

# Festival at Fort King



A great time was had at the annual Fort King Festival

Step into the 1800s at the Festival at Fort King! This two-day event will feature historic themed crafts, games, workshops, activities, living historians, vendors, food,

drinks and much more. The pinnacle of the festival is a re-enactment of the event that fueled the start of the Second Seminole War.

More on page 7

# Taxes, Taxes, Taxes! Insurance, Insurance, Insurance!

By TomL

To The Board of County Commissioners.

I have written several letters to Board about taxes and insurance. I agree you need the money to get Marion County ready for many residents moving here. The perfect storm is to be ready before they move here but, you can see what is happening I'm sure. When you raise taxes, you raise value of the homes, The mortgage Companies raise the insurance value and the tax payers are receiving astounding Insurance increases every year. I have talked to many people that say their insurance monthly payment has gone up \$200 to \$400 per month in two year's. That is not sustainable. When a person turns 65 they should not have increases like that. Retirees work many years in Marion County, pay taxes to build the current infrastructure and now they risk all the planning to live comfortably for the rest of their lives because of taxes and Insurance. Again I understand you need the money to get the County ready for the

incoming, Someone said a thousand a month, but the people moving here should pay the expense not the Marion County elderly. I am sorry I have to write this letter but it's getting worse for the mortgage holders and the banks don't care and the Insurance Company's LOVE IT! It is in your hands to help the elderly mortgage holders. One question. Have you looked at the fore closures lately.

A suggestion was offered by one of the Marion County residents, if the insurance company has not paid a claim that year on the said property give the insured half their money back or credit half money for the next year.

I am sending a copy to the Governor also, you are honorable people I understand maybe the Governor is acting on this.

I have been a Marion County tax payer for 56 years. I have already paid for the infrastructure!

Respectfully Tom Loury

Dunnellon Florida (the forgotten).



Pictured are some of the Select Business Associates of Ocala presenting a check to the Public Education Foundation of Marion County Meghan Magamoll. I little bit about the Select Business Associates is the they are a non profit group of local business people that meet twice a month, dedicated to help each other in business with referrals and friendship. One category never two doing the same business. (NO COMPITION)! Our dues are \$40 per year and we donate our annual dues to a local non profit. For more info call Tom at 352-804-1223.

More about The Public Education Foundation of Marion County is a non-profit, direct support organization focused on enhancing education in the Marion County Public School system, from pre-Kindergarten through vocational and post-secondary education scholarship opportunities.

The Public Education Foundation of Marion County has proudly raised

millions of dollars for our teachers and students in Marion County. Those funds have been placed back into the hands of teachers through programs like Grants for Great Ideas, Tools for Teaching, Take Stock in Children, as well as Golden Apple Academy. PEFMC is committed to continue to serving the needs of our teachers and students well into the future.

Thanks to the recent the generosity from Select Business Associates of Ocala, additional support will be provided to elementary school literacy initiatives through the Foundation's Grants for Great Ideas program. The **Grants for Great Ideas** program enables teachers to make real improvements in their classrooms and schools tied to key areas of literacy, STEM education, career and technical education and student resiliency.

For more information about the PEFMC, please visit [www.pefmc.org](http://www.pefmc.org)

With gratitude, Meghan Magamoll

## Let's Brag!

### TomL Publishing LLC

- We have 4 digital Newspapers!
- We have five websites!
- We are a Ocala CEP partner!
- Current member and past President of the Ocala Business Leaders!
- Current president, past president and co-founders of The Select Business Associates of Ocala!
- Current member and past president of The Lady Lake Chamber of Commerce!
- Winner of over 100 state wide awards for Newspaper excellence!
- Graduate Publisher of the CPF Leadership Institute!
- Our publications are in the University of Florida Library AND MORE!
- This year has brought us many new friends and associates. I want to thank them: my graphic artist, our advertisers! Tell them you read it here.

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Write us - hate mail or nice mail [tloury@att.net](mailto:tloury@att.net)

## CEP CHAMBER NEWS

MATT MCCORMICK  
NEW PRESIDENT AND CEO OF OCALA METRO  
CHAMBER & ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP



### BEYOND NETWORKING:

By Tom James

#### 'Leadership In Its Purest Form'

Alex Sosa, B.B. Graphics

"Flying influences everything I do in life, including how I run my business."

CEP partner Alex Sosa draws clear parallels between how he runs B.B. Graphics and how he approaches aviation.

"Being a captain teaches you leadership in its purest form," he says, stressing the importance of details. "When people's lives are in your hands, your decisions carry real weight. I approach business the same way—making sure our product is top-quality, our team is well-trained, and every client's experience is seamless."

Away from the office, it's up, up, and away for Alex, who has built an unshakeable bond with the friendly skies starting the moment he received his high school diploma.

"I began my flight training right out of high school and aviation has taken me places I probably never would have seen otherwise."

Flying runs deep in Alex's family, as multiple family members have spent time in the cockpit.

"My dad is my biggest inspiration," confirms Alex. "He flew in the Air Force, then became an airline pilot and spent his life flying around the world with genuine joy every time he took off."

While dad gave Alex his wings, his mom served as the wind beneath them.

"On the roughest days, she reminded me that I was going to make it," Alex asserts. "I wouldn't be here without her support and belief in me. Aviation always felt like the path I was meant to follow. It was what I grew up around, what inspired me, and what I found exciting, so pursuing it was less of a decision and more of a calling."

Learning to fly at an elite level has been a gradual ascension. The journey for Alex is more enjoyable than any specific destination. Some of his stops along the way border on epic.

"Some of the most memorable moments in my flying career have been the most spontaneous. Searching for a hidden grass strip in the middle of nowhere. Landing on the slopes of a volcano. Waking up and deciding to go island hopping just because we could. Carefully planning a landing on a remote grass strip between two connected

*Continued page 3*

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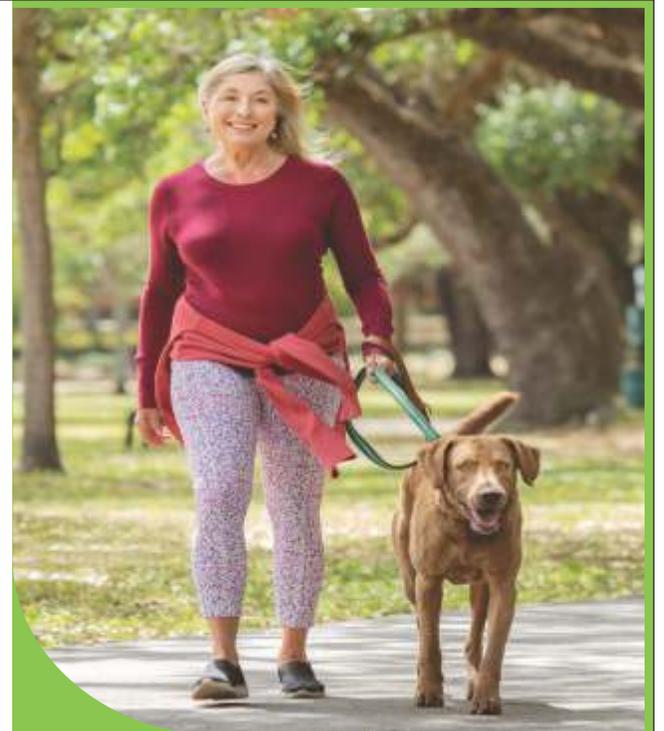
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## CEP *Continued from page 1*

volcanoes near Lake Atitlán in Guatemala. Flying through the mountains of Hungary is another memory I'll never forget. Honestly, it's hard to think of a flight that wasn't fun."

Alex runs B.B. Graphics with his wife Ana, who when hubby is in the air, keeps everything else grounded.

"I wouldn't be able to balance flying and running a business without my amazing and beautiful wife. She holds the fort down when I'm gone."

The lessons learned through aviation filter directly through to business, especially during key moments.

"It's taught me how critical decision-making is," says Alex. "Sometimes you only get one chance to make the right call."

## Believe It or Not! Twilight Justice

HARRISBURG - The Garrity for PA campaign announced the release of the trailer for the campaign's upcoming web series "Twilight Justice," a docudrama exposing the years of corruption and scandal surrounding Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro. This will be the first time the litany of character issues associated with Shapiro will be fully unmasked for voters in Pennsylvania and around the country to see.

"Twilight Justice," features an investigator who works in the shadows searching for evidence, including from experts, victims, and previously undisclosed documents, that bring to light the troubling actions of Shapiro.

For his entire career, Josh Shapiro has presented a sanitized and distorted story

regarding his actions and his record. "Twilight Justice" will expose the truth.

It's time for Josh Shapiro to buckle up!

Stay tuned... "Twilight Justice" is coming early 2026. To stay up to date on "Twilight Justice's" upcoming releases, visit: <https://www.twilightjustice.com/>.

## Faith Leaders Coalition

**Byron Donalds for Florida Governor Launches Faith Leaders Coalition**

65 Florida faith leaders have already signed up to support Donalds' campaign.

NAPLES, FL - Today, the Byron Donalds for Florida Governor campaign

launched a Faith Leaders Coalition consisting of individuals who lead their community in prayer, volunteer at their church or faith community, serve as clergy, or lead a faith-based organization. 65 faith leaders have already signed up to be a part of the coalition, which will hold weekly prayer calls led by rotating faith leaders.

"God calls us to pray for our leaders. This is not about politics. It is about standing in the gap and covering Byron Donalds' leadership in prayer as we seek God's best for our state of Florida," said **Pastor J, Jearlyn Dennie, Founder of She Leads Florida.**

"We are called to pray for our leaders, and Congressman Byron Donalds is a fearless leader who shares our values and needs our prayers. In order for Florida to continue succeeding, common sense values of faith, family, and freedom must be reflected at the highest levels of state government in order to serve the public good," said **Anthony Verdugo, Founder of the Florida Christian Family Coalition.** "Policy decisions impact the lives of everyday Floridians from vulnerable communities to houses of worship, and our state needs a proven leader like Congressman Donalds who listens and leads with the conviction of a man on a mission to strengthen our state. He respects the critical role faith institutions play in our state to help shape our culture and character, thus, this coalition exists to lift up Florida in prayer and support for a leader who shares and practices our values."

The Faith Leaders for Byron Coalition follows the launch of the [Veterans for Byron Coalition](#), co-chaired by elected officials who have served our country as part of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and Navy JAG.

In [polling](#) and in [fundraising](#), Byron Donalds is the clear front-runner in the race for Governor with endorsements from President Trump, Elon Musk, [75% of the Florida House Republican Caucus](#), [top Florida sheriffs](#), 17 members of Florida's congressional delegation, U.S. House Leadership, and leading Florida and national conservatives.

## Cattle Herds are Low

American families are being crushed by skyrocketing beef prices that have surged 14.7% in just one year, while ranchers face a devastating perfect storm of drought, soaring costs, and the smallest cattle herd since 1951.

### Story Highlights

- Beef prices jumped 14.7% from September 2024 to 2025, nearly five times the overall food inflation rate
- America's cattle herd has shrunk to its smallest size since 1951, creating severe supply shortages
- Rancher input costs have exploded over 50% in five years, squeezing family farms nationwide
- Drought conditions and international trade disruptions are worsening the crisis for consumers

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Edward Jones

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EVENTS

[floury@att.net](mailto:floury@att.net)

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. If you want to make contact with the newspaper / Tom Loury email [toury@att.net](mailto:toury@att.net)

## PUBLISHER'S NOTES



Our journey brings us into the elderly category. Healthcare problems, high insurance rates, high Doctor bills, ruthless Doctors trying to build a practice. My wife has a primary doctor she was sent to, a specialist

for a work up, she was OK while there the doctor said she needed some test on her legs. She was tested and the recommendation was made to close off the vein's, that was done After many trips, her in pain, months of travel, she was getting worse, then she had a stroke in her eye, what caused that? Maybe clot from her legs? We kept going back and suddenly we realized she has two primary doctors, hmmm. We decided to cancel the second one and she was told at that she could not come back??? I think the doctor was taking clients from our small town and sending into her main off in the large city

close by. I am not happy! I think we were worked at the expense of my wife health. Lot's of procedures on her legs and they put her on a maintenance program NO IMPROVEMENT! And we are not allowed to come back! They made their money.

I was happy that the METRO CEP Ocala Chamber Partners were commenting to me about the Ocala DownTown newspaper. They said they saw all the great CEP information in it! Thanks for the Comments. I still have not met Mark McCormick the new CEO but I will, I'm looking forward to it.

Why did 14,000 Amazon Big Tech employees lose their jobs? Very large lay offs from New York, California, New Jersey, and Washington represents nearly half of the layoffs were engineers. Someone from Amazon said they need to get rid of the Bureaucracy in their company. That might be but, I don't believe that! Here is what I

think.

Remember the story about Henry Ford wanting to make unbreakable glass. Many people were dyeing in wreck's because of the glass in the first Fords.

Ford called all his engineers in one at a time and ask "Why can't we make unbreakable glass and they all would give him all these reasons that made sense. After eight or ten he came upon this new engineer recruit in his company and ask why can't we make unbreakable glass and the young man said oh please Mr. Ford I just started and I don't know why we can't make unbreakable glass, Ford said you are the one to make our unbreakable glass. Because you are half way there, you don't know why you can't. So let's start right now. Ford put him in charge of that division and monitored him daily. They went through many trials until they laminated two pieces of glass together with a clear double sided adhesive material. They found it would brake but held together. It has been improved on many time since then and it is not the major cause of deaths. If you don't know why something can't be done, you have taken your first step to greatness, work hard a create something new an innovative. You will see new and exciting things from the new engineers!

Why did this terrorist that use to help the United States in Afghanistan come to

Americas to kill American Troops. Did he do it for the love of his country. Hatred for the people who left him and his family to die when we made that last run from Afghanistan airport. Actually I think I heard the Americans went back and got him out! He was on the last load or something like that. He did not hate us for no reason, Biden or the people with the Biden signature stamp pulled us out of that country without helping the people that helped us. So they send the worst of their people here to do harm us! News flash...The shooter had an article (Propaganda piece) informing the shooter that our military was shooting American people? I don't believe that for a minute!

A simple conversation can help you create strategies that lead to true financial freedom for saving, budgeting, and managing expenses and invest in something, I suggest you talk to Edward Jones (Nick Navetta).

Healthcare is another important thing on my mind. I am getting such strange stories to get you to listen to them about their healthcare program. BUT what is happening is the large companies are trying to steal business from the independent specialist. Don't fall for it, if want the real scoop ask Christine Calvert about your health insurance needs. She handles almost all of the brands and knows which one is best for

Continued page 5

## Newspaper Deadlines

Editorial & Ad Copy for February

Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown

Noon, January 23rd

Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator

12am, January 28th

## Seniors Voice of Ocala/Ocala Downtown Products of TomL Publishing, LLC

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## CHAIR CHAT

BY BRIGGITTE SMITH

### Conversation Vie (Part 1)

Dear Friend,

We are delighted to share an in-depth look into the Marion County Republican Executive Committee (MCREC) – your local Republican Party, powered by your neighbors and dedicated to upholding the principles that strengthen our community, state, and nation. The MCREC is a vibrant grassroots organization, a cornerstone of the Republican Party in Florida, committed to shaping a brighter future through principled leadership and active civic engagement.

At its heart, the MCREC is composed of everyday citizens – your friends, family, and neighbors – who are united by a common set of core beliefs and values. We firmly believe in:

- **Protecting Constitutional Freedoms:** Upholding the fundamental rights endowed to every American, from the sacred right to bear arms to ensuring a limited government that respects individual liberties.
- **Securing Our Elections:** Championing the integrity of our democratic process by advocating for robust measures that ensure only eligible U.S. citizens cast votes, strengthening public trust in our electoral system.
- **Empowering Responsible Energy Solutions:** Promoting energy independence and economic prosperity through the strategic and responsible expansion of America's abundant natural resources, including oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear power.
- **Defending Life and Faith-Based Values:** Standing unequivocally for the protection of the unborn and advocating for policies that reflect and honor our community's deeply held faith-based principles.
- **Upholding Lawful Immigration:** Advocating for secure borders and a just, orderly immigration system rooted in the rule of law, ensuring the safety and sovereignty of our nation.
- **Championing Medical Freedom:** Protecting individual autonomy in healthcare decisions, opposing government mandates, and ensuring

patients have the right to choose their treatments and vaccinations without coercion and vaccinations without coercion.

### The Power of Grassroots Action: Your MCREC Members

Our strength lies in our Precinct Committeemen and Committeewomen – dedicated volunteers who serve as the direct link between our party and your neighborhood. These are party-elected officials who embody the spirit of community service, working tirelessly to represent Republican values at the most local level. They are the backbone of our efforts, actively engaged in:

- **Electing Republican Leaders:\*\*** From local municipal races to state and federal elections, our members are on the front lines, canvassing neighborhoods, organizing fundraisers, and providing essential support to elect officials who share our vision.
- **Maximizing Voter Turnout:\*\*** Spearheading "Get Out the Vote" initiatives to ensure every eligible Republican voice is heard on Election Day.
- **Active Participation:\*\*** Attending monthly meetings, representing the Republican Party at various local and state events, and fostering a strong, connected network of like-minded individuals.
- **Committee Engagement:\*\*** Contributing their time and expertise to vital committee activities, including:
- **Recruiting New Members:\*\*** Expanding our reach and inviting more citizens to join our mission.
- **Providing Feedback:\*\*** Offering valuable insights and comments on pending state, county, and school board actions and legislation, ensuring local voices are amplified.
- **Strategic Decision-Making:\*\*** Voting on MCREC Board members and crucial party actions, directly influencing our direction.
- **Direct Advocacy:\*\*** Meeting with and advocating to local and state officials, ensuring the MCREC provides an effective platform for "Your Voice" to be heard on key issues.

We are building a legacy, a sustainable future for Marion County, our beloved State of Florida, and our great Nation. Your involvement is crucial to this endeavor.

## Publisher's Notes

Continued from page 4  
your needs!

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In-N-Out President Lynsi Snyder is fleeing California for Tennessee, citing the Golden State's hostile business climate and family-unfriendly environment as key reasons for the move.

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Jaguars moving into the United States territory across the border in the Arizona territory. What is pushing them out of the jungle which is their natural Habitat? Is an army in their habitat?

-----  
"When a person sacrifices his integrity, nothing else really matters."

## Reflections

By TomL

Some years back I went to a senior fishing derby to take pictures for my Seniors Voice of Ocala newspaper.

It was being held at Lake Tuscaawilla and seniors were out in force. Every body had a spot and they would maneuver to get where they wanted to fish. Here is what happened. The lady that was coordinating the fishing Derby back then was Mary Filer one of the Parks and Recreation employees. I started taking pictures and went to interview Mary Filer and as I ask questions she said this might be the last Senior Fishing Derby My sponsor for the Derby said they will not be doing it any more. I ask how much does it cost to put on a fishing derby. She explained different ways of feeding the seniors. I went out and priced a few things. I went to a restaurant supply place and price the big all beef hotdogs, chips, drinks, worms for bait. Then I find out that the Florida Game Commission loaned the fishing poles over a hundred. The price fit my budget!

I called Mary and ask do you still need a sponsor? She said yes I said thats me! The first one we had I had so much fun that I ask how about having two per year. She got back to me and said as long as you want to sponsor it YES! I ask the members of Ocala Business Leaders for door prizes. BJ Trophy's came in with three trophy's, I would go to Walmart and buy three to six fishing poles for grand prizes We bought the

fishing worms there also. After that I sponsored 17 Senior Fishing Derby. Dianne Leaf was the supervisor for thee Senior Center, she is also known for her work with Charity's. When Mary Filer retired her super took over with the help of Grace Huff on the fishing derby.

First the Assisted Living people loved us. They came by the transport buses. They got the seniors out in the sunshine, some were in wheel chairs, so Ocala City Parks and Recreation built a badly needed dock so family's could enjoy it all year. The Seniors had fun, we fed them, they won prizes for fishing and just for drawings we had. Door prizes galore! Here are a few of the stories.

I was watching a guy with a big Cowboy hat on and a woman was telling him to pull. I took their picture then, I ask the lady what was going on? She said he is blind and wanted to fish. WOW! Wheel Chair people fished mostly off the dock and they had first choice to use the dock. All of them had helpers from the home that they came from and some caught fish, when they caught a fish they would holler FISH and they got a ticket for a drawing for door prizes and volunteers would take the fish off and measure it. After the first hour the fish would wake up and you could hear people hollering Fish. The prizes for Biggest fish, second the most fish and the oldest fisherperson, always in their 90's. We went over a hundred once or twice. The next year as time went on they would bring the fishing pole they won. We had one lady who fell in the lake, well she actually slid in the lake on her butt. Two or three of us were there to get wet also. There was a volunteer Life Guard on duty also. When the lady fell in twice on the same day. We went to the person that brought her that they had to make sure they watched her. She like the attention she was getting and we could not take chance of her getting hurt. In other words keep her out of the water or don't bring her back.

For years Clay Electric would bring a cooker from the plant and cook hundreds of hotdogs and hamburgers. They got a quality meat hamburger and a good beef hotdog and and most ate both with chips and a drink and you can have a picnic without beans. By the way the Ocala Star Banner came and took pictures 17 events and mentioned that I was the sponsor once! Petty petty petty!

It was not unusual for someone would say thank to the City Parks and Recreation, the FI Game Commission and the Seniors Voice.

Continued page 6

# Select Business Associates Of Ocala

- Edward Jones (Nick Navetta)
- Health Insurance Licensed Benefit Specialist (Christine Calvert)
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- Ocala Business Brokers (Connie Sivesind-Pendleton)
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- Titanic Belfast

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Take the following precautions to prevent rabies exposure:

- Immunize your pets and livestock based on your veterinarian's recommended schedule.
- Keep pets under direct supervision and on a leash, and keep livestock secured on your property. If an animal bites your pet or livestock, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact [Marion County Animal Services](http://Marion County Animal Services) at 352-671-8727.
- Avoid contact with wild or stray animals. Do not handle, feed, or unintentionally attract them with outdoor pet food, open garbage cans, or other sources of food. If you have been bitten or scratched by a wild or domestic animal, seek medical attention, and report the injury to DOH-Marion by calling 352-629-0137.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home; instead, contact a [licensed wildlife rehabilitator](http://licensed wildlife rehabilitator).

- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood. Contact [Marion County Animal Services](http://Marion County Animal Services) at 352-671-8727.
  - Prevent wildlife, including [bats](http://bats), from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, schools, and other similar areas where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- For more information on rabies, please visit [FloridaHealth.gov/Rabies](http://FloridaHealth.gov/Rabies) or contact DOH-Marion at 352-629-0137.

## Reflections

*Continued from page 5*

One day I was shopping in Wall Mart and a little Korean lady came up and hugged me and said I remember you from the Fishing Derby. It made me feel good!

It got to the point that I could not afford it. Two weeks ago a lady came up to me at a craft show and said hi she was part of almost every event. She is now 95 and has Race horses. I hope she goes past 150. I still go when I can and take pictures. It is a fun event.

Make your voice known!

tloury@att.net



FOR SALE!

OCALA DOWNTOWN AGENCIES

An Email (Barter Business)

**MAKE OFFER!**

It is a member with \$8900 trade available in ITEX Barter network organization see below!

**ITEX** is a company that operates a large barter network where businesses and individuals can trade products and services using ITEX dollars instead of cash, as detailed on Yahoo Finance and ITEX. It provides a marketplace for members to buy and sell and handles the record-keeping and transaction processing for this non-cash exchange, as shown on Prime Trade NW. This service helps businesses turn idle assets into new sales,

according to ITEX

They offer : Barter network / Business support / Membership / Transaction process (ITEX checks) to spend on many things, places and items.

**Purpose** is to help businesses and individuals leverage assets that would otherwise be idle (like spare inventory or empty seats) into a new revenue streams, reports ITEX.

- **ITEX is the largest marketplace for B2B cashless transactions in the USA and Canada.**
- ITEX processes millions in sales for thousands of member businesses everywhere!

Email Tom Loury at [tloury@att.net](mailto:tloury@att.net)

## A Night of Nostalgia

### Stirrups 'n Strides 1950s Sock Hop



build core stability, while the bond between horse and rider fosters trust, independence, and joy. It's a partnership that changes lives in ways no classroom or clinic can replicate.

Thanks to the incredible support from attendees, sponsors, and devoted volunteers, the event was a tremendous success, raising essential funds for the horses, programs, and riders who rely on Stirrups 'n Strides every day. It was truly a Happy Days evening—one filled with joy, generosity, and community.

So many wonderful photos were taken during the event and are still

**Stirrups 'n Strides Therapeutic Riding Center** brought the magic of the 1950s back to life at this year's vibrant Sock Hop fundraiser. From poodle skirts and saddle shoes to leather jackets and slicked-back hair, guests stepped into a night of pure nostalgia—all for a meaningful cause.

with casino tables, silent auctions, a Chinese auction, and raffles—all set to the timeless hits that defined the decade. Attendees filled the dance floor with swing, twists, the hand jive, and plenty of laughter. The energy was contagious, fueled by themed beverages (including the crowd-favorite Sour Betty), delicious treats, and an impressive array of auction items generously donated by community supporters.

But beyond the excitement, the heart of the evening centered on Stirrups 'n Strides' mission: empowering individuals with disabilities through the healing power of horses. For many riders, these horses offer more than a lesson—they provide balance, strength, confidence, and emotional connection. The rhythmic movement of the horse mimics the human walk, helping riders

being processed by Julie Bartoli, All About You Photography! The link below is from Rachel Doeberl Photography, Every Memory Matters Photobooth! She was a blast to work with and captured so many incredible moments. The photos are amazing, and her energy made the night even more fun. If you were a part of the event and would like to share photos, please send to Brandi at 352-286-2519.

Stirrups & Strides and Gala of the Royal Horses are joining forces for a very special collaboration!

On December 27th, our show will not only bring the magic and beauty of the horses you love — it will also help spread awareness and raise funds for the incredible work Stirrups & Strides does within our community.

This performance is filled with heart, purpose, and holiday spirit... and it also makes the perfect Christmas gift for the horse lovers in your life.

Join us for an unforgettable night that supports an unforgettable cause. <https://galaofteroyalhorses.com/> Buy Tickets Now!

# Festival at Fort King

A great time at this years Fort King Festival

Free shuttle parking is available at the Duke Energy power line field, approximately a quarter mile east of the fort. The field is located between NE 43rd Avenue and NE 44th Avenue on the north side of E Fort King Street. Free shuttles and trams will be running continuously throughout the event for pickups and drop-offs. An ADA tram will be available for handicapped or disabled guests.

Cannon Firing Notice

During the event, artillery volunteers will

conduct live cannon firing.

Residents in the area may hear a series of rounds fired multiple times throughout the day during the event.

Step into the 1800s at the Festival at Fort King! This two-day event will feature historic themed crafts, games, workshops, activities, living historians, vendors, food, drinks and much more. The pinnacle of the festival is a re-enactment of the event that fueled the start of the Second Seminole War.

Fort King National Historic Landmark  
3925 E Fort King St. | Ocala, FL 34470



## FROM THE DESK OF CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



**Cammack Applauds Oversight Committee Passage of USA Act**

**Washington, D.C. —** Today, U.S. Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03)

released the following statement after the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform passed her bill, the *Unauthorized Spending Accountability (USA) Act*:

*"I'm grateful to Chairman Comer and my colleagues for advancing this critical bill," said Congresswoman Cammack. "For too long, Washington has allowed billions of taxpayer dollars to flow to programs that haven't been reviewed or reauthorized in years—sometimes decades. The USA Act restores accountability by forcing Congress to do its job: examine these programs every three years, determine whether they are effective, and ensure that federal funds are being used responsibly. This is a commonsense, necessary step to rein in wasteful spending and return real oversight to the American people."*

**Chairman James Comer (KY-01) praised the legislation, saying:** *"It is not too much to ask that Congress provide the appropriate level of scrutiny over the federal programs it has established and find the time every three years to ensure that federal funds are being used responsibly and effectively. The timeframe under the USA Act forces that to happen. Ensuring that every federal*

*program is properly authorized gives Congress the oversight and budgetary tools to increase government efficiency, improve the effectiveness of federal agency programs and missions, and help reduce government spending."*

The USA Act puts all unauthorized programs on a pathway to sunset in 3 years and requires any new authorizations or reauthorizations to include a sunset clause. This means every government program will be routinely scrutinized and updated by the People's representatives.

In its latest report, CBO found 1,264 authorizations that expired before fiscal year 2024 began and 251 that are set to expire before the end of the fiscal year. Additionally, it reported that \$516 billion in appropriations for 2024 is linked to 491 expired authorizations. Two decades ago, this figure was \$35 billion marking an 1,374% increase of unauthorized programs and agencies that are still taxpayer funded.

Congresswoman Kat Cammack represents Florida's Third Congressional District, covering 12 counties across North Central and Northeast Florida. She serves on the House Agriculture and Energy and Commerce Committees and chairs both the Republican Women's Caucus and the Republican Study Committee's Emerging Tech Task Force.

**Cammack Secures Key Legislation to Strengthen National Guard Readiness in FY26 NDAA**

**Washington, D.C. —** Congresswoman

Kat Cammack (FL-03) released the following statement after House passage of the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), landmark legislation that advances President Trump's Peace Through Strength agenda and delivers critical support to America's warfighters, military families, and defense industrial base. The legislation includes Congresswoman Cammack's amendment to ensure National Guard units have the equipment they need to execute homeland defense missions.

*"From strengthening deterrence to rebuilding our industrial base, the FY26 NDAA restores America's military advantage and ensures our servicemembers have the tools, training, and support they deserve," said Congresswoman Cammack. "America relies on the National Guard every single day—whether in natural disaster response or homeland defense. They cannot do their jobs without the right equipment, and this provision gives Congress the transparency needed to address these shortfalls and ensure our Guard is fully prepared to meet any mission."*

**The FY26 NDAA fulfills several major priorities:**

- **Implementing Peace Through Strength:** Reinforces President Trump's strategy of deterring conflict by maintaining overwhelming U.S. military superiority; strengthens nuclear capabilities, expands missile defense, and invests in countering threats from China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.
- **Transforming Defense Acquisition:** Cuts red tape, streamlines procurement, and accelerates delivery timelines so warfighters receive the capabilities they

need when and where they need them.

- **Improving Quality of Life for Servicemembers:** Supports the Administration's 3.8% pay raise and enhances military housing, education benefits, and childcare access to improve recruitment and retention.
  - **Accelerating Innovation:** Prioritizes cutting-edge technologies—hypersonics, AI-enabled systems, autonomous platforms—to ensure the U.S. maintains a decisive technological edge in future conflicts.
  - **Revitalizing the Defense Industrial Base:** Expands U.S. production capacity, provides stability for contractors, and encourages new and innovative entrants into the defense marketplace to strengthen economic and national security.
- Congresswoman Cammack's provision strengthens oversight of the National Guard's ability to conduct homeland defense missions and response to natural disasters.
- FastWave Medical develops next-generation laser-based IVL systems to treat cardiovascular disease.
  - The technology is subject to export controls under ECCN 3A001 and classified as "critical technology" under 31 C.F.R. § 800.215(b).
  - The ongoing dispute with Grand Pharmaceutical (Hong Kong) has stalled U.S. fundraising efforts and placed more than 70 American engineering and manufacturing jobs at risk.
  - The case is currently under CFIUS review as Case 25-149.

## FAIRTAX



Artificial intelligence is still a relatively new technology. Still more and more people are using it to answer questions or look up information. Bob Paxton, a FAIRtax advocate in Ocala, is a former radio personality as well as a retired computer programmer. He is the founder of FAIRtax Power Radio, a weekly podcast and video stream, who decided to ask three separate AI application services to compare the current income/payroll tax system to the FAIRtax and then choose which system they would like to live under if they were a typical American taxpayer. Not surprisingly, all

three chose the FAIRtax. Below are some excerpts that Bob received from those inquiries.

CoPilot:

“If I were an American taxpayer weighing the income tax system against the FAIRtax, I'd lean toward the FAIRtax - for some compelling reasons, though without caveats, if you're someone who values economic freedom, simplicity and transparency, the FAIRtax is attractive. But if you prioritize stability, predictability and targeted redistribution, the income tax feels safer.

Grok:

“If I were an American taxpayer, I'd lean toward the FAIRtax for its simplicity, transparency and potential to boost economic growth by untaxing productivity. The income tax system's complexity and inefficiency (ie., hours spent on tax prep, loopholes favoring the wealthy) are major drawbacks. The FAIRtax prebate could address regressivity if well implemented,

ensuring low-income households aren't disproportionately burdened. However, I'd want a clear transition plan to avoid price shock and protections against evasion (e.g., strong auditing of retailers).

That said, the income tax's progressively and stability are strong arguments, especially for those prioritizing redistribution. My preference assumes a well-designed prebate and enforcement system, which isn't guaranteed.”

ChatGPT:

“If I were an American taxpayer, I'd like the FAIRtax system over the current income tax, though with some reservations. The FAIRtax is a national sales tax that replaces most federal income taxes, including payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare.

In summary, I'd prefer the FAIRtax because of its simplicity, potential to stimulate economic growth and fairness in how it taxes individuals based on consumption rather than income. It would provide a fresh start with fewer complexities, though the regressive nature of the tax and it's potential impact on the cost of living for low-income families would need to be added effectively.”

I found it interesting that all three AI applications chose the FAIRtax, noting it's simplicity, transparency and potential economic growth. However, I take exception to the idea that the income tax system is stable or predictable since Congress proposes 1,500 to 2,000 changes to the tax code each year. Also, worth noting is that although the FAIRtax removes Social Security and Medicare obligation from paychecks, the bill requires a certain percentage of all FAIRtax collected to go to those programs making them much more stable than they are today. I am convinced that, once sufficiently explained, most living, breathing, thinking human beings would arrive at the same conclusions.

For more information go to FAIRtax.org

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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.



Fuchala 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.



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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 UTHMEIER



### Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Arrests and Prosecutions of Three Central Florida Predators for Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Materials

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General

James Uthmeier announced the arrests of **Jorge Armando Nieto**, 39, **Martin Theodore Cassady**, 61, and **Joel Orellana**, 25, all from the greater Orlando area, on a combined **81 felony charges** of Possession of Child Pornography.

“The depraved individuals who choose to engage in and trade content showing the sexual abuse of children will be caught and prosecuted to the fullest,” said **Attorney General James Uthmeier**. “Protecting our kids is my utmost priority, and I am confident in our Statewide Prosecutors' ability to hold these predators accountable for this abhorrent behavior.”

The investigations were launched by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Cybercrimes Task Force following tips from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The executed search warrants revealed graphic sexual abuse materials involving children and animals on their personal devices. Some of the children appear to be under two years old.

These cases will be prosecuted in the Ninth Judicial Circuit of Florida by Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Rodrigo

Caruco.

The investigations are ongoing, and further charges may be added once the information is filed.

### Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Guilty Verdict for Illegal Alien who Stole Disaster Aid from Hurricane Ian Victims

FORT MYERS, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Office of Statewide Prosecution secured the conviction of **Ivan Gutierrez Miranda** for stealing and reselling trailers meant for recovering hurricane victims who lost and were rebuilding their homes. Miranda is a Cuban national who entered the United States illegally in 2022.

“This illegal alien was allowed in by the Biden administration, and he targeted critical resources during a disaster when many Floridians needed temporary housing,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “Thanks to Assistant Statewide Prosecutors Paul Thomas and Tim Donnelly, this criminal will stay behind bars for a long time before we send him back to where he came from.”

The investigation, conducted by the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office and Florida Highway Patrol, revealed that Miranda and his codefendants operated in the early morning hours as well as late evening in an attempt to blend in during the state of emergency where RVs/Campers were being moved daily to aid displaced Floridians in need due to Hurricane Ian.

After a week-and-a-half-long trial, the Office of Statewide Prosecution secured a guilty verdict against Miranda. A key piece of evidence in the trial was a video Miranda filmed, in which he advertised the features of the stolen trailers.

The jury found the defendant guilty on the charges below:

- RICO
- Conspiracy to Commit RICO
- Organized Scheme to Defraud
- Dealing in Stolen Property – 5 counts

Sentencing is scheduled for January 26, 2026. Miranda faces up to 165 years in the Florida Department of Corrections, with a mandatory minimum of eight years. After serving his sentence, Miranda will be deported.

### Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Seizure of \$1.5 Million in Cryptocurrency from Chinese National who Defrauded Floridian

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Office of Statewide Prosecution's Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit successfully seized cryptocurrency valued at \$1.5 million USD in a money laundering case against a Chinese national.

“While scammers are changing their methods, I am proud of our Statewide Prosecutors' ability to adapt and deliver justice,” said **Attorney General James Uthmeier**. “I want to thank our Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit and the Citrus County Sheriff's Office for their continued dedication and for making this fraudster's victim whole again.”

The investigation started in July 2024 after a report was filed with the Citrus County Sheriff's Office. The victim, a Citrus County resident, reported he had been scammed out of \$47,421 USD through an internet-based investment scheme.

As a result of the investigation, **Tu Weizhi**, of China, was charged with **Money Laundering, Grand Theft, and Organized Scheme to Defraud**. If Weizhi ever attempts to enter the U.S., he will be arrested. The seizure was conducted under the Fugitive Disentitlement Act.

A seizure warrant was filed in the Fifth Judicial Circuit to recover Weizhi's entire cryptocurrency wallet, valued at approximately \$1.5 million, which contained AVAX (Avalanche), DOGE (Dogecoin), PEPE (Pepe), and SOL (Solana) cryptocurrency tokens.

Cryptocurrency-related crimes are on the rise. If you believe you have been the victim of fraudulent activity, you may file a complaint at [MyFloridaLegal.com](http://MyFloridaLegal.com) or by calling 1-866-9-NO-SCAM.

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FROM THE DESK OF

GOVERNOR DESANTIS



**Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Proposal for Citizen Bill of Rights for Artificial Intelligence**

**THE VILLAGES, Fla.**— Governor Ron DeSantis announced a proposal to protect consumers by

establishing an Artificial Intelligence Bill of Rights for citizens. Additionally, Governor DeSantis announced a proposal to protect Floridians from footing the bill for Hyperscale AI Data Centers and to empower local governments to reject their development in their communities.

“Today, I proposed new legislation on artificial intelligence and AI data centers to protect Floridians' privacy, security, and quality of life,” said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. “Our AI proposal will establish an Artificial Intelligence Bill of Rights to define and safeguard Floridians' rights—including data privacy, parental controls, consumer protections, and restrictions on AI use of an individual's name, image or likeness without consent.”

The Artificial Intelligence proposal will establish an AI Bill of Rights to provide consumers with protections.

- Reenact protections Florida has already passed against “deep fakes” and explicit material, including those depicting minors.
- Prohibit any state or local government agency from utilizing DeepSeek or any other Chinese-created AI tools to protect American data.
- Prohibit AI from using an individual's Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) without their consent – tie it to harm or sale of a product (political ads, schemes to defraud already in law).
- Require a notice to consumers when interacting with AI (Company chatbots).
- Prohibit entities from providing

“licensed” therapy or mental health counseling through artificial intelligence. This can be expanded to include use of AI to imitate a licensed professional.

- Provide parental controls for minors which will allow parents to access the conversation their child has with a large language model, set parameters for when the child can access the platform, and notify parents if their child exhibits concerning behavior.
- Ensure data inputted to AI is secure and private.
- Prohibit companies from selling or sharing personal identifying information with third parties (deidentified) and mirror data privacy protections in current law.
- Limit insurance companies from using AI for insurance claims. Require that AI cannot be used as the sole determination in adjusting or denying a claim. Insurers that use AI for claims must detail the use and allow the Office of Insurance Regulation to inspect the AI model to ensure it does not violate unfair insurance trade practices.

The Data Centers proposal will protect Consumers from footing the bill for AI Data Centers. The proposal will:

- Protect Ratepayers—Prohibit utilities from charging Florida residents more to support hyperscale data center development, including electric, gas, and water utilities.
- Protect Taxpayers—No taxpayer subsidies for Big Tech.
- Protect Local Control—Allows local government to prohibit data center construction/development.
- Protect Florida's Water Resources—Ensure that water resources are not utilized to the detriment of the public.
- Protect Natural Florida— Prevent the construction, siting, or operation of a data center by foreign principals or on land classified as agricultural and/or lands

under a greenbelt exemption, and require setbacks and vegetative buffers. Requires FDOT to complete noise abatement reviews to protect natural Florida from noise pollution.

**Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Proposal to Protect Puppies in Florida**

**LOXAHATCHEE, Fla.**— Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced proposal to protect puppies in Florida. In partnership with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the state will develop standard practices to ensure ethical dog breeding. Through this proposal, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation will be directed to license dog breeders and hold accountable puppy mills that abuse dogs, whether by overbreeding them, leaving them out in extreme weather, cramming them into small cages, or limiting their access to water.

“In Florida, we will always fight to protect man's best friend,” said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. “The proposal we announced today will end unethical puppy mills, hold accountable abusive breeders, and help shelter dogs find loving homes.”

Additional proposal actions includes:

- Establishing a hotline for individuals to call and report abuse by breeders to better crack down on these bad actors.
- Requiring pet stores to offer their space to local shelters for adoption before they use that space to sell dogs from puppy mills. As shelters across the state face overcrowding, offering animals for adoption at pet stores will help save them from being euthanized.
- Developing additional legislation that provides for increased penalties for individuals who abuse or torture animals in front of a minor.

Earlier this year, Governor DeSantis signed Trooper's Law and Dexter's Law:

- Trooper, who is now happily living with his new family, was abandoned on the side of the road as Hurricane Milton was barreling down. If not for the Florida Highway patrol, he would have most likely

died. In Florida, it is now a felony to abandon and restrain a dog during a state of emergency.

- Dexter's Law was passed after a dog was brutally killed just days after adoption. Florida now has a sentencing multiplier for anyone torturing, mutilating, or killing a dog. A database was also created of those convicted of animal abuse, so shelters know not to let these evil people adopt pets.

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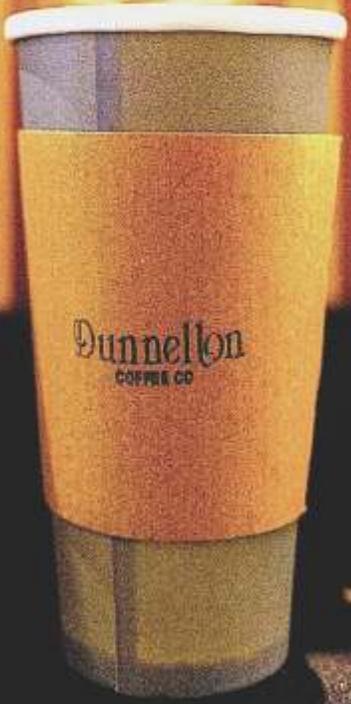


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Jennifer Madden, Director of Partner Relations  
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**OCALA**  
BUSINESS LEADERS

If you are looking to build your business, be our guest.  
**6:45 AM – 8:00 AM at Ocala**

**Come to a FREE Breakfast Wednesday Mornings and check out this PREMIER networking group.**

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