

It's Raining Money



The CEP/Ocala Chamber of Commerce Spring 2016 HOME GARDEN and LIFESTYLE EXPO was held at the Ewers Center. There are pictures of the event on pages 8 and 9. One fun thing that was there was the money booth, put on by Campus USA Credit Union. You stand in this glass booth and the money and pieces of paper are blowing around you. The idea is you get to keep the money you can grab. Pictured is a great shot of a local young girl attempting to grab the money. She did a great job!

We the People By the People For the People

“The people are speaking” in these elections and the core politicians are not listening. They have lost sight of who they work for. The political system is trying to come back and realign itself. I predicted a long time ago that it needed to happen. It’s not

Senior Fishing Derby



The Senior Fishing Derby was a morning of fun, stimulation and smiles. For the catch and release 150 seniors showed up for the fun, food and Prizes. More pictures in this paper.

Transgender Problem

By TomL

Obama has sent a message to the schools in this country that says if they do not make arrangements or allow the transgenders to use the bathroom of their choice he will cut off the federal funding. The transgender represent 1/3 of one percent of the people of the United States.

We are forcing businesses to set up public bathrooms for this. We are confusing our children, as children have been taught to be aware of people you don’t know and be especially careful in the bathrooms. Now we put them in situations with this ridiculous law.

For example: Dunnellon Florida at the

local Walmart a man dressed as a woman went into the Ladies room. A little girl seeing the man go in would not go in and started crying. A witness said to this. “it is terrible to scare children like that!” Why is this administration deteriorating our country’s values?”

It was suggested the stores put a temp port-a-potty out in the front parking lot and mark it “transgender only” until they resolve this issue. What will happen is the stores will just close the bathrooms to everyone and be done with it. I think only restaurants must have bathrooms. I don’t know

(Continued on Page 3)

happening the way I thought it would. It will be painful but I believe that America can be great again. The structure needs to land some where between what it is now and down to earth, common sense measures.

(Continued on Page 3)

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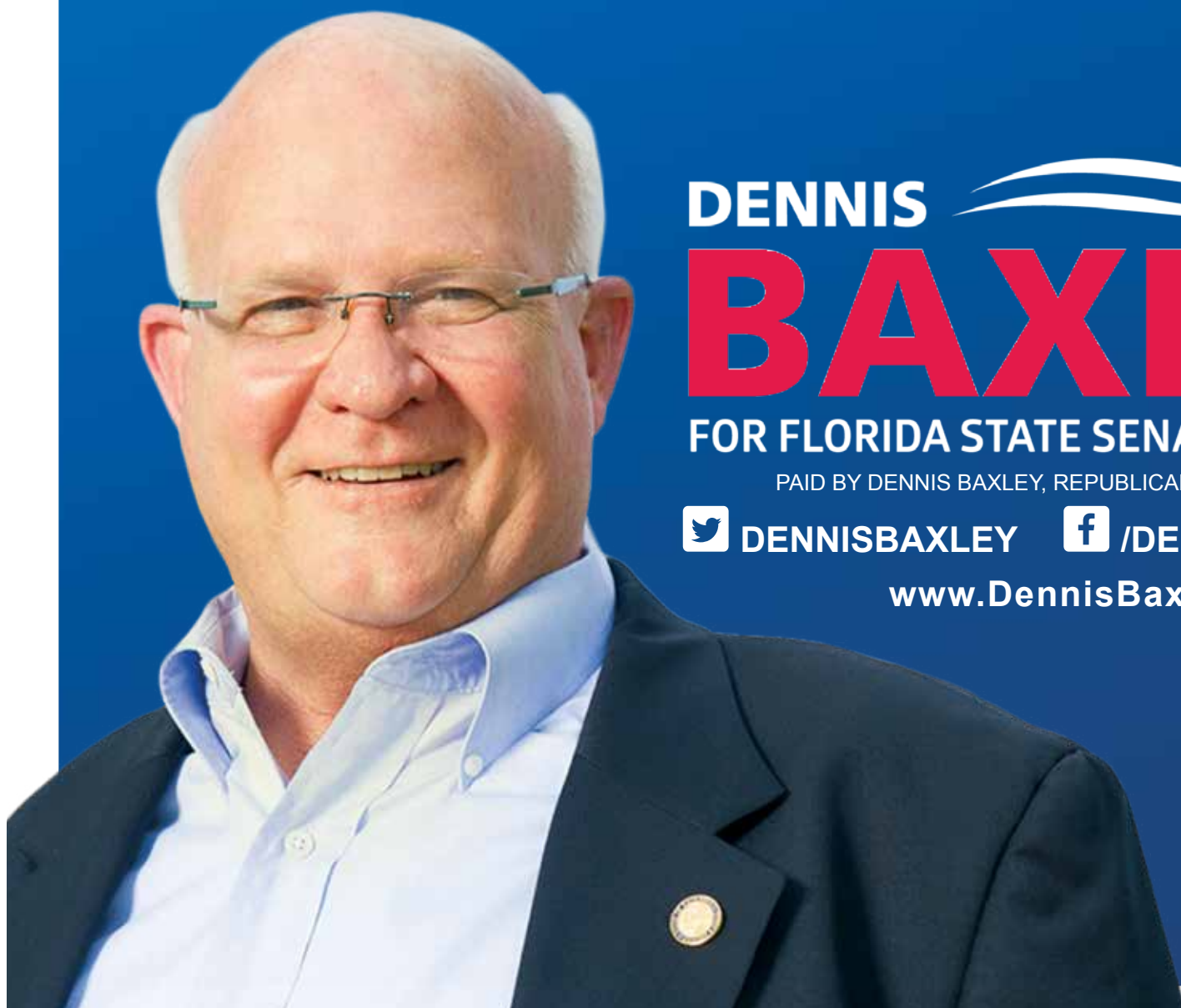
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- ✓ **Opposed to any funding for sanctuary cities**
- ✓ **Pro-Second Amendment**
- ✓ **Opposed to the Obama transgender bathroom policy**



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OVERREACH
The latest Obama Order linking bathroom policy and education funding is the latest bold example of central government overreach. Regardless of your views on these issues,

what is most evident is that this is NOT how public policy is formed in a demo-

cratic republic. This highlights the disregard for our constitutional form of government which respected the sovereignty of states and granted limited prescribed powers to the central government. What we are witnessing is executive tyranny. This kind of tyranny is fostering the anger that grips our nation.

It will be a greater imperative for state and local governments to stand firm in resisting this overreach to restore liberty. American freedom is not a selfish freedom. It does not empower us to 'do whatever I want'. It is a responsible freedom, to allow

one to be free to take responsibility for oneself and others. This is the America we were given, one that lifted not only the quality of life for us, but for the world. We must work to restore this nation for the next generations to follow. I believe in the spirit of the

American people. Every generation has met this challenge and we will continue to do so. We are Americans.

Onward and upward,
Dennis Baxley

Transgender Problem

(Continued from Page 1)

what the answer is but it will take time and money to setup a third bathroom system. What say you?

Jeff Foxworthy said, If you have to get your parents' permission to go on a field trip or to take an aspirin in school, but not to get an abortion — you might live in a nation that was founded by geniuses but is run by idiots.

We the People

(Continued from Page 1)

Money drives the country and foreign trade should come after "We the people get should

get ours first".

The Government always steps in to fix something they created!



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■ Tom Loury

PUBLISHER'S NOTES



If only Mitt Romney had been this aggressive during his bid in his presidential election. We probably have a surprise coming and there seems to be an effort in the Republican party from the dinosaur section, meaning the career politicians that have been office for many years, to unseat or stop Trump's efforts and the voters.

I will print the information when proven facts come out on the Sheriff's issue.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

From the 2015 edition of the "Waste Report" from the federal spending oversight sub committee, chair by Rand Paul. Here are some examples.

TV commercial to promote Christmas Trees at Christmas time \$150,000

YOGA Classes for Federal Bureaucrats \$150,000

A study to find out why Americans don't want to use the metric system \$188,000

Paid for children from Pakistan to travel to the USA to attend space camp and visit Dollywood \$250,000

A study about the 1972 video game Pong \$350,000

A made for TV professional cricket league in Afghanistan \$850,000

A wine making study curriculum for community colleges \$853,000

Research on the effectiveness of golf equipment in space \$15,000,000

A gas station in Afghanistan that practically no one can use \$43,000,000

We want to welcome several new advertisers, one is Eaton's Beach / The Steam Shack. If you have not experienced this place it has the best of two worlds, indoor dining overlooking Lake Wier and the open air dining under roof next to the beach. Great food, chef prepared, friendly people, good service, a great place to visit to have a drink at the bar or eat lunch or dinner. They also have live entertainment on weekends. See ad!

Welcome Kindred at Home. They take care of people that want to live at home

which are terminal. They are looking for volunteers. This is a very important cause to help a person keep their dignity to the very end so call now! See ad!

Welcome Heart & Soul Café. Go meet the girls Cathy & Lori. See ad!

Thanks to Dennis Baxley running his ad in our papers. His is running for his office again and they have moved his territory to include the Villages, Lake, Sumter, and Marion. When the Villages send out a copy of the ballets they will put their picks on it. They are endorsing Baxley's competition. Baxley is well known in Tallahassee for the work he does for the people, and he wrote the Stand Your Ground Law!

Thanks to Evelio Silvera for running his ad in our papers. Evelio is running for Marion County Commission. He is well known

in Marion County, Gainesville, Tallahassee and more.

Hawaii, DC, and Massachusetts pay more in welfare than the average working folks earn.

It has been said:

Trump is the Dragon Slayer! By Billy Gramm's son

Cruz is the designated driver!

Not many years ago, GM made automobiles in Flint, Michigan and you couldn't drink the water in Mexico.

Now after 7+ years of Obama, GM now makes cars in Mexico and you can't drink the water in Flint Michigan!

You can shake in your boots when I tell you our movement is for TRUMP and he hasn't asked for a dime.

Ocala Rotary Club

OCALA ROTARY CLUB ANNOUNCES JUNE 2016 PROGRAMS

(Ocala FL May 16, 2016) Ocala Rotary Club will host the following speakers for the June 2016 meetings:

Monday, June 6: Katrina James, founder of Favour Ain't Fair Foundation LLC; her topic will be "From where we are to where we're supposed to be"; 352-812-8074; flc@gmail.com

Monday, June 13: Kim Greene, with

Brown & Brown Insurance; her topic will be "Summer Safety"; 352-387-4234 or 352-207-5241; Kim.Greene@bbocala.com

Friday, June 24 (6:00 PM at the Webber Center): Annual Banquet and installation of officers and board members.

The club meets each Monday at the College of Central Florida in the Ewers Center Room 100. Lunch service begins at 11:45 AM, with the call to order at 12:15 PM. Guests are welcome at Monday meetings.

Newspaper Deadlines

Editorial & Ad Copy for July

Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown

12am, June 22nd

Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator

12am, June 29th

Ocala DownTown

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Kevin Sheilley

OCALA/MARION COUNTY CHAMBER & ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP



We talk often at the CEP about our local economy and some of the great statistics about the area's economic growth. Some of these statistics include being names to Forbes' list of the fastest growing job markets, the list from Bloomberg names Ocala as one of the 10 fastest growing economies and new numbers showing our job creation rate is 1/3 higher than the state average.

Additionally, we track and report on the efforts of the CEP to directly impact job creation and investment. Through the first 40 months of our 5-year Moving Forward effort, we have assisted new and expanding companies with the announced creation of 2874 jobs which on average pay 17% above the County average and will result in a capital investment in our community of \$259 Million. Our two most recent Power Plant Business Incubator graduates have created a total of 35 jobs, up from a combined three when they entered the facility two years ago. These are all important and very worthy of celebrating. However, for this column I would like to highlight some statistics re-

lated directly to the operation of the CEP.

Each year, the CEP participates in a benchmarking survey sponsored by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives. Hundreds of chambers from across the US and Canada participate in this process and participants are able to glean valuable information ranging from operational statistics to financial metrics to employee competitive data. While there is value in being able to compare the CEP to organizations across the continent, the real value comes from being able to compare our performance against similar organizations in similar size communities. The CEP is part of a benchmarking group of 11 chambers who are similar in scope, location and service areas. Each of these 11 organizations are joint chambers of commerce and economic development organizations who serve communities between 150,000 and 450,000 residents and are lo-

cated in the Southeastern US. Additionally, they are all organizations who have excellent reputations and are viewed as leaders.

When looking at the 2015 data, the CEP compares extremely well across a number of key metrics. The CEP ranked #1 in partnership retention (% of members who renew their membership) and #1 in market penetration (% of the business community who are members). We ranked #2 in revenue retention (% of membership revenue which renews) but only by one percentage point. However, the stat which I think is most significant is the efficiency rating (cost effectiveness of delivering programming/services). The CEP was #1 in this rating. In other words, your CEP delivers the most bang for the buck for our partners.

We are incredibly grateful for the businesses who invest in the growth of their business and the economy by partnering with the CEP. Our Vision is to be a model of excellence of what a 21st century Chamber should be and do and we think this efficiency is a part of the model. A huge THANK YOU to all of our partners and if you are not a partner, please reach out to us today so we can help you learn how you can invest in the growth of our community and your business.



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PaperChain and this Publication are Proud Supporters of the Fisher House



With your help, we will continue to meet the needs of our military community today, and long into the future.

www.fisherhouse.org

This ad has interactive features. Download the app "Layer"

Marion County Genealogical Society

Marion County Genealogical Society Meeting

The Marion County Genealogical Society will meet on Thur June 16 at 2 PM at the Marion County Public Library located at 2720 E Silver Springs Blvd in Ocala.

For further information, contact Judy Wright at (352) 897-0840 , HYPERLINK

“mailto:MarionGenealogy@gmail.com” \t “_blank” MarionGenealogy@gmail.com, or HYPERLINK “http://mariongenealogy.tripod.com/” \t “_blank” http://MarionGenealogy.tripod.com.

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For more information, please call
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Pride Tree Service



Pictured here is a tree man from Pride Tree Service 40 feet in the air cutting a tree close to this structure. The tree was taken down and all went well. The center of the tree was broke out during a freak storm and had to be removed.



Tom Loury
352-804-1223



Wendy Netherclift
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■ ONE PERSON'S OPINION ■

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

There is no longer a United States of "WE THE PEOPLE".

It is now the United States of "WE THE WASHINGTON, D.C. VIPERS" liberal and conservative.

WE THE PEOPLE are looking for a savior, and see none on the horizon.

John Bolton, Lt. General Jerry Boykin, or Rudy Giuliani might get my endorsement, but none of them are on the ballot.

We have a choice between a Maybe and a NO. The Maybe promises us many of the things we the people want. If Maybe gives us one of those promises we will be farther ahead, than if No is elected, and gives us more VIPERISM. Who will do us the least harm? Our culture, morality, money, jobs, and freedom are on the line. Maybe is being savaged by the POWER LUSTERS [THE VIPERS}, and lobbyists, because Maybe is not beholden to them. We the people need an

unencumbered candidate.

What do we want strife or harmony? Freedom or enslavement?

Please look for knowledge. The Communist Takeover of America – 45

Declared Goals by Greg Swank {on the net}, or The Naked Communist by Cleon Skousen. This may be our last chance to keep our freedom.

DO NOT VOTE IN IGNORANCE. See how many of these 45 goals have been completed. Is that O.K. with you? Is that what you want?

The communists are not the only one's after America. America is the gem of the planet. The example for all mankind. She is not perfect, but getting rid of the VIPERS is a start. One down,???? to go?

D.I. Larson

Ocala, FL

Your opinion matters to us!

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Ocala Bike Fest

The Ocala Bike Fest will be held June 3rd through June 5th. The times are Friday 1pm-11pm, Saturday 11pm-11pm, and Sunday 9am-6pm. This year's event includes the addition of two longtime motorcycle industry veterans Ted Smith from The Rats Hole and Johnny Lange from SCC Promotions who both have more years on the road than they care to admit. Ted and Johnny have over half a century in combined experience in marketing, promotion, event coordination and of course bike/car shows. Both indicated they were very fortunate to come on board to a great event run by passionate people and their intention was to take the event to the national level. The first change was to hold the event at the sprawling 16 acre ARC campus which gives the event unlimited growth potential and great visibility. Next they upped the entertainment aspect by bringing in national musical acts this year's lineup features The Georgia Satellites on Saturday night, Nova Rex on Friday night and closing out the event on

Sunday afternoon will be Michael Allman yes that Allman ! What would a bike event be without a bike show and we are fortunate to have The world famous Rats Hole Show on Saturday just like Daytona and Leesburg plus a Rat rod show on Sunday ! Last but certainly not least Warhorse Harley has provided us with a brand New Harley Davidson Street Glide for a chance drawing with all proceeds benefitting The ARC Marion . Remember the entire event is a fundraiser for developmentally disabled citizens in Ocala. You as an individual can help by spreading the word and attending the event, businesses can help by becoming sponsors ! Vendors spaces are available by contacting Johnny Lange at 714-465-7103. Sponsors can contact Cheri Craig 352-351-9048 or visit HYPERLINK "http://www.ocalabikefest.com" \t "_blank" www.ocalabikefest.com to become a sponsor or purchase a chance drawing ticket who knows you might leave the event on a brand new Harley!



CEP Ocala / Marion County CHAMBER & ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

To be the catalyst for a prosperous community.

The Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Corporation are **Moving Forward!** and have unified to create the Ocala/Marion County Chamber & Economic Partnership (CEP).

The CEP will serve as the central resource for all businesses in Marion County: new, relocating, existing, large, small and budding entrepreneurs!

The forward momentum of this vibrant organization will focus on economic growth while maintaining the beauty and quality of life in Ocala and Marion County.

We invite you to get acquainted at a complimentary, no-obligation

"GET GOING! New Partner Orientation"

This 60-minute overview is a casual format for you to learn more about the CEP and how partnership in this progressive organization will provide you with additional resources, connections, and advocacy to help in YOUR business development and growth initiatives.

For more information and the date of the next session, please contact:
Felecia Prather at 352-629-8051 or felecia@ocalacc.com

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Classified Print Results:

Sold what they advertised... 38%
Sold or had many calls..... 73%

Craigslist:

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Placed Ad on Craigslist..... 17%
Responded to Craigslist Ad.. 21%

* Survey Conducted June 30, 2013

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CEP/Ocala Chamber Spring 2016 Home & Garden Expo

The Home, Garden, and Lifestyle Expo held on Saturday, April 30th at the College of Central Florida, was a success! With 55 vendors, over 600 consumers, 10 seminars, and three food trucks, the three organizations that held the event (CEP, OMCAR,

and MCBIA) have called it the most successful Expo event yet.
Special Thanks to sponsors Cox Communications, NRL Mortgage, and Florida Credit union for your support of the event.



CEP/Ocala Chamber Spring 2016 Home & Garden Expo



SENIOR SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MOVIES FOR JUNE, 2016

8th AVENUE – TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7TH AND 8TH, 2016 AT 1:30 PM

BARBARA G. WASHINGTON – THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, JUNE 9TH AND 10TH, 2016 AT 1:00 PM

“ZOOKEEPER” STARRING: KEVIN JAMES, ROSARIO DAWSON, LESLIE BIBB, KEN JEONG AND DONNIE WAHLBERG

The animals at the Franklin Park Zoo love their kindhearted caretaker, Griffin Keyes. Finding himself more comfortable with a lion than a lady, Griffin decides the only way to get a girl in his life is to leave the zoo and find a more glamorous job. The animals, in a panic, decide to break their

time-honored code of silence and reveal their biggest secret: they can talk! To keep Griffin from leaving, they decide to teach him the rules of courtship - animal style. RATED PG

8TH AVENUE – TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21ST AND 22ND, 2016 AT 1:30 PM

BARBARA G. WASHINGTON – THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, JUNE 23RD AND 24TH, 2016 AT 1:00 PM

“BROOKLYN” STARRING: SAOIRSE RONAN, DOMHNALL GLEESON, EMORY COHEN, JIM BROADBENT, AND JULIE WALTERS

Eilis Lacey is a young Irish immigrant navigating her way through 1950s Brooklyn. Lured by the promise of America, Ei-

lis departs Ireland and the comfort of her mother's home for the shores of New York City. The initial shackles of homesickness quickly diminish as a fresh romance sweeps Eilis into the intoxicating charm of love. But soon, her new vivacity is disrupted by her past, and Eilis must choose between two countries and the lives that exist within. RATED PG 13

Reservations must be made at the Center of your choice. Seating is limited to 8 persons per video. Please call the 8th Avenue Center at 629-8545 or Barbara G. Washington Center at 629-8357 to reserve your seat.

COMING EVENTS FOR JUNE, 2016 AQUAZIZE: WATER AEROBICS FOR ADULTS

When: Thursdays, June 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th, 2016,

July 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th, 2016

August 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th, 2016
Time: 6:30 to 7:30 PM
Cost: \$15.00 per participant for 4 sessions

Where: Hampton Aquatic Fun Center, 255 NW Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd., Ocala

What: Class activities include: stretching, cardio, toning, strength training and abdominal workouts.

Buoyancy equipment is used. Modifications will be demonstrated for all fitness levels. For more information, please call Diane at 401-3916.

AQUABILITY

When: Wednesdays, June 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th

July 13th, 20th, 27th, and August 3rd, 2016

Time: 5:30 to 6:30 PM OR 6:30 to 7:30 PM

Cost: \$25.00 per person for 4 week session

Where: Hampton Aquatic Fun Center, 255 NW Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Ocala

What: An Adaptive Aquatic Program for individuals with Disabilities of all Ages. For more information and registration, please call Diane at 401-3916.

SENIOR TRIP: BARBARA LEE SCENIC CRUISE

When: Wednesday, June 22, 2016

Where: Sanford, Florida

Cost: \$70.00 per person (includes transportation, meal and admission)

Time: Leave 8th Ave. 8:30 AM Return 6:00 PM

What: From its home port on Lake Monroe in charming downtown Sanford, the Barbara Lee cruises the St. Johns, serving superior food, live music and dancing. A great experience for everyone. Pre-paid registration is

required. Seating is limited to 45 persons. For more information please call Grace at 629-8357.

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Family Fun Made Simple

(NAPSI)—As a parent, life is chaotic. Some days can feel like a race to get through, but when we slow down and savor a joyful moment of simplicity, we never regret it. Positive memories that involve lively activities and healthful foods, like blueberries, can set kids on a positive path, instilling shared memories and good choices to last a lifetime.

To make this summer unforgettable, the Blueberry Council is sharing 100 Bite-Size Summer Moments—simple, enjoyable, wholesome and delicious things to do as a family. Here are 25 “bites,” or ideas for things to do together to kick off the summer. You can find detailed recipes and blueberry farm locations, plus new Bite-Size ideas every two weeks now-August, at littlebluedynamos.com:

- Slow it down on your nature walk—

take pics of the coolest and weirdest things you see, then look them up when you get home.

- Pick your own blueberries at a nearby farm—make something fun or eat ‘em fresh!

- Pack up paper and art supplies for a trip to the local zoo and draw the animals you like best. Can you say arts and giraffes?

- Punch up your lunch with a family picnic! Everyone gets to choose or make one thing he or she likes the most.

- Stir up an adults-only beverage with Blueberry Moscow Mules. The occasion? Life.

- Establish a “no-phone zone” at meals. Replace texting with talking! What did YOU learn/do today?

- Host a recipe swap party with friends. Discover healthy, fun snacks for kids AND the latest gossip. #WinWin.

• Try your hand at fun-shaped pancakes. Not artistically inclined? Everyone can make a delicious smiley face out of blueberries!

- Challenge kids to make their own recipes using only ingredients already at home. (It’s not lazy, it’s resourceful!)

- Shop together for exotic new fruits or veggies to try—like star fruit or artichokes—and find recipes to use them.

- Preserve the taste of summer with homemade blueberry jam. Your future self will be grateful!

- Go for gold with your own Summer Olympics at the pool with races, relays and other games.

- Make each member of the family a “Wellness Wednesday” jar to drop in activity and healthy food ideas. Every Wednesday, pick one from each jar and let the wellness wash over you.

- Plant blueberry bushes on your prop-

erty. The environment and your family will thank you!

- Give your kids’ roadside stand an edge with bright blueberry lemonade.

- Get ready for long car trips and beach vacays with a neighborhood book swap.

- Got picky eaters? Entice them with a build-your-own-smoothie bar full of fruits/veggies.

- Plan a neighborhood “progressive play-date,” moving from house to house to enjoy different “play stations.”

- Rally the kids for a local playground/park cleanup day.

- Clear space for a serious dance floor. Rock the house with a Zumba party or try out the funniest moves you can find on YouTube.

- Hit your local blueberry festival for tasty treats and activities.

- Make a friend’s day with a surprise letter! Fill the envelope with fun paper gifts like a handmade bookmark, stickers or confetti—and don’t forget to decorate the envelope!

- Practice “Muffin Tin Math”; with toddlers, letting them count and categorize healthy snacks in muffin tins or ice cube trays.

- Take turns storytelling—each person contributes one sentence at a time. Write down or record for lasting family memories.

- Chill out with some guilt-free, homemade ice pops with frozen fruit. Here’s how:

Red, White and Blueberry Popsicles

Makes 4

1 cup vanilla yogurt

1 cup frozen blueberries, thawed

1 cup diced watermelon

4 popsicle sticks and mold

In a blender, add blueberries and 5 tablespoons yogurt; puree until smooth. Divide blueberry mixture among the ice pop molds, filling them about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way. Freeze 1-2 hours. Add a layer of 2 tablespoons yogurt on top of frozen blueberry layer to each ice pop mold. Freeze 1 hour until almost completely frozen. In the meantime, puree watermelon and 1 tablespoon yogurt in a blender. When the yogurt layer is almost completely frozen, add watermelon mixture to form top layer of the ice pops. Push in the pop handles. Freeze another 1-2 hours.

Keep this list handy for inspiration and adventure, marking off each one as you live it, and find more ideas from the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council at www.littlebluedynamos.com/BiteSizeSummer.



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An Inspiring Look at Love, Illness And Recovery

(NAPSI)—According to the American Cancer Society, nearly two out of five Americans will be diagnosed with cancer at some time in their lives. It's a rare family that's not affected—but if it ever happens to you, a new book may be both helpful and inspiring.

"Walk Beside Me" by Christine Handy (Proper Press, LLC) is the amazing story of one woman's journey from a world of fashion, fame and wealth to one of cancer and healing; it's about a life that goes from the glitter of New York's fashion world and designer labels to one of loneliness, fear, illness and, finally, recovery.

The book is a fictionalized story of what at first seems a picture-perfect life: a stunning model turned wife and mother, who lives in a beautiful home with her husband and two kids in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Ohio. Then she's diagnosed with breast cancer and it all seems to fall apart.

Fortunately for her, she has the most amazingly devoted group of friends who won't let her walk alone. These extraordinary women, all living prominent lives with demanding schedules, take turns staying with her, accompanying her to doctors'

appointments, to chemo sessions and back home, where they do everything for her, from feeding her to bathing her to cleaning up after her. They are her angels, and they walk beside her every step of her long recovery.

They lift her spirits; laugh and cry with her. They share their stories, some funny, some sad. They walk beside her spiritually and emotionally, soothing her heartache, boosting her self-esteem and reminding her that every single minute of her life is abundantly worth living.

This is an enthralling story of sickness and triumph, of being comfortable in your own skin, of valuing the things that have true worth, and of learning to fight for yourself and what you truly want. It's the story of

a woman who peels away the layers to find her inner warrior, a woman who faces insurmountable odds and—thanks to her earthly angels—learns to treasure the gift of God's infinite light and love.

The author, a real-life former model and cancer survivor, is now an advocate for women with breast cancer, and donates 15 percent of the sales price of her book to breast cancer research.

"Walk Beside Me" is available at www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com in hardcover, paperback and as an e-book.

Learn More

For further facts about the book or the author, visit www.theproperpress.com and www.christinehandy.com.

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Blinded Veterans Take On Ranger Training

(NAPSI)—For two years, some of the toughest training in the military has been enjoyed by some pretty tough American veterans, in this case members of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA).

With unusually high levels of strength, stamina and endurance, they spend a long weekend of rigorous U.S. Army Ranger training at Camp Frank D. Merrill Military Base in Georgia.

With travel sponsored by BVA's Operation Peer Support Committee and the idea brought to fruition by the Association's National Sergeant at Arms Danny Wallace, the trip to Camp Merrill and the subsequent training to be an Army Ranger is for the blinded veterans much like it is for actual Ranger recruits.

"We display our unstoppable drive not only to ourselves but to the elite U.S. Army Rangers," Wallace affirmed after the first Ranger experience in 2015.

Activities consist of mountaineering training that includes hiking up a rock-strewn trail toward cliffs they later climb and rappel. At the cliffs, the Ranger cadre and instructors set up eight climbing stations at which trainees can prove themselves on the vertical rock. The instructors assist them in tying knots and ascending the rock face. Later in the day, they move back to a base camp and climb a synthetic rock wall and perform additional rappelling.

"The only limitations that we face are those that we place on ourselves," said Wallace. "Words that come to mind in helping us overcome these limitations as blinded veterans are 'courage,' 'determination,' 'self-respect,' 'intestinal fortitude,' 'pride,' 'self-worth,' 'confidence,' 'commitment' and 'fellowship,' just to name a few."

The Ranger trainees also conduct a 5K run. In addition, they are invited to the Gainesville, Georgia Police Department, where they shoot live fire using shotguns, assault rifles and pistols. Several eating, drinking and storytelling competitions are also on the program.

"I first attended Ranger school 47 years ago," said blinded Vietnam veteran and New Orleans, Louisiana resident Joe Burns, who is also the oldest of the participants from both 2015 and 2016. "This prior experience did not interfere with the rewards that I reaped from having the chance to do it again now."

Burns' comments were echoed by Kevin Jackson of Austin, Texas, who also praised the program and the overall experience.

"Walking up to and then climbing the rock, I paid attention to all of my body positions," he said. "This total body experience was very revealing and provided me with a sense of accomplishment that I had not experienced in a long time as I ascended to a height I didn't expect."

Jackson was as emphatic about his associations with fellow comrades as he was about the activities themselves.

"The camaraderie and companionship that were built in five days with other blinded veterans as well as our guides were beyond belief and very enduring," he said. "Our guides went out of their way to support us in any way they could."

In addition to the rigorous physical activity, the blinded veterans are treated to a barbecue, a fish fry, and a critter cookout in the evenings.

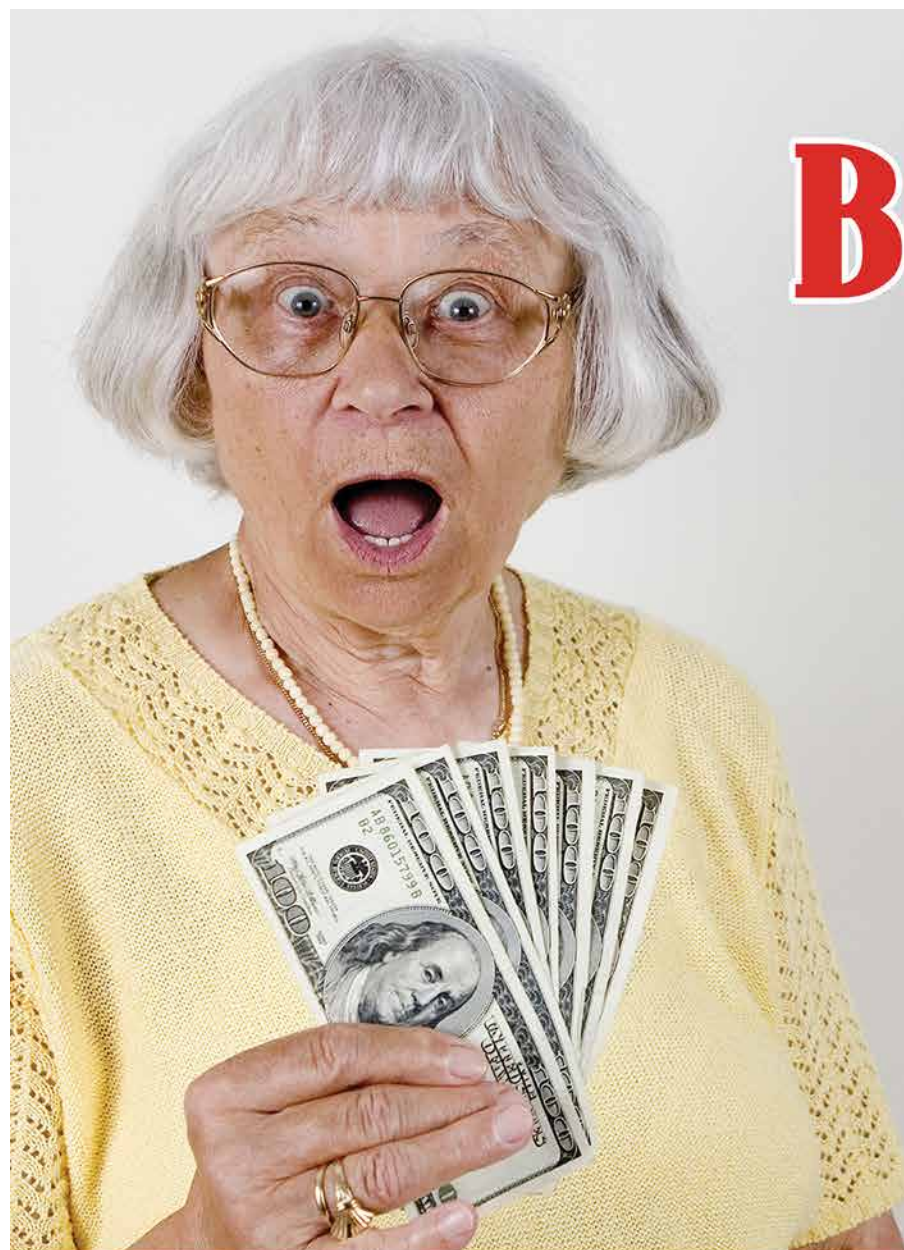
The volunteers that Wallace recruited to keep the veterans safe, well fed and on schedule for two years straight consisted of two young soldiers who worked at the camp and a larger cadre of his Ranger friends, some of whom traveled long distances to be able to work with the group.

"The devotion and respect these warriors command is second to none," said one such volunteer who traveled across the country in 2016 and who preferred to remain anonymous. "It is times like these, now each year,

that makes me appreciate the love these veterans have for their country, and the esprit de corps that we have holds a special place in my heart."

The veteran-trainees are all legally blind and from several eras of service. BVA is the only Veterans Service Organization exclusively dedicated to serving the estimated 132,000 blinded veterans and their families throughout the United States. Its Operation Peer Support initiative seeks to help newly blinded veterans look ahead to the possibilities and opportunities their lives still present, through social activities, counseling, and educational forums regarding benefits and rehabilitation.

"The purpose of the trip is to let people know that an organization for blinded veterans actually exists while building and fostering a bond of camaraderie between BVA and the elite Army Rangers," said Wallace. "It is our intent to demonstrate, not only to our veterans but to the Ranger community as well, the abilities that we possess even without our sight."



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