

ocala

A free publication serving the people of the Ocala area

Downtown

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Volume 14 Issue 6

June 2023



Photo by CkJ Photos13

The 30th Senior fishing derby was held Monday April 24, 2023. They had category for the largest fish, the most fish, and the oldest fisher person. A fun day for the seniors. More about the Senior fishing derby and pictures By CKJ Photos 13 on pages 6 and 7.



Photo by CkJ Photos13

VIPcare and SaludVIP were celebrating the Grand Opening of their 100th Office in Silver Springs Shores. It marks an important milestone in the organization's growth as it strives to raise the standard of healthcare across the United States.

Representatives from VIPcare and SaludVIP were on hand to greet and provide clinic tours to community officials, dignitaries, and existing and prospective patients who are invited to attend the event. The event is open to the public.

Serving communities for over 17 years, VIPcare and SaludVIP, part of the Better Health Group umbrella, operate more than

100 clinics across five states – Florida, Alabama, Oklahoma, Georgia, and Texas. With 100+ providers, VIPcare and SaludVIP care for more than 35,000 Medicare Advantage beneficiaries utilizing a high-touch population health management approach that prioritizes spending quality time with the physician. By focusing on a senior care model and increasing access to high-quality care, VIPcare and SaludVIP's model is at the forefront of the future of healthcare, as opposed to the current system the healthcare organization refers to as "sick care." Patients are encouraged to see the doctor often instead of only when they are

sick, contributing to their success in patient outcomes.

VIPcare and SaludVIP are part of the Better Health Group brand family. The primary care health network falls under the Better Health Group umbrella, which operates across 11 states and champions innovative relationships with providers and health plans, and consistently delivers best-in-class healthcare experiences for the more than 240,000 patients it services across Medicare Advantage, Medicare ACOs, Medicaid, and Commercial insurance products.

Great News! TomL Publishing Goes Totally Digital

By TomL Publisher

Our printed newspapers have been put on pause! Rising cost has helped us make the decision.

We will keep our local columns. Our newspapers will be directed to two areas for now: Villages area and Ocala Area. We will stay monthly for now. Our intent is to give readers current news of crime, events, local interest stories.

An events calendar can be accessed from the front page, to help readers connected to and engaged with their community.

Advertise with us! Our ad prices for inclusion in the digital versions of Ocala Downtown, Seniors Voice of Ocala, Village Spectator, Lady Lake Magazine, will be cut in half to share the savings with our advertisers. All ads will be 4-color modular sizes.

Full page 10" x 13" (4color)	\$280
Half page 10" x 6 1/2 (4color)	\$200
Half page 7 1/4" x 9" (4color)	\$200
Quarter page 5" x 6 1/2" (4color)	\$127
Eighth page 5" x 3" (4color)	\$ 71
Banners 1" x 10" (4color)	\$100

FBI Whistleblowers Testify During Weaponization Hearing

The weaponization of our nation's federal agencies, including the FBI and the DOJ, were on full display yesterday during the Weaponization Subcommittee hearing featuring three FBI whistleblowers. But to no one's surprise, House Democrats tried to invalidate their statements by creating chaos rather than listening to the whistleblowers' testimony. Republicans are committed to revealing the truth to the American people

about what's really going on inside our government.

Additionally, I was proud to introduce the bipartisan DIGITAL Applications Act with my colleague Congresswoman Doris Matsui this week. This bill plays a vital role in closing the digital divide by creating an online portal for the acceptance, processing, and disposal of Forms 299 for communications use authorizations.

With all that's happening this Congress, it is my greatest honor to represent you and hear from you about the issues that matter most. You can read below about what we've been up to this week, and as always, you can stay up to date with us here, on our website, and on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

For Freedom,
Kat Cammack



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Kevin Sheilley

OCALA/MARION COUNTY CHAMBER & ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP



I recently met with several equine industry leaders to discuss the state of the industry and what will come next. In short, the industry is strong, and the future is bright.

In 2015 the CEP commissioned an economic impact study of what it means, dollars and cents-wise, to be the Horse Capital. The data was both surprising and impactful. Equine contributes \$2.6 billion annually to the local economy. That reflects not only the direct spin of the horse farms, shows, and support industries but also the thousands of tourists and guests who visit our community whether for a horse show, thoroughbred auction, or just to view the beautiful farms.

The CEP had planned to repeat the study in 2020 but put it on pause for two important reasons: 1) COVID and, more importantly, 2) the pending arrival of the World Equestrian Center. Today, this billion-dollar complex is remaking not only equine competition but our local tourism. With the second on-site hotel now under construction along with an events center, urgent care facility, and a

number of additional restaurants and stores, the economic impact just of this facility easily reaches into the tens of millions of dollars annually.

Farmland Preservation

The CEP is and will continue to be a strong promoter of our Farmland Preservation Area (FPA). Our tremendous partners at Horse Farms Forever take the lead in ensuring we can remain the Horse Capital of the World® for generations to come. Maintaining the nearly 200,000-acre FPA is important to us all.

However, that does not mean that either group is anti-growth, just that it needs to occur in the right location. Between FPA, Ocala National Forest, and other government owned/protected lands, we as a community have basically agreed to preserve 89% of our county. Approximately 90% of this place we call home is basically off-limits for development or significant development. In other words, all our growth must occur in 1/10th of our land area and most of that should be centered in the Urban Growth Boundary which is 50% smaller than the FPA.

As a community of 400,000 residents, this means that the overwhelming majority of development is denser and urbanized. However, this is a small

concession to make to ensure we protect this farmland and our springs and forest.

US News & World Reports

You may have seen the recently released "Best Places" rankings from *US News & World Report*. Once again, the Ocala Metro did well earning the following:

- Top 10 Safest Metros (based on FBI data) for the 3rd year in a row.
- #7 Fastest Growing Metro
- Ranking in the Best Places to Retire

We know we live in an incredible community and readily admit that growth presents challenges. However, by continuing to work together we can ensure we have a diverse and robust economy, adequate housing supply, beautiful farmland, and incredible springs. This truly is the one place where you can Live Life Here!



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Florida State Senate

DENNIS K. BAXLEY



Dear Friends,
Our work in Tallahassee for 2023 has been completed. It feels good to be back in hometown America with friends, family, and the people of Senate District 13!

Our goal over the next few columns is to report on some of the next few columns is to report on some of the key pieces of legislation that we passed in 2023, as well as provide a quick snapshot of the budget that we passed. Please note, as of this writing, the Governor still has time to sign or veto pieces of the budget as well as some policy items that we may mention in this first column. However, we do feel confident that those that we do highlight are not in danger of getting the red pen.

Our 2023 balanced budget (Yes, a balanced budget, we do not spend money we do not have!) addresses key needs in communities across our state, enhances our state's thriving economy, and provides Floridians with critical tax relief as we all deal with the crippling inflationary policies from the Federal Government. The general appropriations act is \$117 billion in total

allocations. This includes nearly \$11 billion in total reserves, which serves as our state's rainy day fund. As usual, our two highest areas of funding are health and human services and education at \$47.3 billion and \$27.9 billion, respectively. \$2.7 billion will be returned to taxpayers via various forms of outlets.

This year's budget appropriates an historic \$711 million for affordable housing through SB 102, the Live Local Act. This legislation and the appropriated funds signify the Legislature's commitment to providing high-quality, attainable workforce housing that allows Floridians to live in the communities they serve.

Additionally, \$850 million is allocated for the expansion of Florida's Iconic Wildlife Corridor, which, through an additional \$200 million appropriation for the expansion of the SUNTRAIL system, will be accessible for locals and visitors to experience all that Florida's heartland has to offer.

In K-12 education, parents and students can expect to see expanded school choice opportunities, increased FEFP funding, and improved school safety. This funding will increase base per-student allocations by over 12% and ensure that educational funding in Florida follows the student, expanding opportunities for all students.

The budget also allocates \$675.8 million to fund workforce development, teacher apprenticeship programs, and career and technical education for Florida school districts, empowering students to attain high-paying careers immediately after graduating high school if they decide college is not the path for them. Continuing our commitment to attract the very best

teachers to the State of Florida, the budget provides an additional \$252 million to increase teacher pay.

Thank you for sending us to Tallahassee to fight for you and your families. It is an honor to serve you as President Pro Tempore of the Florida Senate.

Onward & Upward,
Senator Dennis Baxley

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Tom Loury *Tom Loury Long time member of CEP/Ocala Chamber of Commerce, Past President of the Ocala Business Leaders and current member, Co-Founder and past President of Select Business Associates, Past President of the Lady Lake Chamber and current member.*

PUBLISHER'S NOTES



By Tom

WOW I am not surprised about the findings of the Durham Report. I suspected what happened but by Durham proving it was unexpected and showing us a unredacted copy.

Remember it was Hillary Clinton that started all this, then the FBI and DOJ did not prove it wrong but endorsed it. I will never forget Nancy Pelosi as speaker standing before the House and said "Donald Trump will never become President again NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES!" I take that very serious. So we have Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton, Adam Schiff and more with the same agenda! Then the FBI and the DOJ. I am not hearing as much about the DOJ, I wonder why?

No matter what you think Donald Trump had the election stolen from him! The film 2,000 Mules which many refuse to watch prove it was a large effort of people

stuffing ballot boxes and they were film doing it! Only a few were brought to justice and prosecuted being charged with stuffing ballot boxes, although they were being filmed by federal camera's!

I think Trump should have a redo or they need to charge the Bidens and get it over with. They are guilty of Treason. Obama knew about what was going on and he allowed it. Ohhh, maybe he is the BIG GUY? Anyway Trump is draining the swamp thru loyal America loving legal annalist and investigators. Say what you want it would not have been found out without a TRUE AMERICAN investigating and reporting.

Where do we go from here? Prosecute those who broke the law replace them with honest, true law abiding Americans with pride in our country. Will Biden step in and give them amnesty and set them free? probably. How much will the people take before they react.

GONE FISHING I bought a boat almost 40 yrs ago at YankeeTown Marina

so my fishing partner, Bill and I went to launch the boat there. Bill and I have a few difficulties getting around especially while launching a boat. These guys a Yankee Town Marina help in every way with the launch. They have frozen bait, ice, live bait and they were very friendly. For you boat owners the marina is fresh water we were going to salt water, when you come into the the boat ramp it flushes your motor out with fresh water. There are lots of advantages to using YankeeTown Marina. Try them you'll like them!

With that I have to tell you a fish story. A couple of weeks ago I was lucy enough to go fishing in the ocean with a friend. While fishing, a fish pulled a fishing pole out of the boat, I dove for it just to miss it by inches. I tried for a half hour to snag it with a treble hook to no avail. I told my fishing partner if the lord wanted me to have it back I would have snagged it, so I went back to fishing. I was pretty much down about it! About an hour later I got a bite and tried to set the

hook, missed the fish, as I was winding up my line I got something that felt like grass. I remarked I have some grass. As the grass got closer the tip of the rod I lost came straight up not on an angle but straight up out of the water. My fishing partner said holy mackrel is that a sign or dumb luck. I was the happiest guy in the ocean. My son Justin had given me that fishing reel for Christmas. Was it a sign? I think so!

the end
I am looking for a radio station to do business with to tell the readers our papers are online only. Most people know it but but we want to remind them how to find us on the internet. We have five websites just type in the name of the newspaper.com and you will see choices. You will see many issues back some months. The current copy is the one you're looking for.

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Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator
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Men Stay Out of Women's Sports

By TomL

The way I see it there must be a reason these men wanting to compete against women maybe because they can't compete with other men, what a wuss. These women train all their lives to compete in local, state, national and world competitions and these men want to ruin it because that can't be a man and compete against other men. The LORD created man and woman and did not mention other. So get out of the women's arena. If you want to have a sex change do it and leave the women's sports out of it and leave the children out of it! Don't flaunt it just live your life and let others live theirs!

Speaking of which I have been busted by the Gay Rights movement, Atheist, Blacks, ETC. But when they take a good look at us they see we a fair. We report facts on both sides. One good example was the Confederate Flag issue. We reported that many blacks fought and died for and under the confederate flag. I realize there always two sides.

When it comes to politics I am a "TRUMP MAN" I believe DeSantis was voted in by the Florida people to Govern the State of Florida and that is what he should do! He should not use us as a stepping stone to run for a higher office. I feel like a have DeSantis foot prints on my back! Maybe we should have ask Cat Hammock to run for Governor. She would probably be better for the state. Actually the State of Florida was not in bad shape when DeSantis took over. YES he has done some good things and has made some

bold moves but he needs to finish his term. You know Donald Trump endorsed him when he was running for Governor, boy where is the loyalty. Is that what you want in a President, someone who will turn on a person who helped him get where he is at?

We need to take back America from what it has become the last several years. The

Bureaucrats live in a different world than you and I. They don't know what it is to be hungry, drive and old beater truck and work past dark. They are playing a lot of the time. I just heard one of our government officials would be working and voting from home??? What is wrong with that picture?

Trump would open up the flow of Oil,

close the border, talk to all the world leaders and tell them what we expect for the money we are sending them. Reconnect and recommit to our allies. Facilitate the manufacturing of military arms and personnel. Fill our military reserves back up. Increase law enforcement officers,

Continued page 8

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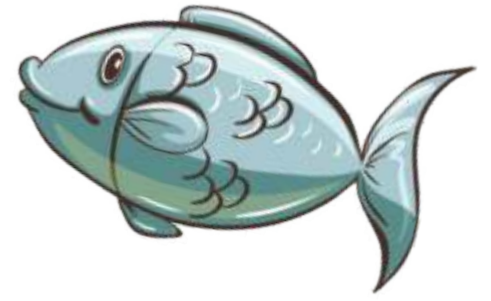
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SENIOR Fishing Derby



The 30+ Senior fishing derby was held Monday April 24, 2023 we had approximately 150 attendance

Deloise Langford caught a 17 inches bass **Willie Washington** caught the most fish. **Mrs. Dorothy**

was the oldest fisherman. Grace Huffman was the coordinator with the help of the City of Ocala recreation staff help volunteer with baiting the hooks being runners giving out tickets and taking fish off

the hook. the city of Ocala Recreation dept sponsor the fishing derby with the help of sponsors Greater Hopewell Baptist Church, St. John Baptist Church, New Zion Baptist, Nelson Lawn Service We

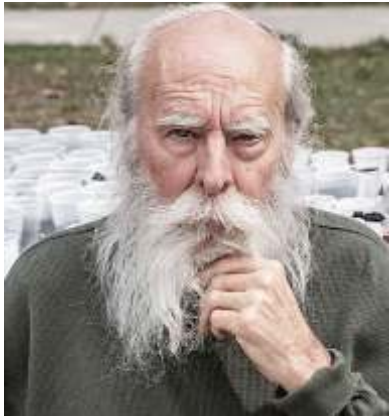
had 9 nursing homes to attend. Prizes was donated by the city of Ocala Recreation Dept, Tom Loury, and Devoted Health Plans

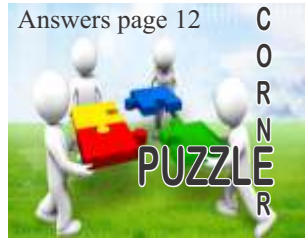
Photos by CKJ Photos13



Senior Fishing Derby

Photos by CKJ Photos13





Across

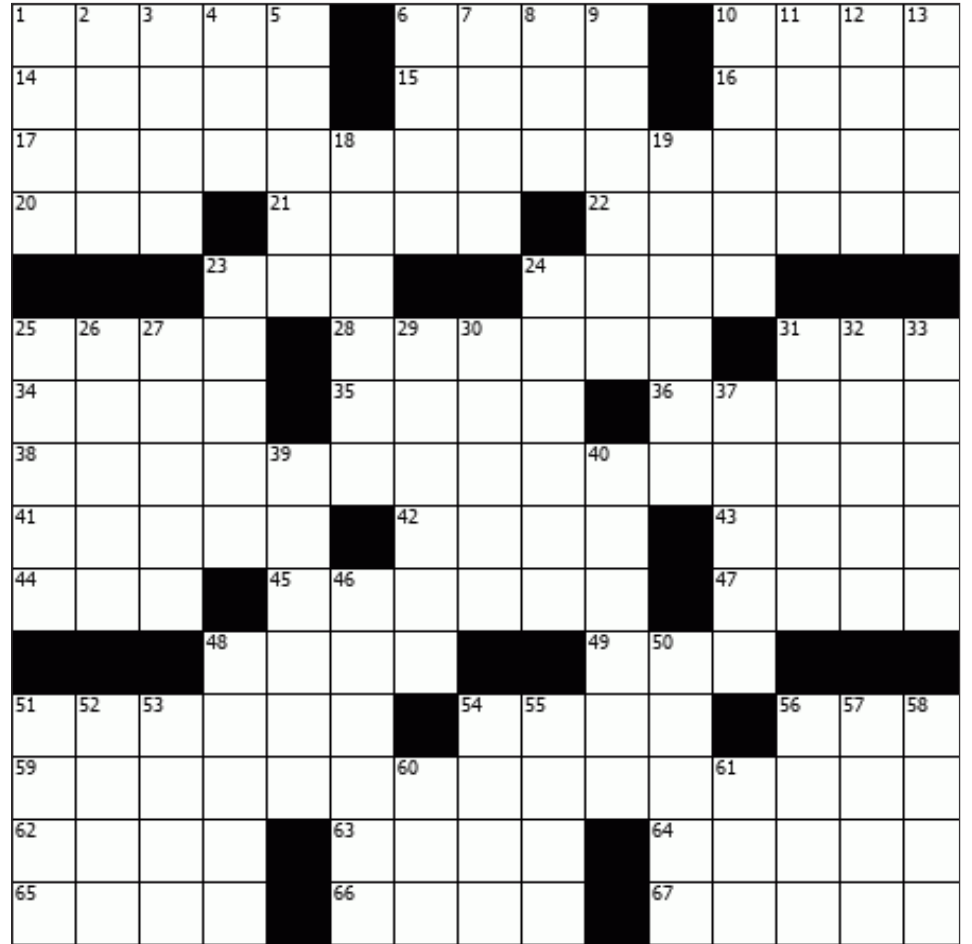
- 1. Old Faithful output
- 6. Castle defense
- 10. Tannenbaum object
- 14. "Whoopee!"
- 15. Sainly emanation
- 16. Place for a swing
- 17. HYPERTEXT?
- 20. Energy source
- 21. Big name in oil
- 22. Rich desserts
- 23. Home of the Seminoles
- 24. Oldsmobile, e.g.
- 25. Genghis Khan territory
- 28. 16th c. chronicler of Italian art
- 31. Grounded commercialmfler
- 34. Before long, long beforemnow
- 35. Jeans mishaps
- 36. Smart in dress
- 38. BROADBAND?

- 41. Tale with a moral
- 42. Beneficial bestowal
- 43. Punic Wars victor
- 44. Some railways
- 45. Conquerer of Athens
- 47. Matterhorn locale
- 48. Punch
- 49. Blubber
- 51. Quick raid
- 54. Simulate
- 56. Nail site
- 59. ONLINE?
- 62. Verdi spectacle
- 63. Laundromat unit
- 64. Upper crust
- 65. Meddlesome
- 66. Burden
- 67. Restrict

Down

- 1. Blubbers
- 2. "O Brother, Where Artm__?"
- 3. Dark, poetically
- 4. Just fine
- 5. Stories of the gods
- 6. Father's celebration
- 7. Inning enders
- 8. Aristotle, tomJacqueline
- 9. Dentist's concern
- 10. Reach home, e.g.
- 11. Slackless
- 12. Fit of fever

- 13. Dumbbell turns
- 18. Writer's lifetimemwork
- 19. Making a team, in amway
- 23. Important exam
- 24. Halftime cavorter
- 25. Faux pas
- 26. 1992-93 NBA Rookiemof the Year
- 27. Fails miserably
- 29. Auto safety feature
- 30. Animal's trail
- 31. Spot for a toad?
- 32. Confound
- 33. Genres
- 37. Orderly grouping
- 39. Gigi and Lilimportrayer
- 40. Aptitudes
- 46. Hopi home
- 48. Wander
- 50. Disgust
- 51. Trumpeter, e.g.
- 52. River that joins themMississippi
- 53. Oscar-winning film formBeatty
- 54. Herr's helpmate
- 55. Tallies
- 56. Straitlaced
- 57. When the lights dim
- 58. Sharpen
- 60. Radiation result
- 61. Yalie



Dunnellon High School Robotics Team at Orlando regional competition with the owner of AndyMark (supplier of robotic components). Dunnellon ended up 22nd out of a field of 54. Teacher Don Slocum says he is real proud of his class/team. They worked very hard to compete.

Women's Sports

Continued from page 5

rebuild military police to the border. DEPORT DEPORT DEPORT! Catch the undesirables and through them out or put them in prison. Take down the Cartels, outlaw the gangs and help them join a new part of society. Maybe some kind of law enforcement along the border on the

Mexican side. Bust up the drugs coming across the border and give the gang members a new purpose in life. Figure out why our society is using drugs to start with? There would be no drug deaths if no one was using them!

I ask a homeless man one day, what happened? I said you had a great home, great family, friends. He said once I started living under a bridge I had no one asking me

to do things that was expected of me. He said he had friends under the bridge but they would take his food when he was not looking. What kind of life is that? I ask again what happened? He said he got into a card game and lost his and his wife's life savings and found it easier just not to go home. The home was lost in 90 days. He took him and his wife right

to the bottom in a card game.

Let go to another subject...

Hunter Biden...In fact 12 or more of the Biden's. The way the investigation looks, a lot of the Biden's are or have received money. I wonder if they knew it was dirty money. I think he gave money because he did not want someone in the family telling on him. They might do it anyway to save themselves. It is unraveling daily, timed will tell but Big Daddy Joe will come to the rescue. He can use his powers as a big Genie with a magic wand and poof, make it all disappear! AMNESTY! I wonder what the dem's will say then? Half of them covered it up!

SHORTAGES!

Teacher shortages, Police shortages, Border Patrol Shortages. So let's hire 87,000 IRS agents? I wonder if they will be targeting the 4,000,000 Illegals that are working for cash? How much taxes are we loosing from the act Biden?

LAW AND ORDER!

The administration says no one is above the law! So what about the illegals. Let's wait for the answer. Local Sheriff fought back when the anti gun media ask stupid question, you go Billy Woods, give them hell! This publisher says the anti gun media needs to stop pushing the citizens around.



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Love is just a leash away!!

The HSMC is here for you and the animals who depend on us. We wanted to share that we will continue to be here to help unwanted pets during this pandemic while following all Marion County and Florida state guidelines.

As this situation is constantly changing, we ask that you continue to visit our Shelter using the safety guidelines in place.

How can you help?

Pet Food Bank: Help stock our Pet Food Bank with pet food and supplies for people who cannot afford them due to job loss or other reasons. You can also bring donations to our Shelter daily from 10-6. Masks required please! If you need help keeping your pet with you during this time, our Happy Paws food program is here for you.

Volunteer: A small number of volunteers have returned to help in various departments. We are accepting volunteer applications but do not yet know when we will schedule orientations for new volunteers. Please contact us for more information about volunteering. We are currently working on a digital orientation.

Opt to adopt: According to the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, there is no evidence that companion animals such as cats and dogs can spread the virus that causes COVID-19.

Donate: We know there is a lot of uncertainty right now but homeless and unwanted animals still need us. Donate to help the Humane Society of Marion County so we continue our lifesaving work and make them feel safe and loved.



Bilbie

Bilbie is a 14 weeks old male brought to the HSMC with her brother Wombat! We believe they could be Xolaitzcuinli, or Xolo, which is Mexican hairless dog breed.



Fuchsla is a 15 week old paralyzed kitten full of love.



Ninja is paralyzed in his hind legs but enjoys runs with his wheels.

Your donations make it possible to provide medical care, food and shelter to animals in need. On behalf of all the animals, thank you for caring.



Humane Society of Marion County
PO Box 1542 Ocala, FL 34478
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Donations to the Humane Society are tax-deductible. Check with your accountant for more information. No goods or services have been provided to the donor as a result of this gift.

FROM THE DESK OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY



ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY HIGHLIGHTS SUPPORT RESOURCES FOR LEOS DURING NATIONAL POLICE WEEK AND MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

In recognition of National Police Week and Mental Health Awareness Month, Attorney General Ashley Moody is highlighting available resources for Florida law enforcement officers. Statistics show, in previous years, that law enforcement officers are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty. According to BlueHelp.org, the national law enforcement suicide rate increased in 2022—however, Florida's rate decreased. In an effort to further protect Florida's officers, Attorney General Moody is encouraging any first responder struggling with mental health issues to seek help.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "We received some encouraging news this National Police Week and Mental Health Awareness Month. The suicide rate among Florida law enforcement officers declined last year. I want to thank all the mental health experts in Florida who focus efforts on helping our first responders who struggle with the mental health issues brought on because of their service to others. I also encourage anyone struggling to seek help. There are caring professionals available 24/7 who want to help."

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay President & CEO Clara Reynolds said, "The Crisis

Center of Tampa Bay would not be able to support the community to the extent that it does without partnering with local law enforcement agencies. We are so appreciative of their support of the victims of assault they bring to our door, the interventions they provide when someone is contemplating taking their life, and the numerous other ways they step in to keep us all safe. Thank you for choosing this very vital but difficult work each and every day."

Law enforcement officers face challenging work daily that can take a serious toll on mental health. The Blue H.E.L.P. program seeks to bring awareness to suicide and mental health issues law enforcement officers face. The program, created by Karen Soloman and Jeffrey McGill, offers mental health education, advocates for law enforcement officers and their families and recognizes those lost to mental health causes.

Attorney General Moody wants all law enforcement officers struggling with mental health issues to know that help is available. There are caring people available 24/7 who understand the struggles and challenges that often accompany protecting the public from danger and violence.

The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay is a nonprofit organization developed in 1972 to offer comprehensive services to people in the Tampa Bay community through collaboration and partnerships. With more than 10 different programs that offer a wide range of services and resources to all individuals, the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay is determined to ensure no one in the Tampa Bay community has to face a crisis alone.

Since taking office, Attorney General Moody continues to take action to support Florida law enforcement officer mental health, including:

- Urging Congress to pass the Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022: Last year, Attorney General Moody, joined by 52 other attorneys general, urged Congress to pass the Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022. The legislation addresses gaps in support for public safety officers who suffer from PTSD associated with the high-risk nature of their jobs..

- Presented a Back the Blue Award to an Officer for Supporting Mental Health Awareness: Attorney General Moody presented a Back the Blue Award to a Tallahassee Police Department officer who co-wrote a book with information on mental health awareness and treatment strategies for first responders. Officer Sean Wyman co-authored *Going Beyond the Call: Mental*

Health Fitness for Public Safety Professionals. The book focuses on social-emotional trauma, stress impacts and communication strategies to reduce the number of suicides within the public safety industry.

- Recognizing CCTB's Law Enforcement Suicide Help Line: Attorney General Moody presented a Florida Cabinet resolution recognizing National Suicide Prevention Month in Florida in September 2019. Attorney General Moody then visited CCTB to recognize the then-pilot program called "First to Respond, Last to Ask For Help." At the time, the program served officers in Hillsborough County with a help line to call for immediate, confidential support. Now, the help line is extended statewide—any officer in the state needing assistance can call 1(866)4FL-HERO.

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Physical Exam required	\$25
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Dog/puppy distemper/parvo 5 way vaccination combo	\$20
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Cat/kitten distemper 3 way vaccination combo	\$20
Canine heartworm test	\$25
Fecal analysis (intestinal parasite worms)	\$25

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FROM THE DESK OF
GOVERNOR DESANTIS



Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Florida has Lowest Unemployment Rate Amongst the 10 Largest States in the Nation and

Experienced Record Tourism in First Quarter of 2023

Florida's unemployment rate remains at a near record low 2.6 percent for the 4th consecutive month. Florida also saw the largest volume of visitors ever recorded in a single quarter between January and March of this year.

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced that Florida has the lowest unemployment rate among the top 10 largest states in the nation at 2.6 percent, as Floridians see continued economic stability spurred on in part by the thriving tourism industry. Between January and March of 2023, Florida saw a record 37.9 million visitors, the largest volume of visitors ever recorded in a single quarter. In April 2023, Florida's unemployment rate was 2.6 percent for the fourth consecutive month, which is 0.8 percentage points lower than the national rate of 3.4 percent. Florida's statewide unemployment rate has remained lower than the national rate for 30 consecutive months since November 2020.

In April 2023, the labor force was 10,960,000, an increase of 5.8 percent since February 2020. Between April 2022 and April 2023, Florida's total private sector employment grew by 336,200 jobs (4.1

percent), which is faster than the national private sector job growth rate of 2.7 percent during the same time period. In April 2023, with the exception of October 2022, Florida employers have added jobs for 35 months since May 2020. Florida's over-the-year private sector job growth rate has exceeded the nation's growth rate for 25 consecutive months since April 2021.

"Through strong economic policy and strategic investments, Florida is outperforming the nation and providing more opportunity for its citizens, resulting in more than 200,000 new business formations this year alone and an unemployment rate near an all-time low," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "In Florida, we are combatting negative national economic headwinds by promoting policies that support Florida businesses and families and attract record numbers of tourists every day."

"Florida's low unemployment rate of 2.6 percent – the lowest among the top 10 largest states in the nation – is a testament to Governor DeSantis' bold leadership," said Meredith Ivey, Acting Secretary of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO). "Governor DeSantis' Freedom First policies are helping Florida businesses continue to create jobs and Floridians feel confident in the meaningful job opportunities available to them, ensuring the economic prosperity of the great state of Florida and its residents."

"The Q1 estimates show that 2023 is on track to continue Florida's outstanding performance in welcoming visitors," said Dana Young, VISIT FLORIDA President and CEO. "Each quarter shows that Florida is the most sought-after destination for visitors and we are excited to continue our efforts in welcoming more throughout the

year. VISIT FLORIDA is proud of the work we have done with our partners in sharing Florida's sunshine with the world and we thank Governor DeSantis for his unwavering support of our organization and the tourism industry."

Florida's strong economy and freedom first policies continue to draw record numbers of visitors that support Florida's businesses. Florida welcomed 37.9 million total visitors between January and March 2023, according to VISIT FLORIDA estimates. This is the largest volume of visitors ever recorded for a single quarter. A

record high of approximately 34.6 million domestic visitors traveled to Florida in Q1 2023, continuing the trend of domestic visitation growth for an eighth consecutive quarter. Florida welcomed 1.8 million overseas travelers in Q1 2023, an increase of 36 percent from Q1 2022. This marks the closest that overseas visitation has come to full recovery since the onset of the pandemic. Total enplanements at 19 Florida airports rose 11.8 percent in Q1 2023 from Q1 2022, reaching 27.6 million visitors.

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Marion County's Internet Marketplace

FROM THE DESK OF
CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



Rural Broadband Deployment

Backing The Blue During National Police Week & Supporting Rural Broadband Deployment

This week during the start to National Police Week, I had the honor of leading my Republican colleagues on the House Floor as we thanked our brave men and women in blue and green for all they do to protect our communities. My friend and colleague, Sheriff John Rutherford from Florida's Fifth just next door, and I honored the lives of 246 law enforcement officers from across the nation who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in 2022. While there is never enough we can do to thank our law enforcement officers and their families, we can always remember and honor their legacies.

Additionally, I was proud to introduce the Rural Internet Improvement Act of 2023 this week, a bipartisan measure that is vital in securing reliable high-speed broadband services for America's rural communities. You can learn more about this bill below.

With all that's happening this Congress, it is my greatest honor to represent you and hear from you about the issues that matter most. You can read below about what we've been up to this week, and as always, you can stay up to date with us here, on our website, and on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and

YouTube. For Freedom, Proudly Representing Florida's Third Congressional District

Reps. Cammack, Soto, Jackson, Perez Introduce Rural Internet Improvement Act Of 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, Congresswoman Kat Cammack (R-FL-03), Congressman Darren Soto (D-FL-09), Congressman Ronny Jackson (R-TX-13), and Congresswoman Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA-03) introduced the Rural Internet Improvement Act of 2023.

The Rural Internet Improvement Act eliminates duplicative broadband programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) by merging and codifying the popular Rural e-Connectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect) with USDA's broadband loan and grant program. ReConnect builds upon past successes of these programs by enhancing the participation of all types of providers.

Reliable high-speed broadband services are necessary for America's rural communities, providing opportunities for telehealth, education, and economic development. There are more than 14.5 million Americans who still lack access to both fixed and mobile broadband, according to the FCC's most recent Broadband Deployment Report.

"North Central Florida's rural

communities deserve reliable, affordable, and high-speed internet access for daily activities, including education, telehealth, business, and more. It's important to continue our critical work to ensure ReConnect works for our rural communities, and I'm pleased to join with my bipartisan colleagues in connecting more people to the internet for our increasingly digital world," said Rep. Kat Cammack.

"Access to reliable high-speed broadband services is no longer a luxury, but a necessity, especially for our rural communities. The Rural Internet Improvement Act seeks to bridge the digital divide by streamlining USDA broadband authorities, focusing on truly unserved communities, and ensuring program accountability and transparency. By providing support and enhancing participation of all types of providers, we can connect more Americans to the opportunities for advancements in healthcare, education, and economic development that broadband services offer," said Rep. Darren Soto.

"I live in rural America, and I get my internet from a radio tower. Struggling to access the internet is part of everyday life for me and my community. This bipartisan bill brings us closer to ending the digital divide and making sure people can access the internet no matter where they live," said Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez.

"We applaud Reps. Cammack, Soto, Gluesenkamp Perez, and

Jackson on the introduction of the Rural Internet Improvement Act of 2023, legislation focused on helping broadband reach more homes. This bill would guide funding for network expansion to areas where at least 90 percent of households lack access to broadband and encourage reliance on network builders that have experience constructing and operating broadband networks," said NCTA, the Internet & Television Association. "In addition, this legislation would replace existing programs with a revised ReConnect program that would enhance participation and results so more communities can be connected to broadband even faster. Altogether, these are improvements that should be adopted as part of the Farm Bill. Deploying affordable high-speed broadband to all Americans is a key priority for the cable industry, and we look forward to working with members on passage of this legislation."

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