expect the same standard of excellence out of our students. And so, if one of us walks into a rehearsal for the other, there's a lot of reinforcement of expectations going on," Jordan said.

Prior to becoming the directors of the programs, Sara was an FSU music education intern at Burns Middle School, which feeds into Bloomingdale, and Jordan was an intern at Bloomingdale. Sara taught the current Bloomingdale sophomores through seniors when she was an intern at Burns.

When Jordan assists Sara at Randall, being Bloomingdale's band director is never a focus.

"I want them to stick with band, whether it's at Bloomingdale or Newsome. I just want them to know the expectations when they get to high school. They are higher, yes, but it's such a great opportunity for them to keep doing music wherever they go," Jordan said.

"What I tell them is red and blue, Newsome and Bloomingdale — red and blue make purple, and we're purple. We work really well together because red and blue make purple," Sara said.

Jordan plays French horn and trumpet. Sara plays trombone. They both play with the Fanfare Concert Winds community band, are instructors at FSU Summer Music Camps and are Emerging Leaders with the Florida Music Education Association. Sara is also the treasurer of the Hillsborough County Secondary Music Council. When not working, Jordan listens to classic rock from the '70s or band music. Sara listens to movie soundtracks, instrumental music and her favorite band, The Beatles.

Jordan and Sara Fraze can be reached at: jordan.fraze@hcps.net and sara.fraze@hcps.net.

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AMERICAN SEWING GUILD BRANDON WINS BIG AT STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

By Libby Hopkins



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

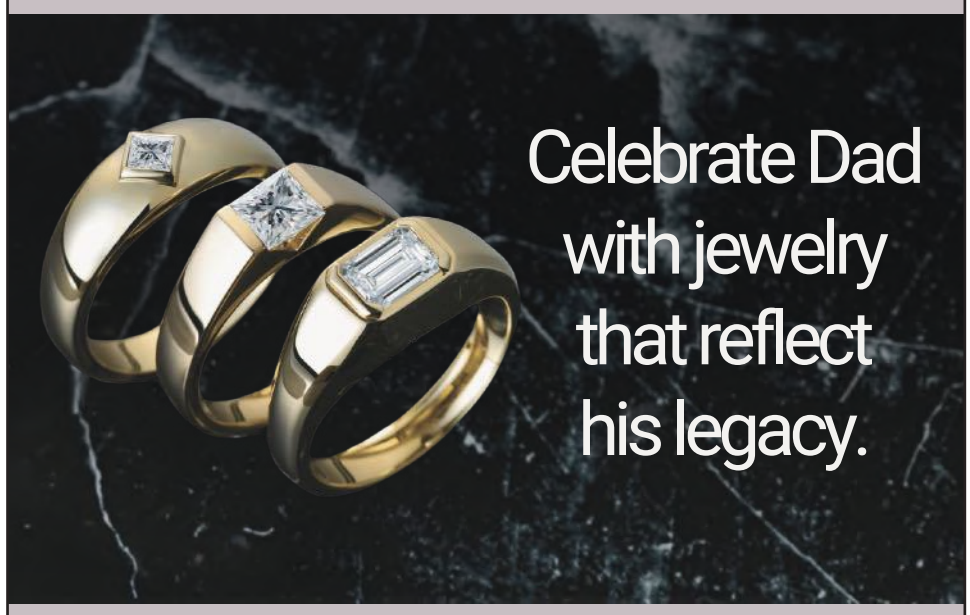
"There are smaller neighborhood groups that meet in Sun City, Brandon and Riverview," Rich said. "At the moment, our chapter has more than 110 members, and they come from as far as Wimauma and Wesley Chapel to be a part of our group."

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

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

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

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LOVE'S TIRE & SERVICE CENTER MARKS 30 YEARS IN VALRICO

By McKenzie Brown



The Love family celebrating 30 years of commitment to our community.

Love's Tire & Service Center is celebrating 30 years of serving Valrico and the surrounding communities, marking three decades as a family-owned business built on trust, hard work and lasting relationships.

Owners Scott and Gay Lynn Love purchased the Valrico shop on April 1, 1996, beginning what would become a 30-year journey in the automotive industry. The date may have been April Fools' Day, but the commitment was no joke. Before becoming owners, Scott Love had spent 16 years working for Charles Brazzeal, who owned two Goodyear Tire & Auto Repair locations. In 1994, Brazzeal transferred Scott Love from Tampa to the Valrico location, where he prepared him for ownership before eventually selling him the store.

That purchase launched more than a business. It began a family legacy. Gay Lynn Love joined her husband at the shop, often bringing their two daughters, Peyton and Chloe, with her while they were still young. What started as a husband-and-wife operation soon became a second-generation family business.

Today, both daughters work alongside their parents, as does their son-in-law, Ty Sullivan. Together, they now serve the children and grandchildren of many longtime customers, creating a rare full-circle moment for the family and the community they have served for decades.

Over the last 30 years, Love's Tire & Service Center has remained steady through some of the country's most challenging times, including 9/11, the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic. Through every hardship, the Love family credits faith, loyal employees and longtime customers for helping sustain the business. Several employees have been part of the team for decades, including two who have worked there for more than 20 years.

During the company's recent 30th anniversary celebration, the Loves were asked what has meant the most to them over the years. Their answer was immediate: the people.

From longtime employees to loyal customers, the relationships built over the past three decades have been the heart of the business and the foundation of its success.

Located at 1701 E. SR 60 in Valrico, Love's Tire & Service Center continues to provide trusted tire sales and auto repair services to Valrico, Brandon, Seffner and nearby communities, carrying on a 30-year tradition of treating customers like family. Visit www.lovesautorepair.com.

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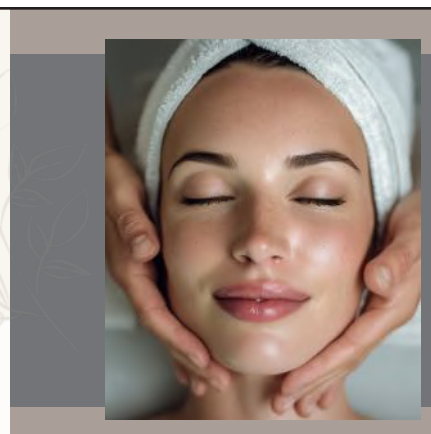





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Rendon Wins Award, Catsino Night Fundraiser & More...

Compiled by Jenny Bennett
jbennett@ospreyobserver.com

School Board Member Honored With Distinguished Leader Award



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

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

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

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

Catsino Night Fundraiser For A Kitten Place

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

Memorial Day Observance Ceremony

Hillsborough County's 29th annual Memorial Day Observance Ceremony will take place at 10 a.m. on Sunday, May 24, at the Veterans Memorial Park & Rear Admiral LeRoy Collins, Jr. Veterans Museum, located at 3602 N. U.S. 301 in Tampa. The ceremony will feature American Gold Star Mothers, special guests and the annual 'Garden of Gold' flag display of local fallen heroes.

The ceremony will be followed by refreshments and resources for military veterans and their families. All are welcome to attend this event. Parking and admission are free.

Hillsborough County Public Schools Recognized As A 2026 Best Community For Music Education

Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) has once again been named a Best Community for Music Education by the NAMM Foundation, a national honor that celebrates school districts demonstrating a strong commitment to providing comprehensive, high-quality music education for all students.

The designation reflects the passion, professionalism and dedication of HCPS music educators, whose efforts ensure students across the district have meaningful opportunities to learn, perform and grow through music. From classroom instruction to performances, advocacy and community collaboration, HCPS music programs continue to make a lasting impact on students and the broader community.

"Being recognized once again at a national level is a testament to the passion and commitment of our music educators," said Superintendent Van Ayres. "Because of their work, students throughout our district experience high-quality music education and arts programs that inspire creativity, build discipline and foster collaboration at every grade level."

For more information about music education programs in Hillsborough County Public Schools, visit hillsboroughschools.org.

HCA BRANDON HOSPITAL ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF SEVEN SCHOLARSHIPS, INCLUDING TWO $20,000 AWARDS

Staff Report



Shayla Commons
Brandon High



Izabel Wiltz
Lennard High



Bradon Martis
Riverview High



Claudia Maguire
Riverview High



Emma Kasting
Newsome High



Madeline Estabrook
Bloomingdale High



Aditi Menon
Middleton High

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

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

HCA Florida Brandon Hospital and Physicians Healthcare Scholars Award

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

Recipients:

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

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

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

Recipients:

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

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

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

Notice Under Fictitious Name Law Pursuant to Section 865.09, Florida Statutes

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned, desiring to engage in business under the fictitious name of **Southern Fancy Entertainment, LLC** located at **17104 Falconridge Rd,** in **Hillsborough County,** in the city of **Lithia, FL, 33547. Tina M. Pace** intends to register said name with the Division of Corporations of the Florida Department of State, Tallahassee, Florida

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STUDENTS DESIGN 'I VOTED' STICKERS FOR 2026 ELECTIONS

Staff Report



Winning students from Durant, Blake and Wharton high schools display their "I Voted" sticker designs after being recognized at a Hillsborough County School Board meeting.

Hillsborough County high school students showcased their creativity and civic pride through the 2026 VoteHillsborough Art Contest, submitting more than 300 designs for a new 'I Voted' sticker to be distributed during upcoming elections.

Supervisor of Elections Craig Latimer praised the overwhelming response and the quality of the entries.

"Thank you to all the high school students who entered our 2026 VoteHillsborough Art Contest. We received more than 300 submissions and were incredibly impressed with not only the number of entries but the quality of the designs," Latimer said.



Three seniors were selected as winners for their standout designs: Angelica Pertab of Durant High School, Juniper Worthington of Blake High School and Simran Wadhera of Wharton High School.

The winning artwork will be reproduced as a 2-inch by 2-inch round sticker and distributed to voters who cast ballots early or drop off mail-in ballots during the two weeks leading up to Election Day for the 2026 primary and general elections.

Finalists were recognized during a recent Hillsborough County School Board meeting, where winners were also announced. Students received prizes donated by contest sponsors, including the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Busch Gardens and The Florida Aquarium.

"We had a great time honoring the finalists and revealing the winning sticker designs at this week's School Board meeting," Latimer said. "Look for the first-place design when you vote this year — and wear that beautiful sticker proudly."

According to Gerri Kramer, chief communications officer for the Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections Office, the contest was open to high school students and winners were selected through a vote by staff and community partners.

The contest is part of an ongoing partnership between VoteHillsborough and Hillsborough County Public Schools aimed at encouraging civic engagement among young people. In addition to the art contest, the elections office visits local high schools each semester to help eligible seniors register to vote.

"Our partnership with Hillsborough County Public Schools is a long-standing and important one," Kramer said.

For more information about voting in Hillsborough County, visit www.votehillsborough.gov.



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HOME SERVICE HEROES BUILDS ON FAITH, INTEGRITY AND FAST SOLUTIONS

By Kelly Wise Valde



Home Service Heroes remains a trusted presence in Tampa Bay, broadening its electrical, airconditioning and plumbing services while adopting new technology to meet rising demand.

The company, originally founded in 1999, has built its reputation on fast response times and a customercentered approach.

"Home Service Heroes, formally Electric Today, is your locally owned electrical, air-conditioning and plumbing repair company that has been in the area since 1999," said owner Jon Polizzi. "We pride ourselves on fast, same-day service and having the best guarantee in Tampa Bay."

Polizzi explained that the company's foundation rests on a set of guiding principles consisting of faith, honor, excellence and want as the pillars that drive the business.

"We founded the company on these four powerful core values and truly make every decision based on lining up with these," he said. "Faith: Follow the golden rule and treat other the way you want to be treated and be thankful for all we have and know we are all part of something bigger than ourselves. Honor: Everything we do will be done with honor and integrity. Excellence: We strive for absolute perfection, both professionally and personally. Want: We all must have that burning desire to be awesome."

For Polizzi, the company's mission is rooted in service.

"The most rewarding part of owning this business is being able to help people. Our mission is 'to serve,' and I just love hearing how we made someone's day or we saved the day due to an issue within the home. I also love the fact that the work we do creates jobs and we are able to support the families of our team," he said.

Fast response remains central to the company's identity.

"This has been our claim to fame from the beginning," said Polizzi. "No one wants to wait when the lights don't work or the AC is not cooling. We totally get that and have built this company to be able to come to you and fix the issue fast. I know that time is valuable to most people, and the work we do helps save time."

Technology has also become a key part of operations.

"We have adopted some new technology to help us be more efficient," said Polizzi. "From training to material ordering programs, like AI software, has helped us stay organized and get things done fast. I have also made it as easy as possible to schedule jobs with our book online features and pre-scheduled maintenance."

Ultimately, Polizzi said the company's promise is simple: "We show up when you need us with reliable, same-day service so you're never left waiting around." Call 813-653-4221 or www.homeserviceheroesfl.com.

VFCC AWARDS $5,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS TO OUTSTANDING LOCAL SENIORS

By Marie Gilmore



Five high school seniors were awarded VFCC Scholarships this year.

The Valrico FishHawk Chamber of Commerce (VFCC) recently honored five exceptional high school seniors with $1,000 scholarships each, recognizing their academic achievements, leadership and commitment to community service.

"It was a wonderful experience working in the role of scholarship chair for the VFCC this year," said Michael Brand, awards and recognition chair. "I was so impressed with the quality of candidates we had apply. The independent judges had quite a time selecting the winners. Meeting the finalists and learning about their accomplishments was extremely inspiring. It's great to know we have such talented young adults ready to become leaders in our community."

Among the recipients is Durant High School senior Bailee Knighten, an accomplished student athlete and entrepreneur. Knighten has already published three books, operates two businesses and holds school records in the 100 and 400-meter hurdles.

Also from Durant High School, Andrew O'Toole, ranked first in his class, earned recognition for both academic excellence and leadership. His honors include the West Point Society General Schwarzkopf Leadership Award and the AP Scholar with Distinction Award.

Avery Ranieri of Bell Creek Academy, ranked fifth in her class, has demonstrated a passion for civic engagement and communication. As student government president and a volunteer at Tampa General Hospital, she has advocated for organ donation legislation in Tallahassee. Ranieri, who also interned with the *Osprey Observer*, will attend the University of Georgia.

Newsome High School's Mary Grace Hyde was recognized for her exceptional leadership, having served as class president all four years of high school — a first for her school.

Durant High School senior Logan Glynn, ranked fifth in his class, plans to pursue civil and transportation engineering at the University of Florida. A lacrosse team captain and club founder, Glynn hopes to one day solve local traffic challenges that first sparked his interest as a child.

Together, these five students represent the VFCC's mission to invest in the next generation of community leaders. For more information on the chamber, visit www.valricofishhawk.org.





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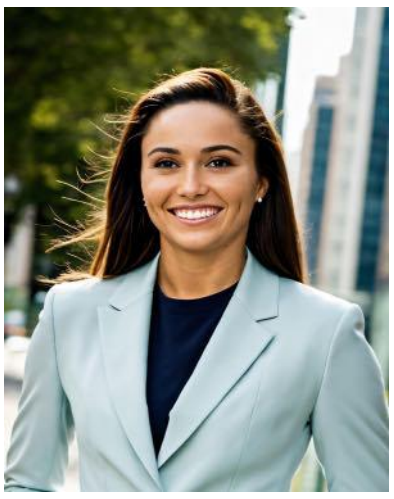
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HIGH 5 INC. TEAM MEMBERS SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

By Emily Harper



High 5 Inc. chief operating officer Patrick Skidmore.



High 5 Inc. chief communications officer Jada Spano.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For more, visit www.high5inc.org.

BLOOMINGDALE AND NEWSOME HOST SUMMER BASKETBALL CAMPS

By Nick Nahas



Coach Bower will also be hosting a joint camp with Newsome girls basketball Head Coach David Cassreino.

Bloomingdale High School is hosting basketball camps for boys and girls of all skill levels from fourth to ninth grade this summer.

Week one will be held from Monday through Thursday, June 8-11, and week two is from Monday through Thursday, June 15-18.

Session one is for grades four through six from 9 a.m.-12 Noon and session two is for grades seven through nine from 1-4 p.m.

Students will be instructed by Bloomingdale boys Head Coach David Maciejewski and girls basketball Head Coach Joel Bower along with players, with an emphasis on the improvement of fundamental skills and sportsmanship.

"I enjoy teaming up with Coach Bower and the girls players during camp," said Maciejewski. "I think both of our programs do a really good job of supporting each other throughout the year, and I believe that this camp helps set the foundation for that with our teams. We have several players on both the boys and girls teams who have come to camp and are now players in our program. I enjoy seeing those players grow from middle school and elementary players into players in both our programs wearing the Bloomingdale jersey."

Players from beginner to advanced are welcome, with each one receiving a camp T-shirt.

The priority is for each camper to have fun and learn in a safe environment. Campers will be placed in groups by age, size and ability.

All campers participate in daily skills, instructions and drills and play in three-on-three or five-on-five games and contests daily.

Participants may arrive as early as 30 minutes before their session begins, with concessions and camp bank available.

Bower will also be hosting a joint camp with Newsome girls basketball Head Coach David Cassreino. The Rival Girls Basketball Camp will be held at Newsome High School from 9 a.m.-12 Noon from Monday through Thursday, June 22-25, for rising sixth to ninth graders. The cost is $125 per person.

"I am excited to see players from both schools work together to help develop the next generation of basketball players in our area," said Bower.

For more information on the camps, email Bower at joel.bower@hcps.net or Cassreino at david.cassreino@hcps.net.

"I'm looking forward to having our two programs come together this summer to help promote girls basketball in the community," said Cassreino. "This is a great opportunity for young girls to learn the game from the coaches and players of Bloomingdale and Newsome. It will be a fun week of basketball."

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SERVING UP INCLUSION: JUDY MOORE MARKS 25 YEARS OF TENNIS FOR FUN

By Jay Braden













For 25 years, Judy Moore has been quietly transforming lives on the tennis courts of Brandon. What began as her son's high school project has grown into Tennis For Fun (TFF), a widely respected program serving individuals with Down syndrome and other intellectual and developmental disabilities — one that is now inspiring similar initiatives across Florida and beyond.

For Moore as director of TFF, the milestone is less about longevity and more about impact. The program has become a cornerstone for families seeking inclusive recreational opportunities, offering participants not just a chance to learn tennis, but a space to build confidence, friendships, and a sense of belonging.

"When we started, the goal was simple," Moore has often said in reflecting on the program's early days. "We wanted everyone to have the chance to play, to feel included, and to have fun." That guiding principle remains at the heart of TFF today.

Over the years, the program has expanded significantly. What began in Brandon now serves as a model for other communities looking to replicate its success. Programs inspired by TFF have been established in multiple locations throughout Florida and in other states, a testament to both its effectiveness and its adaptability.

Participants in Tennis For Fun engage in structured tennis activities tailored to their abilities, supported by a network of dedicated volunteers, coaches, and family members. The emphasis is not on competition, but on personal growth and enjoyment. For many families, the program fills a critical gap.

Parents often describe the program as life-changing. Beyond the physical benefits of exercise, participants develop social skills and independence. Many form lasting friendships, while others discover a newfound confidence that carries into other areas of their lives.

> This Brandon program empowers individuals with Down syndrome, intellectual or developmental disabilities to grow into a model replicated across Florida and beyond.

"Before joining, my son was hesitant to try new things," one parent shared. "Now he looks forward to every session. He's made friends, he's more active, and he feels proud of what he can do."

The success of TFF is also rooted in its community support. Volunteers play a central role, working one-on-one with participants to ensure each individual feels encouraged and included. Their commitment, combined with Moore's steady leadership, has created a program culture that is both welcoming and empowering.

As the program has grown, so too has its influence. Organizations in other regions have looked to TFF as a blueprint for developing inclusive sports programming, thus demonstrating that such initiatives can be both impactful and sustainable, Moore and her team have helped significantly to broaden access to recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Despite the expansion and recognition, those closest to the program say Moore remains focused on the individuals she serves. Her leadership style—hands-on, compassionate, and consistent—has been a driving force behind TFF's enduring success.

As Tennis For Fun marks its 25th anniversary, the celebration is as much about the community it has built as it is about the years it represents. For participants and their families, the program is more than an activity—it's a source of joy, connection, and possibility.

And for Judy Moore, the mission continues much as it began: one player, one rally, and one smile at a time.

For more, visit http://tennisforfun.org/.

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BRCC ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR

Staff Report



The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce its Community Health & Wellness Fair, taking place Saturday, May 16, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Gardenville Park & Recreation Center, located at 6219 Symmes Rd. in Gibsonton.

This free, family-friendly event is designed to connect residents with valuable health, wellness and medical resources while creating a fun and engaging experience for all ages. The fair will feature local health and wellness businesses, medical providers and community organizations, along with interactive activities, on-site health screenings, food trucks, sports demonstrations and live entertainment.

"Our Community Health & Wellness Fair is all about bringing people together and empowering our community with access to resources that support healthier, happier lives," said the Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce President Amber Aaron. "From preventative care and fitness to nutrition and mental wellness, this event offers something for everyone."

The fair also provides an excellent opportunity for health and wellness businesses to showcase their services directly to families, individuals and decision-makers in the Brandon-Riverview area. Participating businesses can build brand awareness, share expertise and form meaningful connections while supporting community well-being.

Businesses specializing in healthcare, fitness, nutrition, mental wellness, preventative care and holistic services are encouraged to participate.

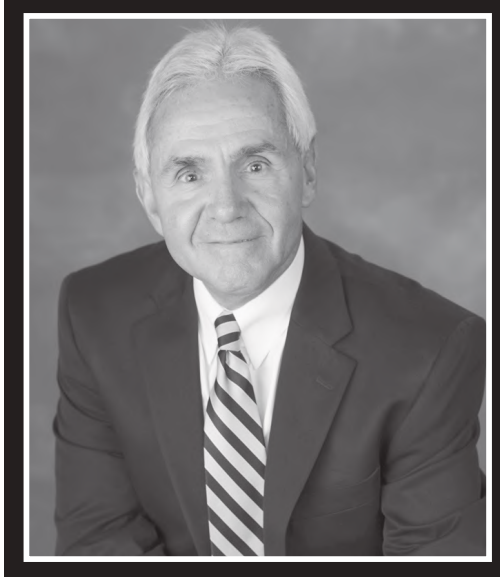
Community members are invited to attend at no cost, and businesses interested in showcasing their services can register online at https://web.centralhillsboroughchamber.com/events/Community-Health-Wellness-Fair-63706/details.

Join the Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce for a high-energy, impactful event that educates, inspires and strengthens a healthier community.

About the Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce

The Brandon Riverview Chamber of Commerce empowers businesses through opportunities for brand exposure, education and advocacy while fostering meaningful connections that strengthen the community and promote collaboration and growth.

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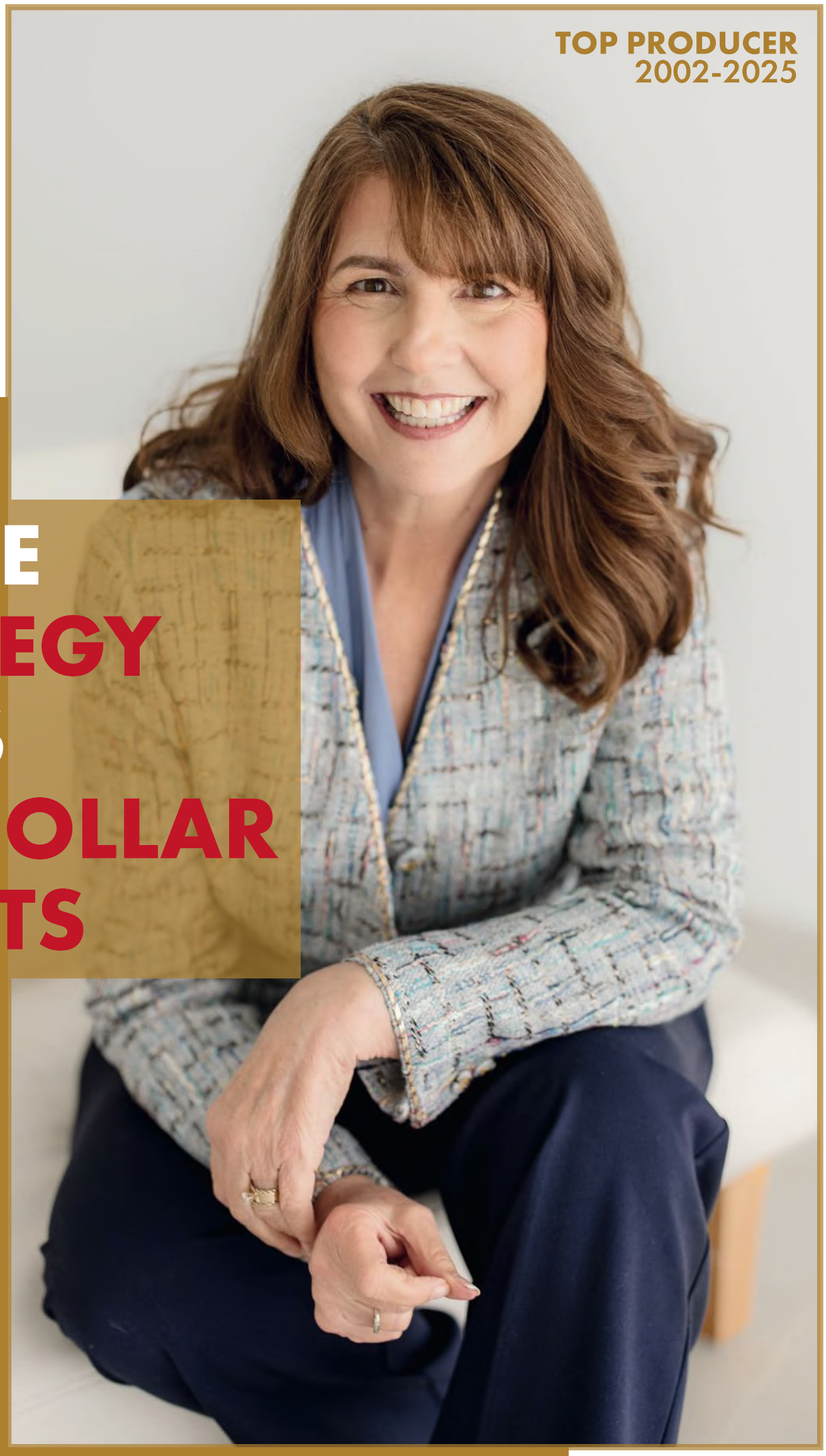
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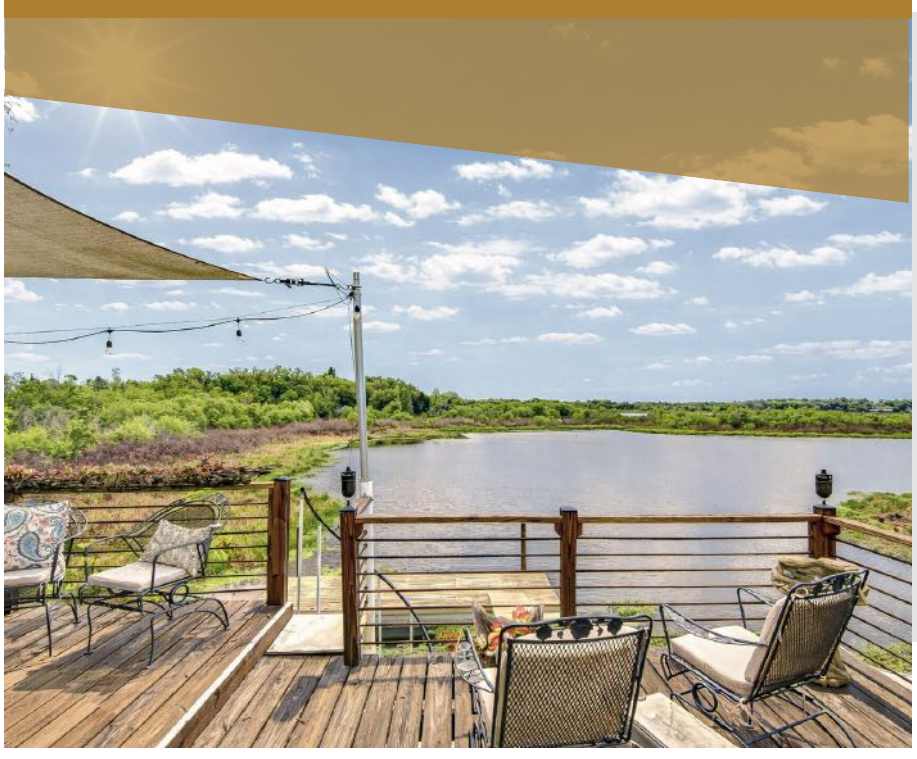
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CARDINAL ROOFING CO-OWNER BECOMES AN INDUSTRY PIONEER

By Madeline Gardner



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HONORARY MAYOR CANDIDATES READY MONTH OF FUN EVENTS

Staff Report



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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DAVID WEEKLEY HOMES MARKS 30 YEARS OF BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Staff Report



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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNTY TO HOST 29TH ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE

Staff Report





Photos Courtesy of Veterans Memorial Park and Museum

Hillsborough County Veteran Community Services and the Veterans Council of Hillsborough County will host the county's 29th annual Memorial Day Observance on Sunday, May 24, at 10 a.m. at Veterans Memorial Park & Rear Admiral Collins, Jr. Veterans Museum, located at 3602 N. U.S. 301 in Tampa.

In addition to the annual 'Garden of Gold' flag installation depicting the faces and service branches of local Gold Star Family members, the event will include remembrances of fallen heroes from Operation Epic Fury.

The 29th annual Memorial Day Observance will feature:

- Special guests, including Maj. Gen. John Gronski; retired U.S. Army Command Chief Master Sgt. Christopher Ottenwess of the 6th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill Air Force Base; and American Gold Star Mothers.
- Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC), rifle salute, and taps.
- On-site resources for veterans and military families.
- Refreshments and fellowship following the outdoor amphitheater ceremony.

Event attendees are encouraged to visit the monuments and Garden of Gold flag display.

For military families, Memorial Day is more than just the unofficial start of summer. Recent and ongoing operations overseas make the upcoming holiday a sensitive time for the military community, especially for Gold Star families whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice. They ask that Americans reflect on the true meaning of Memorial Day: honoring those who gave their lives in service to our nation.

Hillsborough County's Veterans Memorial Park is open daily from 7 a.m.-5 p.m., with free admission and parking. For more information, visit https://hcfl.gov/departments/veteran-community-services or contact Hillsborough County Veteran Community Services at 813-635-8316.



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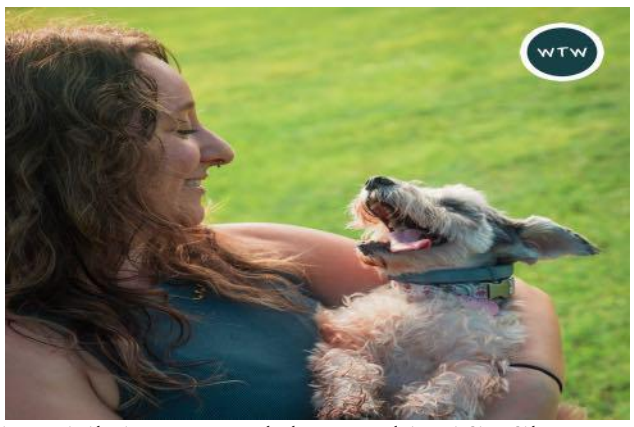
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WHY VALRICO AND LITHIA PET PARENTS ARE CHOOSING LOCAL, LICENSED, PET CARE

By Samantha Evensen



Let's paint a picture.

You've just booked a pet sitter through a popular gig app. It was easy, the reviews seemed fine and the profile photo showed someone smiling next to a golden retriever. You might meet that person, and they promise you the best. You head out of town. And then ... they don't show. You can't get a hold of them. You panic.

Sound familiar? If you're a pet parent in Valrico, Lithia or the surrounding communities, you've probably experienced or at least have heard about this exact scenario happening.

The pet care industry has exploded with gig-economy platforms promising convenience at the tap of a button, but convenience and accountability are not the same thing. Not even close.

Gig-based pet care apps operate like marketplaces. They connect pet owners with independent contractors who set their own hours, their own rates and often their own standards. The platform takes a cut. The sitter shows up (or doesn't). And when something goes wrong, the fine print in those terms of service tends to be where accountability quietly disappears.

To be fair, there are wonderful, caring individuals on those platforms. But 'wonderful' shouldn't be a gamble, especially when we're talking about an extension of your family.

Walk the Walk Professional Pet Care built its business, and its reputation, right in the Valrico and Lithia community. When you give it access to your home and trust it with your pets, it takes that seriously.

Its team members don't just show up, it shows up prepared, professional and backed by a company that stands behind every single visit. If someone on Walk the Walk's team has an emergency, it has local backup. If something unexpected happens with your pet, it has protocols, not panic.

"Samantha came over to meet them, and I immediately felt at peace. That feeling has only grown stronger with every interaction since. Sam and her entire team operate at the highest standard. Their communication is exceptional, the visit notes are thoughtful and thorough. ... They have been an absolute Godsend," said Danielle H., a Walk the Walk client.

When you hire a Valrico or Lithia-based business like Walk the Walk, your money stays in this community.

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Walk the Walk serves Valrico, Lithia and the surrounding communities. Visit it at www.walkthewalkppc.com to learn more or book your first visit today.

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORTS BOTH MOM AND BABY

Staff Report



Lactation consultant Janna Aaron of AdventHealth Riverview supports a new mother during a breastfeeding session, highlighting the health benefits and resources available to help moms and babies establish a successful feeding routine.

As a new or experienced mom, you've likely heard that 'breast is best' when feeding your child. If you can, only breastfeeding your baby for the first six months is considered the best option. And it's even better if you can keep offering breast milk at least until their second birthday.

Although breastfeeding can be difficult at first, it offers several benefits for your baby and you. Talking with a lactation consultant can make the process easier so you can enjoy the advantages breastfeeding offers.

"When you choose to breastfeed your baby, you put them on a path for a healthier life. It's also a choice that boosts your health and well-being," said Janna Aaron, lactation consultant with AdventHealth Riverview. "Our lactation consultants are here to answer your questions and help you and your baby settle into a relaxed breastfeeding routine."

Your breast milk is your baby's superfood — it meets all their nutritional needs. It also has antibodies that boost their immune system and lower their risk of many health conditions, like ear infections, diabetes, lung problems, allergies and childhood cancer. When you breastfeed, you get some of the same benefits. Your risk of breast, ovarian, uterine and endometrial cancer drops, and you're less likely to develop diabetes, high blood pressure or osteoporosis.

"The benefits of breastfeeding go beyond health improvements, though," Aaron said. "It's a free, convenient way to feed your baby. It's always the right temperature, and it's always available. You never have to pack supplies, so it's easy to satisfy a hungry baby when you're on the go."

With AdventHealth, you have four convenient ways to get the breastfeeding guidance you need. You can register for one of its breastfeeding classes, join a weekly Baby Bunch class for moms with babies under 12 months old, schedule a one-on-one consultation at any of its locations or call its breastfeeding support warmline for in-the-moment advice.

Call 656-233-5404 to learn more about our classes or to schedule a consultation with one or AdventHealth's lactation consultants.

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For event information, visit Facebook:
@GlarosForMayor (Steve Glaros)
@ChrisforMayor2026 (Chris Ciulla)

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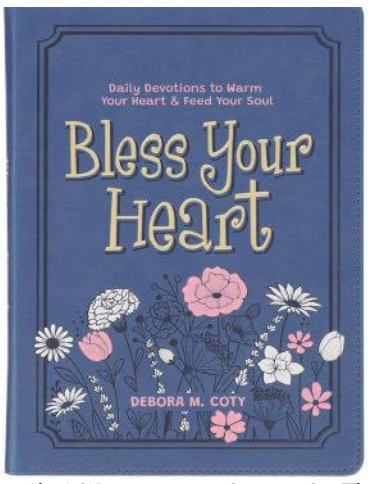
TOO BLESSED TO BE STRESSED AUTHOR LAUNCHES NEW DEVOTIONAL SERIES

By Olivia Clark

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Coty continues her long-running Grace Notes column.

THE NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES ARE COMING TO TAMPA AND ARE WELCOMING VOLUNTEERS

By Emily Harper

This year's National Veterans Golden Age Games will be held in Tampa from Saturday, June 27, to Thursday, July 2. This is the first time the games have been brought to Tampa, and they will bring over 1,400 veterans along with their families to the city.



Photo credit: The US Department of Veterans Affairs.



Photos from the 2025 National Veterans Golden Age Games.

The Golden Age Games began in 1985 to support veterans ages 55 and older to stay active through sports. Now going into their 40th year, the games have grown into one of the Department of Veterans Affairs' premier adaptive sports programs, focused on healthy aging and rehabilitation.

These games highlight the importance of health, wellness and honoring those who served. Veterans will have the opportunity to choose from 21 different sports, including swimming, golf, pickleball and track and field, to compete in over the span of the week.

In preparation, veterans are able to benefit from year-round rehabilitation and fitness programs at their local Department of Veterans Affairs facilities. This allows them to engage in physical activity while gaining confidence in their abilities.

"What makes the Golden Age Games special is that it's not just about competition. At its core, it is about connection, community, recovery and showing veterans that it's never too late to stay active and rediscover purpose," stated Brittany Hook, director of the games.

Volunteers contribute significantly to the success of this event. They assist with operations, help guide participants, support competitions, manage check-in and ensure that the veterans have a safe and positive experience for the duration of the games.

The games invite anyone who wants to support their veterans to volunteer. For students who volunteer, the organization supports the verification of their time for their extracurricular requirements. However, the games encourage students to check with their school or organization for confirmation in the activity.

To sign up, individuals can go to their website, https://40goldenagegames.mytrs.com/ and complete the volunteer registration form.



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PERSONAL CARE AT THE HEART OF SUN CITY CENTER FUNERAL HOME

By Olivia Clark



Staff members at Sun City Center Funeral Home provide compassionate, personalized care to families in the community.

Sun City Center Funeral Home has built its reputation on providing compassionate care and personalized services for families during some of life's most difficult moments. Since becoming part of Foundation Partners Group in January 2017, the funeral home has maintained its family-oriented atmosphere while continuing to serve the community with dignity and respect.

Established with a mission centered on honoring each life, Sun City Center Funeral Home focuses on guiding families through the grieving process with understanding and support. Nicole Sharp, funeral director, emphasized the organization's commitment to thoughtful service.

"Our mission has always been to honor each life with dignity, respect and meaningful tribute while supporting families with guidance and understanding every step of the way," said Sharp.

What distinguishes the funeral home is its deep connection to the local community. Its staff actively participates in organizations such as the Sun City Center Rotary, the Southshore Chamber of Commerce and the Daughters of the American Revolution, while also supporting causes including the Walk to End Alzheimer's and the Out of the Darkness Walk.

"We take the time to listen and understand each family's wishes, ensuring every service reflects the unique life being honored," said Sharp.

Sun City Center Funeral Home offers a full range of services, including traditional funerals, memorial services, cremation options and celebration of life gatherings. Personalization plays a central role, allowing families to incorporate meaningful elements such as music, hobbies, cultural traditions and special tributes.

In addition to its general services, the funeral home takes pride in honoring veterans. With a former member of the military on staff, it assists families in securing military honors, coordinating with national cemeteries and incorporating patriotic elements into services.

"It is a true honor to serve veterans and their families," said Sharp.

Beyond services, the team remains committed to supporting families long after arrangements are complete, offering guidance, resources and a compassionate presence.

"We want residents to know that we are here not only in times of loss, but also for pre-planning and guidance or simply for a cup of coffee and a chat," said Sharp.

For the staff, the most meaningful aspect of their work is helping families find comfort during difficult times.

Sun City Center Funeral Home is located at 1851 Rickenbacker Dr., Sun City Center, FL 33573. For more information, call 813-279-8330.

HILLSBOROUGH COLLEGE UNVEILS NEW BRAND IDENTITY AND LOGO

Staff Report

Hillsborough College has unveiled a refreshed brand identity featuring a new logo, updated visual system and an enhanced college seal. The new brand reflects a thoughtful modernization of the college's image, designed to better represent the institution's growth, purpose and long-standing connection to the community.

"Hillsborough College's new branding captures the spirit of the college today: student-centered and deeply connected to the community," said Dr. Kenneth Atwater, Hillsborough College president. "The design honors our past while offering a more modern look at who we are, what we offer and where we're going. It underscores our commitment to expanding opportunity, advancing academic excellence and staying responsive to the evolving needs of our community."

The new brand identity was developed in partnership with Sensory 5 and Trickey Jennus, which incorporated feedback from college leadership, faculty, staff and students to create a refreshed look that reflects the college's mission and values. The updated system blends modern design elements that bring the brand forward with intentional references to the college's legacy visuals, resulting in a more cohesive and contemporary identity that honors the institution's foundation.

"Our visual identity is often the first way people experience the college, and this refreshed brand helps us tell our story with greater clarity and confidence," said Angela Walters Eveillard, executive director of marketing and public relations at Hillsborough College. "It introduces a more modern look while still echoing familiar elements that connect back to our history. Together, those qualities create an identity that feels current, authentic and true to who we are today and moving forward."

Hillsborough College offers more than 200 academic options, including a Bachelor of Science in nursing, associate in arts and associate in science degrees, college credit certificates, postsecondary adult vocational certificates, advanced technical diplomas and certificates as well as continuing education and lifelong learning courses.

The new brand aims to unify how these opportunities are presented across print, digital and physical spaces, providing a consistent experience for students, faculty, staff and community partners.

The rollout includes updated signage across campuses, new digital assets, refreshed print materials and a cohesive visual system that will be incorporated into student communications, outreach materials and community engagement initiatives.

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

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PRESERVING BRANDON: GRASSROOTS EFFORT KEEPS HISTORY ALIVE

There is something special about a community that chooses to remember where it came from.

In a place like Brandon, a community that has grown rapidly, it can sometimes feel like history is being replaced faster than it can be preserved. What was once a small town founded in the 1800s has transformed into a vibrant area filled with neighborhoods, businesses and families.

But even as Brandon continues to grow, its story still lives all around us in the names of our streets, in historic homes and in the memories of longtime residents.

That is where Preserving Brandon began.

Nearly two years ago, what started as a simple observation turned into something much more meaningful. There was no central place for people to come together to share stories, learn about local history or support preservation efforts in our community. Rather than waiting for something to exist, a group of passionate residents came together to create it.

Preserving Brandon was born from that shared desire to connect, educate and celebrate the rich heritage of our community.

Since then, what began as a grassroots effort has grown into a vibrant movement. Today, we are proud to be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization bringing together neighbors, historians and community partners who share a common goal: ensuring that Brandon's history is not lost but honored and preserved for future generations.

Through community meetings, partnerships and events, we have created a space where stories are shared, connections are built and history comes to life. Whether it's highlighting historic landmarks, supporting local preservation initiatives or simply gathering to learn from one another, every effort helps strengthen our community.

This May marks our two-year anniversary, a milestone that belongs not just to our organization but also to the entire community that has supported and believed in this mission.

Preserving Brandon is, at its heart, about people. It is about honoring those who came before us, celebrating who we are today and ensuring that future generations will always have a place to look back and say, "This is where we came from."

And we are just getting started.

Everyone in the community can play a part. Please get in touch with us at preservingbrandon@gmail.com.

VOLUNTEERS BEAUTIFY FUTURE HOME OF SGT. 1ST CLASS AARON CORNELIUS

By Brian Bokor



Residents and community volunteers gathered in April to help transform the future home of U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Cornelius during a Volunteer Day organized by Homes For Our Troops (HFOT).

The event focused on landscaping the grounds of a specially adapted custom home on Fishhawk Heights Road designed to support the severely injured post-9/11 veteran. Volunteers spent the morning planting and completing outdoor improvements, with participants receiving commemorative T-shirts and lunch for their efforts.

Cornelius, known locally for his positive attitude and resilience, shared his outlook on staying active and encouraging others facing similar challenges.

"I just try to get out and help soldiers and ... show them that, hey, if I can do it, you know, get up and live life, because life's too short as it is," Cornelius said.

He also spoke about the importance of perspective in everyday life.

"If you pay attention to the news, you're going to be sad. ... Go out there and make a life," he added.

That mindset continues to shape his recovery and daily routine. Recently, Cornelius visited Montana and returned to skiing for the first time in more than 13 years.

"I did — it's been about 13, 14 years — I went skiing. I did the first two with some assistance to remember how to do it, and then I did three runs down the slope by myself," he said.

He earned his sailing certification in St. Petersburg and is continuing to stay active within the community.

"I got a tandem bike, so I'll try to get somebody to jump on with me so I can ride bikes too," Cornelius said.

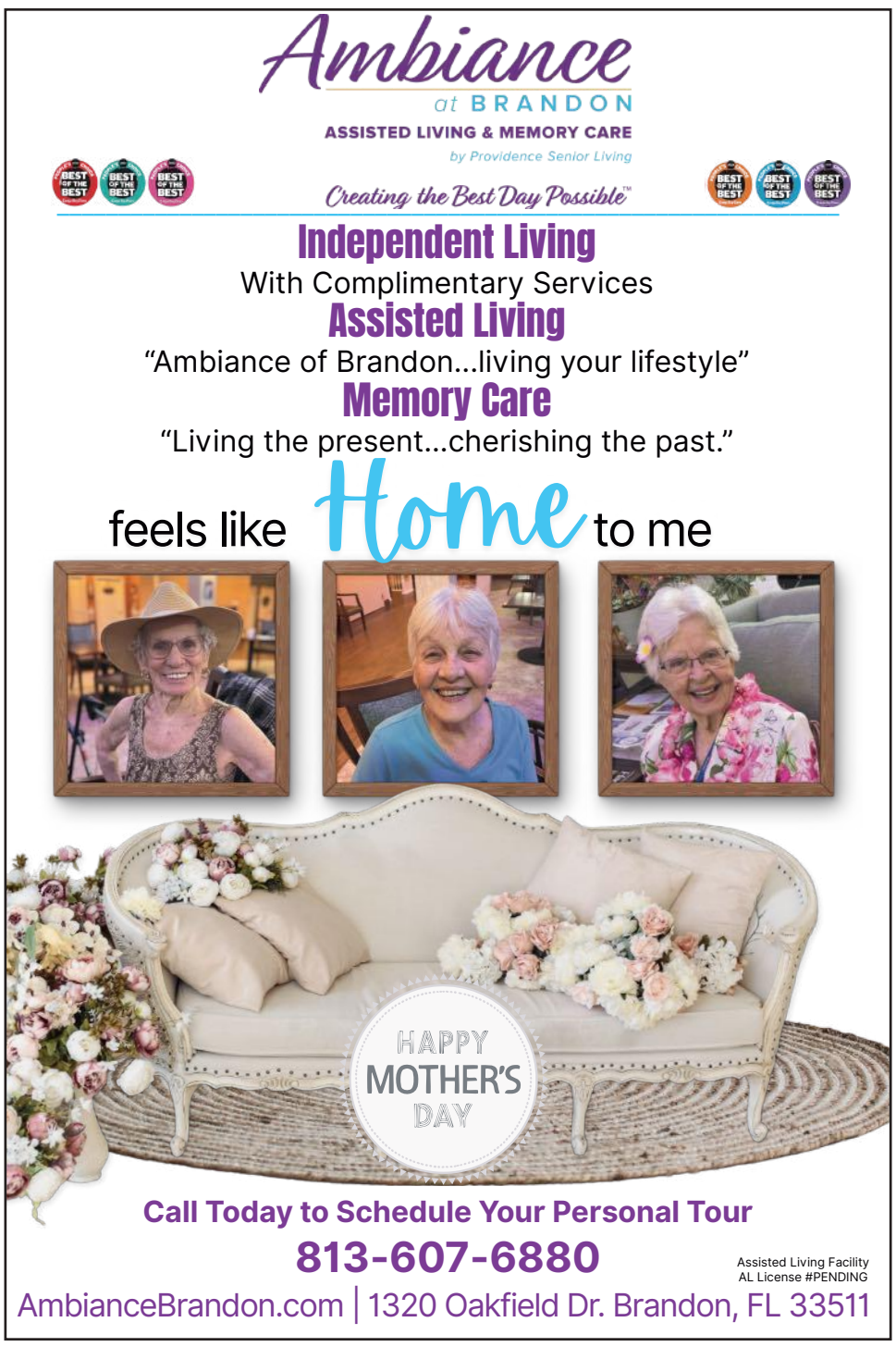
Looking ahead, Cornelius is preparing for his first Boston 5K at the end of June, an event hosted by the Boston Red Sox that includes a visit to Fenway Park.

While the landscaping effort marked a major step forward, another milestone is quickly approaching. HFOT has scheduled the official Key Ceremony for Saturday, June 13, when Cornelius will receive the keys to his new home.

The community is invited to attend the outdoor ceremony. Check-in begins at 8:30 a.m., with the formal presentation scheduled from 9-11 a.m.

Those interested in attending can RSVP at www.hfotusa.org/cornelius.





'ART OF READING' PROGRAM OPENS CHALLENGE FOR ALL AGES

Staff Report



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VALRICO FOUNDERS TABLE PROVIDES CONNECTION FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

By Jane Owen



Every week in Valrico, local business owners meet over coffee to talk about their businesses, what's working and not working and how to grow successfully. They meet to assist each other with problems, brainstorm how to improve processes, and connect.

The Valrico Founders Table meets twice weekly at Chill Cawfee on Lithia Pinecrest Road. There are no dues, no business pitches and no pressure. The group has a question for discussion, time to share wins and failures and offer praise or 'shout-outs' to each other.

Connor Blackmon owns the Heroes Fitness gym in Valrico. During the summer of 2025, he started the Valrico Founders Table with a desire to connect with other local business owners. At the time, Blackmon was feeling the frustration of a business valley or a dip in revenue. Inspired by the mastermind principle in the book Think and Grow Rich, by Napoleon Hill, Blackmon posted in a community page on Facebook that he wanted to start a Friday morning coffee club for like-minded, service-based business owners who wanted to work together towards improvement.

"I didn't have a lot of expectations going into this. I went into this saying I want to connect with people, and I want a place where I can talk about my struggles — more than anything, because I was struggling at the time," Blackmon said.

The group began meeting on Fridays in July 2025. It grew quickly and added a second meeting on Wednesdays at lunchtime.

"It's evolved into a support group. It's a place for business owners to connect and share insights. It's a place where you can be vulnerable and be heard as well," Blackmon said.

Patti Sutherland, national marketplace director for Christians in Business, said she loves the Valrico Founders Table because it is not a pitch group.

"Connor has put together a group of young and older entrepreneurs who share ideas and experiences. The exchanges every meeting are different because of the questions he brings every time we meet. I have learned a lot from this group, and I think some of my expertise has been appreciated too," Sutherland said.

Chill Cawfee owner Tom Quigley said the Valrico Founders Table creates real connection that benefits the community.

"When local founders support each other, it builds a stronger, more resilient community," Quigley said.

The Valrico Founders Table meets at Chill Cawfee, located at 3407 Lithia Pinecrest Rd. in Valrico, on Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. and Fridays at 8 a.m. The Valrico Founders Table can be found as a public group on Facebook.

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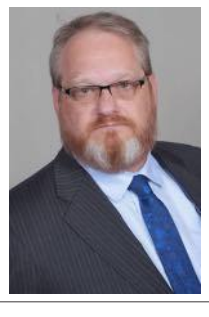
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SENATOR MOODY HONORS HCA BRANDON NURSE WITH FLORIDA'S FINEST AWARD

Staff Report



Sharon Gibbs, director of critical care at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital, (center) stands with Jeff Pollier after being honored with the Florida's Finest Award by Sen. Ashley Moody due to Gibbs' quick actions during a heart attack.

What began as a life-or-death moment in a community garden has become a powerful story of survival, teamwork and recognition at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital. Recently, Florida Senator Ashley Moody honored Sharon Gibbs, director of critical care at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital, with the Florida's Finest Award for her heroic actions that helped save the life of Jeff Pollier.

Jeff Pollier and his wife, Robin Pollier, were present for the surprise presentation, making the moment even more meaningful.

Just months earlier, Jeff Pollier collapsed from a heart attack while gardening with Robin Pollier at their plot in the community garden in Sun City Center. By chance, Gibbs was nearby and immediately sprang into action. She began CPR while others retrieved an automated external defibrillator, or AED, delivering the critical care needed to restore his heartbeat.

Emergency responders transported Jeff Pollier to HCA Florida South Shore Hospital, where physicians identified severe blockages in three major coronary arteries. He was then transferred to HCA Florida Brandon Hospital for advanced cardiac care, where a multidisciplinary team performed a lifesaving quadruple bypass surgery.

During the award presentation, Moody recognized Gibbs not only for her quick thinking and clinical expertise but also for embodying the compassion and readiness that define health care professionals across Florida. Her actions serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of CPR training and access to AEDs and the impact of being prepared to act in an emergency.

Stories like Jeff Pollier's highlight the critical role of teamwork across HCA Florida Healthcare facilities. From the immediate response in the community to advanced cardiac care in the hospital, every step played a part in giving him a second chance at life.

Now reunited and thriving, Jeff and Robin Pollier stood alongside Gibbs during the ceremony, a full circle moment that underscored the lifesaving difference one person and one team can make. For Jeff Pollier, that difference means more time with his wife, his family and the life they have built together.

Jeff Pollier described his recovery in simple terms: "I'm living on bonus time now."

For the team at Brandon Hospital and South Shore Hospital, it is a reminder of their shared mission: to care for and improve human life.

TESSERA SENIOR COMMUNITY REIMAGINED AS AMBIANCE AT BRANDON

By Marie Gilmore

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

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

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

The transition reflects a broader investment in elevating both the environment and experience for residents and their families.

Ambiance at Brandon
ASSISTED LIVING & MEMORY CARE
by Providence Senior Living

Community leaders said the focus remains on creating a supportive, engaging atmosphere where residents can maintain independence while receiving personalized assistance when needed.

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

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

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

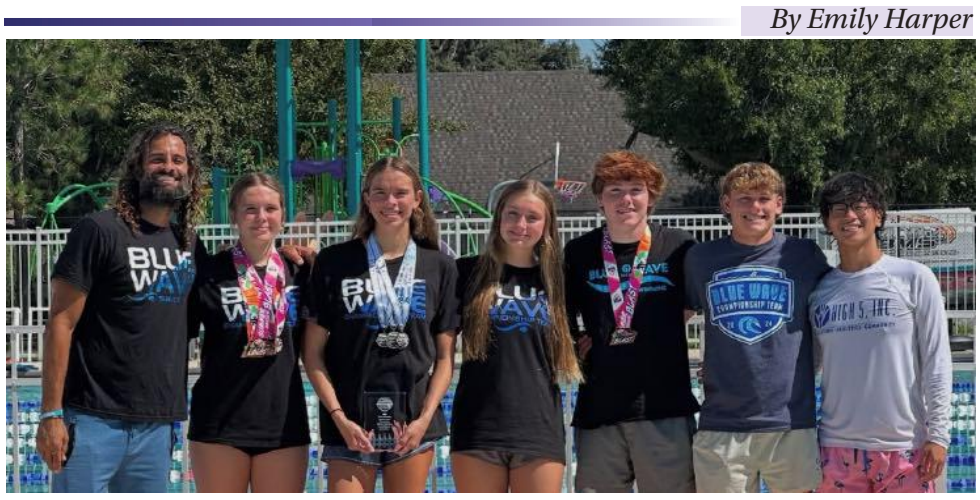
They invite prospective residents and families to visit, meet staff, and explore whether the updated Ambiance lifestyle is the right fit.

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



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

By Emily Harper



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A KID'S PLACE OF TAMPA BAY CELEBRATES LIVES CHANGED DURING FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH

Staff Report



May is National Foster Care Awareness Month. This is a time to help shine a light on more than 4,000 children in foster care across the Tampa Bay area. At A Kid's Place of Tampa Bay, this month reminds us of our mission: To provide a safe, loving and nurturing home for children in foster care. Since opening our doors in 2009, we have helped more than 1,700 children and over 750 families. We are able to care for children from newborns to 18 years old on our main campus, and we are also proud to have expanded our services through our Extended Foster Care program, supporting young adults ages 18-23 as they transition into adulthood.

Every day at A Kid's Place is centered around creating stability, comfort and normalcy for the children who call our campus home. From school support and counseling to fun activities and shared meals, our goal is to make sure each child feels safe, valued and supported while they are with us. To help our community better understand the heart of our mission, we want to introduce you to some of the incredible young people who live at A Kid's Place. While every child has their own unique story, they all share the same hopes: to be heard, to be supported and to be treated just like any other kid.

We sat down with four of our teens and tweens for a very special 'Take 5' conversation to learn more about them beyond their circumstances. We talked about their favorite foods, hidden talents, funniest moments, dream vacations and the activities they are most excited to try this summer. Their answers were full of personality, creativity and resilience. This small glimpse into their lives reminds us that foster care is not just about placement; it is about childhood, growth and possibility. These kids are more than their circumstances; they are athletes, friends and dreamers.

When siblings Emma (8) and Lucas (7) arrived at our home, they carried visible trauma. Both struggled academically, had difficulty regulating emotions and were physically withdrawn. Most of all, they were terrified of being separated — something they had already endured once before. Today, Emma is reading above grade level and leads her class with confidence. Lucas, once silent, is now joyful, engaged and thriving socially. Their health has improved; their laughter has returned, and — most importantly — their trust has been restored. We are proud to share that Emma and Lucas are currently in the process of being fostered-to-adopt by a loving young couple, ready to provide them with a permanent home — together.

We invite you to take a moment this month to learn more, show support and help us continue building a place where children feel safe, seen and loved.

Visit our website, https://akidsplacetb.org/, or call 813-381-3839 to learn more.

SUPPORT CHRIS CIULLA FOR HONORARY MAYOR OF EAST HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

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

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

Chris for Honorary Mayor





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- Saturday, June 27 — Chris Rocks The Vote - Music Festival

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@ Tiki Docks River Bar & Grill

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@ The Regent

June 26th
The Amazing Race 6:00 pm
@Presbyterian Church of Bloomingdale
To Register, email
Glaros4mayor@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

Online Auction
June 25th - 28th

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

Steven J. Glaros
813-854-1234
Steven@glaroslaw.com

My beneFitting Charities are:

HIGH 5, INC.

RAINING CATS & DOGS SHELTER & SANCTUARY

IMPACT

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HURRICANE AWARENESS: PREPARE AND STAY SAFE



Hurricanes are powerful and destructive natural disasters that can cause significant damage to communities, infrastructure and the environment. Understanding hurricanes, how they form, their potential impacts and the importance of preparedness can help reduce the risks they pose to individuals and communities.

The Dangers of Hurricanes

While hurricanes are known for their strong winds, they can cause a variety of dangerous effects:

1. Strong Winds: Winds can cause buildings to collapse, trees to fall and power lines to snap, as well as flying debris.

2. Flooding: Heavy rainfall can lead to flash flooding and river flooding, submerging roads, homes and infrastructure.

3. Storm Surges: A storm surge occurs when strong winds push seawater onto the land, causing coastal flooding and damage, often the most deadly aspect.

4. Tornadoes: Hurricanes can spawn tornadoes, which can further increase damage and risk.

5. Power Outages: Power can be out for up to seven days.

6. Food Shortages: With the lack of power, stores are closed, refrigerators no longer work and transportation of food becomes difficult.

Preparing for a Hurricane

Proper preparation can save lives and reduce property damage. The SouthShore Disaster Council is hosting two hurricane preparedness symposiums, one on Saturday, May 30, at 10:30 a.m. at Calvery Church, located at 1250 E. College Ave. in Ruskin, and the other on Thursday, June 11, at 10:30 a.m. at Sun City Center United Methodist Church, located at 1971 Haverford Ave. in Sun City Center.

Please attend one of these informative presentations, which will include HCFR, HCSO, local utilities and other catastrophe and disaster preparation and recovery resources. Learn your evaluation zone, how to prepare your home, how to deal with evacuations and how to shelter in place.

Conclusion

Hurricanes are among the most powerful and destructive natural disasters, but with proper awareness, preparation, and action, the risk they pose can be minimized. Educate yourself and make a plan.









Bloomingdale Theatre

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Grace Notes

Rooting for the Underdog
By Debora Coty

"Behold, the winter is past. ... The flowers have already appeared in the land... and the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance," (Song of Solomon, 2:11-13 NASB).

Interest in flowers peaks in the springtime, when in most regions of our fair country, flowers pop up and burst forth with fragrant blooms that tickle our various fancies.

Here in Florida, though, the state named for its incredible flora and fauna, spring sprang back in February, and the blossoms are now struggling to keep from shriveling up to beef jerky status in the daily 90-degree heat.

Despite sprouting in a blast furnace, the amazing, wee crocus has recently captured my attention. No, not despite it, because of it.

These lovely, delicate-appearing but stalwart-in-constitution little underdogs are not to be denied — they pop up everywhere. Like a surprise blessing from the Master Creator. A relative of the iris and the source of saffron (the priciest spice in the world), many survive in blazing sun-drenched places where wind or rain has blown their sturdy little seeds to reach out in propagation glory.

The determined crocus puts up with everything nature and mankind bombards upon it and keeps smiling.

Reminds me of another underdog who happens to be a real dog. My rescue pup, Laz the Resurrection Dog, so named because his heart stopped beating for several minutes until he was miraculously resuscitated. Laz has tolerated a lot of blast furnace stuff during his lifetime, including abuse, abandonment and, yes, even death.

Yet Laz puts up with everything that comes at him and keeps smiling.

I want to be more like that. When a blast of life's heat hits me, I want to grow, not grouse. To weather it, not wither. To smile, not grimace. I want to keep striving, not roll over and play dead.

We all root for zealous underdogs and persevering crocuses, don't we? Rocky Balboa; Cinderella; the tortoise racing the hare; Ru-dy, Ru-dy! So, I'm thinking that Papa God has a special place in His heart for underdogs who keep pressing on despite the oppressive heat blasting their way. Would that be you, my friend? What heat blasts have you endured lately?

Debora M. Coty is an inspirational speaker and award-winning author of over 40 books, including the bestselling Too Blessed to be Stressed series. Visit with Debora anytime at www.DeboraCoty.com.

ENTERING MY 70S ON TWO WHEELS!



"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint," (Isaiah 40:31).

We are now almost one month into both my new decade (the 70s) and my 'shall I — shan't I?' dance with riding a bicycle. The 70s, of course, are inevitable; the biking is something I still have to decide.

Little by little I have been breaking myself in. This week, I skipped one day and then, Wednesday and Thursday, did my first 8-mile effort. I pushed it pretty hard but finished the ride convinced I have been making progress.

Friday morning, I agreed to an outing with 'the biker gang' and they showed up at Maul-Hall at 8:15 with the intention of getting me all the way to the village of Speed and back, 16 miles total.

What a beautiful morning. We set out at around 65 degrees, and it was 76 when we got back. Not just to speed but at speed, no less.

I was pleased with how well I maintained pace, and it proved to be a really enjoyable ride. We put in a slight scenic detour on the way home, and by the time we made it back to Saint Patrick Street we had logged in over 19 miles.

I believe what made this more doable was the encouragement from the guys who rode with me. Not just 'doable' but more like eagles' wings, running — riding — and not growing weary.

This point — this principle — has been a foundational pillar of my approach to teaching and encouraging men over the past several decades. The American 'manly men go it alone' ethos is not only impractical; it is counter to God's fundamental design and intention. We were created for community, for communion both with God and with one another.

I do not know if I will be a regular participant in some of these insanely demanding bicycle rides — but I do understand that the men I am getting to know and genuinely love here in Tarboro (at church, and in the community) help me to ride on eagles' wings in many ways.

"You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself," (Exodus 19:4). Tired ... and grateful. — DEREK



Derek Maul has written for many news outlets, including the Tampa Tribune, The United Methodist News Service, All Pro Dad, FOCUS Magazine, Newsweek, USA Today, The Christian Science Monitor, Presbyterians Today, Guideposts, Chicken Soup for the Soul and many other publications. Read Derek Maul's daily blog posts at www.derekmaul.wordpress.com.

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UNITED WAY SUNCOAST NAMES BUCS EXECUTIVE KOURTNEY SANCHEZ AS CEO

Staff Report



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TAX COLLECTOR LAUNCHES BUS BRINGING SERVICES TO RESIDENTS

Staff Report



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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Edited by: Jenny Bennett

EYE ON BUSINESS

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Deadline: 15th of each month.

76 Fence Continues Expansion



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

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

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

Shadetree Apartments Is More Than A Place To Live — It's A Place To Belong

From the moment you arrive, you'll feel the sense of community that sets Shadetree Apartments in Ruskin apart. Residents enjoy fun and engaging events, on-site food trucks, and thoughtful experiences that make Shadetree a place people are proud to call home for the long term. At Shadetree, you'll find a perfect balance of peace, comfort and connection. Every space is designed to help you slow down, recharge and truly feel at home. It's proudly pet-friendly; with two spacious dog parks, dog water fountains, outdoor pet washing stations and plenty of room to run and play, your four-legged family members are just as welcome here as you are. Whether your lifestyle is active, laid-back, social or somewhere in between, Shadetree Apartments fits your rhythm. Schedule a tour at www.shadetree.apartments, meet its friendly team and experience firsthand why life at Shadetree isn't just lived — it's enjoyed.

Summer Athlete Training Program At Fitness Forge

This summer, Fitness Forge, located at 13456 Boyette Rd. in Riverview, is offering a discounted program for local student athletes ready to level up. Its training is built around real results — strength, size, speed and durability. Athletes will follow a structured strength program using proven lifts like squats, bench press and Romanian deadlifts to increase power and performance. For muscle growth, it tracks progress using Styku 3D body scans, giving athletes real data on their body composition throughout the summer.



Injury prevention is a priority. It incorporates mobility, flexibility and stability training to keep athletes healthy and performing at a high level. On the indoor turf, athletes will train speed, agility and explosiveness with drills that directly translate to sport.

Proper nutrition is also coached — what to eat before, during and after competition.

The goal is simple: to leave stronger, faster and more prepared than ever.

Visit www.fitnessforge2025.com for more information.

Sunset Estate Liquidations

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

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

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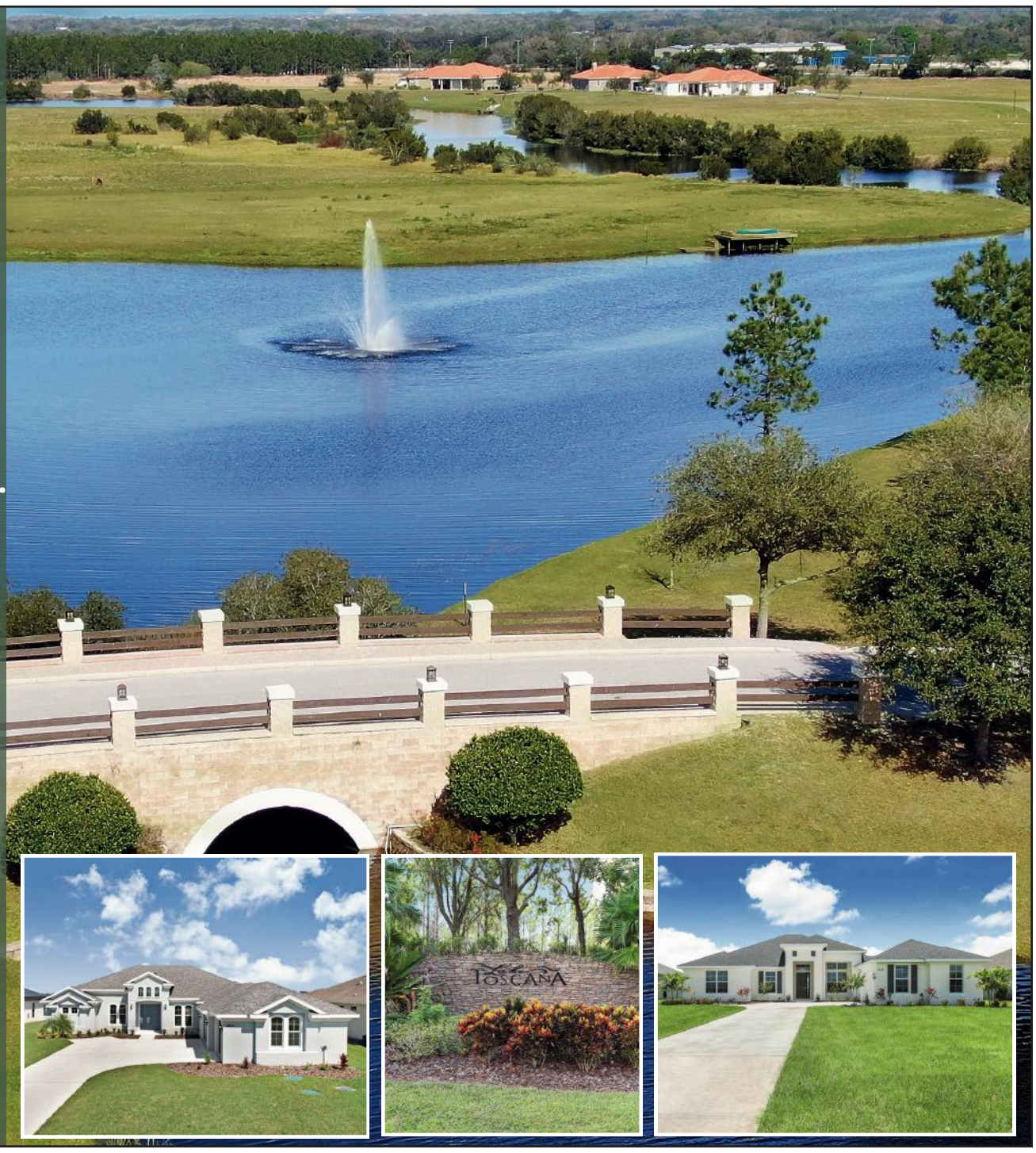
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$699,000



1721 TROPICANA WAY
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1216 BRANDON LAKES AVE
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