

The Front Porch

Where the tea is sweet and the talks are long



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The Front Porch

Established 2019
Vol. 1 Issue 2 Fall 2019

The Front Porch is published quarterly at 1695 South SR 53 Madison, Fla. 32340

Published by



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Merry Ann Frisbee graduated from the University of California and moved to the Tallahassee area where she and her husband raised seven children. She worked at the Leon County Sheriff's Office as a Detective and subsequently as an Investigator for the Public Defender's Office before retiring. Today, Frisbee exercises her talent for telling stories through the written word. She currently freelances for the Monticello News and the Jefferson County Journal. Best of all, she is Nana to twelve glorious human beings.



Chris Vigh has been a resident of Madison, Fla. for the last four years. He has studied environmental science at Florida Gulf Coast College, in Ft. Myers, Fla., as well as art at both the Art Institute of Colorado and the Art Institute of Tampa. Vigh combines his love of nature and his artistic talents to create breathtaking images. He was born with a photographic memory and the skills to bring those memories to life on his sketch pad. Vigh's art reflects his perspective on the priceless beauty of nature.



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Welcome to Volume 1, Issue 2 of The Front Porch ... where the tea is sweet and the talks are long.

Our first issue of The Front Porch, we are happy to say, was received with rave reviews. It is our great pleasure to be able to bring you another edition of stories about your neighbors in North Florida and South Georgia; for we love to share what is happening in our readers' communities and

neighboring communities. We desire to keep our friends and neighbors abreast on what is happening in their corner of the world.

In this newest edition of The Front Porch, you will read about the new surgeon for Madison County Memorial Hospital, a local artist with an amazing gift, the old Jefferson County Jail, Pickett Lake church camp, a candy store marching band from Tallahassee, the history of cypress in Lafayette County, Theatre Guild Valdosta and an exceptional Taylor County photographer! Also, be sure to check out "What's Happenin'" in the North Florida-South Georgia region, in our community calendar section of the magazine.

But, of course, this holiday issue wouldn't be complete without our Holiday Gift Guide (with gift ideas from your neighboring local merchants) and the upcoming Christmas celebrations being held in our neck of the woods. For added yuletide fun, check out our collection of old southern recipes from days long ago.

I would also like to encourage everyone to shop locally this holiday season, as much as you can. I know, and



understand, that by living in a small town there are some things that we have to purchase out of town, but the majority of our holiday shopping can be done with our hometown merchants. Small businesses and local businesses are still the backbone of our economy. Shop locally and support your neighbors, which in turn supports our economy. By shopping locally, you will also save time and gas and will have personal service from people you know and from people that care about you!

Thank you, our friends, for being a part of our newspaper/magazine family. We, once again, invite you to come up on our front porch, sip on some sweet tea and sit a spell. We would love to share our stories with you!


Emerald Greene Parsons, Publisher

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To Bessie, Patricia and Faye, with love



The holiday season has officially begun. The leaves are changing, the air is crisp and I am suddenly plunged into an emotional state of mind. For me, the holiday season is a time for family. Throughout this time of year, I cherish moments spent around a fire snuggled in blankets; big pots of chili; and passionate college football games. I cherish making cookies and candies in preparation for the 25th and I am forever

moved by the spirit of God as I stand in my hometown church during our annual Christmas Eve candlelight service. And, through all of this, my mind turns to those with whom I can no longer share these moments.

Today, I no longer have a living grandmother. They have all passed on. These women laid a foundation for which I am forever grateful. But, I feel the most grateful during the holiday season as I carry on the traditions they began, the lessons they taught and the love they so freely gave.

To Bessie, I owe my love for a big family meal. She always made sure we were fed—physically and spiritually. She taught me how to love my family, care for others and to live like Jesus. Every Thanksgiving, Christmas and many times “just because,” my family was blessed with her savory, southern cooking.

To Patricia, I owe my love of laughter. Every day spent with her was a holiday. Our late night chats and bursts of giggles over a bowl of ice cream still softly resonate in my mind. She taught me how to make dipped candies, cookies and all

sorts of goodies around Christmas time. She told stories of war, family hardships and grief—lessons meant to teach me the importance of perseverance and faith. She lived through so much yet still managed to sit across the table from her granddaughter and laugh vigorously during one of our many card games.

To Faye, I owe my spirit of adventure. She took me on trips every year to explore the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. On these trips, she taught me the importance of learning about new places and faces. She taught me to educate myself—we read every plaque, heard every story and visited every museum. She was unashamed of her beliefs and spoke her mind freely, never backing down and never settling for anything less than what was true and just.

Here at The Front Porch, we know how sacred the holidays are. We salute the southern matriarchs and patriarchs who have left legacies for their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We realize the importance of southern traditions around this time of year—we participate in many, ourselves. In this issue, we have included seasonal exclusives, including a Holiday Gift Guide, upcoming holiday events in the North Florida-South Georgia region, as well as some homespun recipes that will make perfect additions to your Thanksgiving or Christmas spreads. You may rest assured that this issue was created, compiled and designed with love in our hearts and holiday traditions on our minds.

This Editor wishes you the happiest of holidays as you spend the end of the year with those you love most. They won't be here forever, so enjoy your grandmother's sweet tea, cut an extra slice of her cake and memorize the way her laugh echoes through the house in the midst of your family celebration. Hug your uncles and aunts. Let them squeeze you just a smidge longer. Ask your grandfather to repeat that old story he always tells from his childhood. Above all, tell each and every one of them how much you love them.

From our front porch to yours, Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We'll see you in January!

Savannah Reams, Editor-in-Chief

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Theatre Guild Valdosta

31 years is a good beginning

Story and photography by
Rick Patrick, Staff Writer

In the winter of 1989, a group of theatre enthusiasts met together with the idea of forming a community theatre company in Valdosta, Ga. This group of visionaries probably had no idea at the time that the theatre company they would give birth to would become such an integral part of the cultural life of the South Georgia area for over a quarter of a century.

Among this group of people was Mary Ann Green, who worked at South Georgia Medical Center at the time and volunteered at Valwood School in Valdosta, teaching and directing the drama program for the school. Green had extensive experience in theatre, growing up in Dearborn, Mich. (a suburb of Detroit). Green was involved in theatre productions at her Catholic high school and had experience in summer stock productions while in school at Michigan State University. Green had also been involved with community theatre productions in Waycross, Ga. When her daughter, Lisa, expressed interest in theatre while a student at Valwood School, Green saw it as an opportunity to help foster the theatre experience in young people and work as a “trade off” to offset the cost of a private school education for her daughter. “Helping with the theatre program at Valwood was a way I could afford the

tuition,” said Green with a chuckle. Under Green’s leadership, Valwood School developed a reputation of having one of the finest high school theatre programs in the area and frequently won regional and state competitions.

Green is the only member of that original group still active with Theatre Guild Valdosta (TGV). Others have either moved away or have passed on. After that first initial meeting, the Lowndes/Valdosta Arts Commission (LVAC) decided to donate money for an initial production, Agatha Christie’s “The Mousetrap.” Proceeds from that first production helped fund the second production, the Neil Simon/Marvin Hamlisch/Carole Bayer Sager musical “They’re Playing our Song.” Those proceeds helped fund “Auntie Mame” and the first season for TGV was well under way.

The first several seasons for the young theatre compa-

ny were challenging to say the least. Without a permanent home, the company would perform almost anywhere they could. Frequent performance venues would include the officer’s club at Moody Air Force Base, several restaurants around Valdosta and even a bank lobby, to name a few. It was not uncommon for this group of traveling “gypsies” to erect a set in an afternoon, have a performance that evening and strike the set afterward; only to repeat the process the next day.

During their fourth season, the theatre company had an opportunity to move into a permanent home in the building that had once housed the old ‘Dosta movie theater. This building had fallen into disrepair from its early days as a movie theater where youngsters would spend a Saturday afternoon watching serial westerns and other classics in the 1940s

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and 1950s. Work immediately began making the building suitable for live theatre productions, including building a stage. After a great deal of sweat and work, the first production in the new building took place in March of 1993. That production of the Pulitzer-prize winning play, "All the Way Home," by Tad Mosel and directed by Green, ushered in an exciting new chapter in TGV's history. In September of that same year, TGV was in production of the Rogers and Hammerstein musical "The Sound of Music." During a hot Sunday afternoon matinee in the un-air conditioned 'Dosta Playhouse (as the building was now referred), the aunt of one of TGV's active members sat and fanned herself in the crowded audience. This patron, LaForrest Eberhardt, asked her nephew how much it would cost to put air conditioning in the building. Members of TGV had investigated and found that it would cost approximately \$50,000 to install central heat and air in the old building. Mrs. Eberhardt then asked how much it would cost to finish the restoration of the building. That price tag was a bit higher at approximately \$300,000. Several months later, Green, who was serving as the TGV President at the time



Brock Gillyard, left, who plays Huckleberry Finn, and Johnathon Headon, right, who plays Jim, sing "Muddy Water" during Theatre Guild Valdosta's hit production, "Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."



Big River cast members enjoy a break in the "green room" at the 'Dosta Playhouse.

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Theatre Guild Valdosta's ringleaders view costumes on stage, taking notes for needed alterations during a costume parade at the 'Dosta Playhouse. Pictured, from left to right, are: Tasha Conrad, Assistant Director; Mary Ann Green, Director; Pauline Player, Wardrobe Mistress.

received a letter in the mail from an Atlanta area attorney. Almost too frightened to open the letter, Green mustered the courage needed to examine the contents of a letter informing Theatre Guild Valdosta that Eberhardt was making a donation of \$300,000 worth of Coca-Cola stock to the organization. With those funds, along with federal historical preservation grants and continued funding from generous patrons, TGV was able to complete the restoration of the old, once dilapidated 'Dosta Theater.

The work of maintaining a historic building continues and is seemingly never-ending. TGV continues to produce several shows each year. Since those early days in the 'Dosta Playhouse, TGV has acquired two adjacent buildings at 118 and 120 N. Ashley St., in downtown Valdosta. TGV has also operated a vibrant children's theatre program, the Gingerbread Players, that gives youngsters experience in all aspects of theatre production. Many performers have

begun with the Gingerbread Players program and have become active adults in the TGV community.

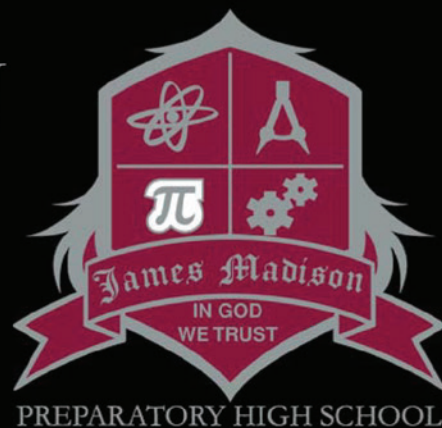
TGV's 31st season began with the Tony-Award winning musical, "Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." This musical, based on the Mark Twain classic novel, drew in performers of many backgrounds, races and ages. "I felt that with the cast of 'Big River' we had finally achieved a sense of 'community theatre,'" said Green, who also directed "Big River." The musical was a tremendous success, performing to an audience of over 800 during its seven-performance run.

The future looks bright for TGV as they move on through another season. With an on-going campaign to purchase new stage lighting for the building, the lights will not soon dim on the 'Dosta Theater, located at 122 N Ashley St., in downtown Valdosta. For more information about Theatre Guild Valdosta, visit their website at www.theatreguild-valdosta.com.



The cast of Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

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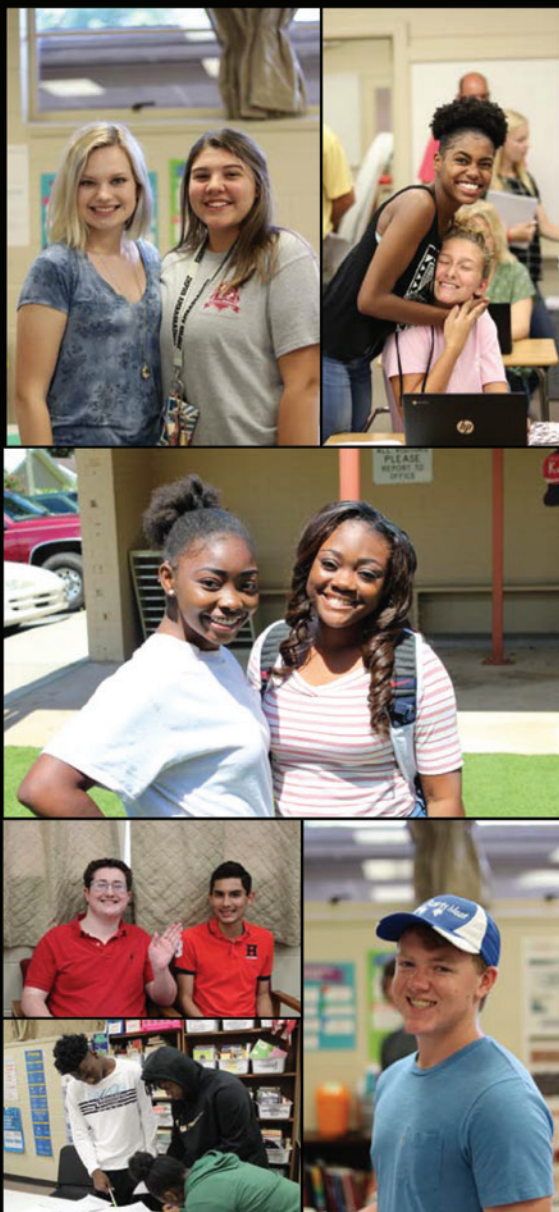
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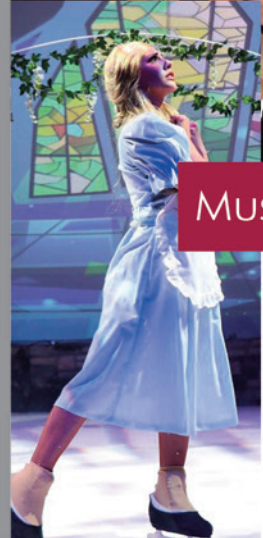
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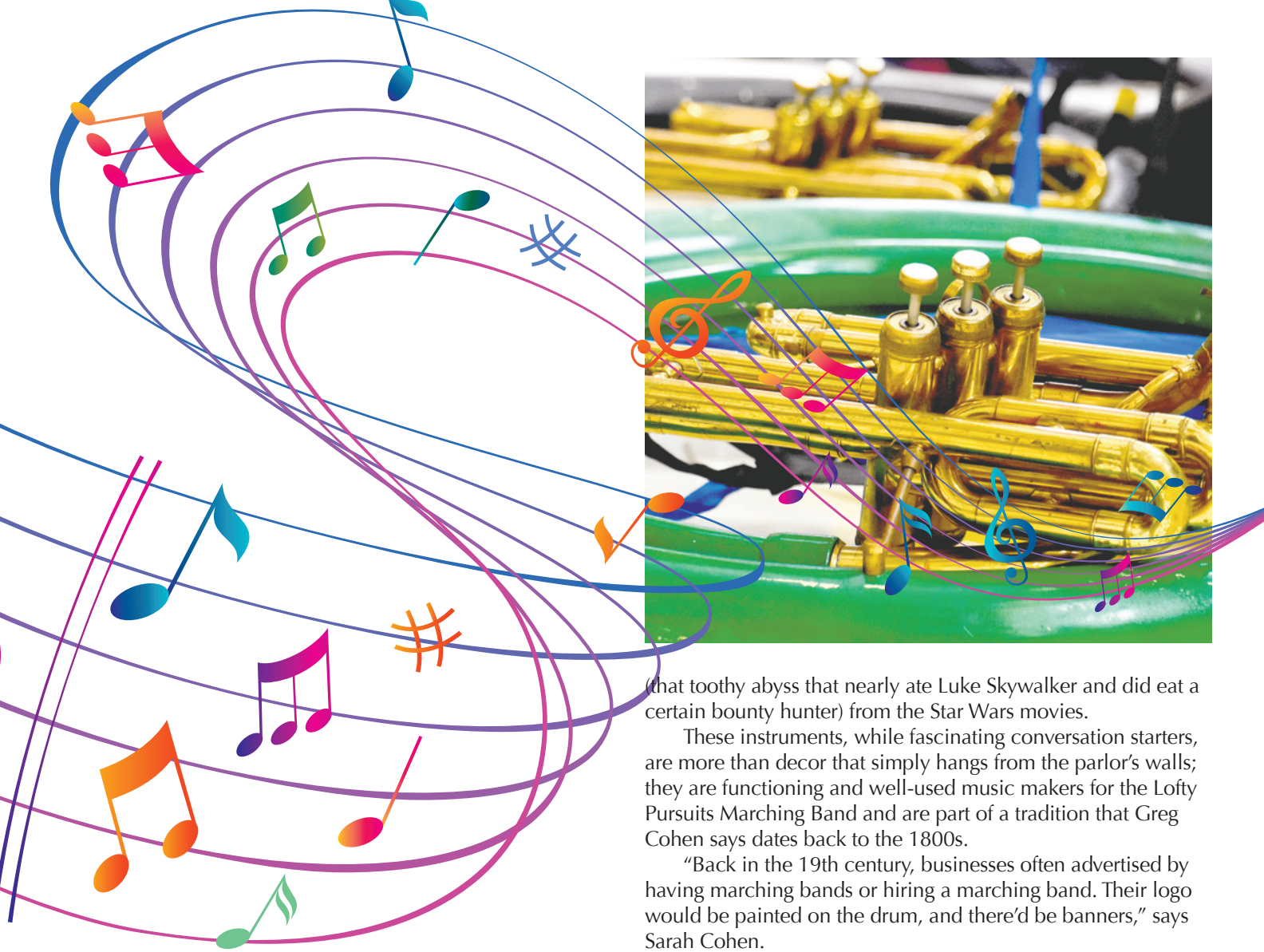
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culture

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Story and photography by Ashley Hunter, Staff Writer

When Willy Wonka built his confection empire, he employed orange Oompa-Loompas, created a chocolate river and hosted a golden ticket giveaway.

When Greg Cohen decided to build his candy and ice cream empire, he bought battered musical instruments and formed a rag-tag band of musicians.

Nestled in a market square that is located off of Tallahassee's Thomasville Road, is the Lofty Pursuits Candy and Ice Cream Shop.

Owned by Greg and Sarah Cohen, the shop is an ode to the by-gone days of soda fountains, victorian candy-making and old-fashioned, frothy milkshakes.

Stepping into Lofty Pursuits is a journey into the sticky-sweet eclectic past. The parlor's walls are lined with romantic artwork featuring Wakulla County's "Creature from the Black Lagoon," as well as vintage toys, games and, perhaps most notably of all, sousaphones and drums.

The sousaphones - which are a member of the tuba family - are extravagantly painted; one looms over the ice cream parlor with the face of Dr. Seuss' Grinch protruding from its bell. Another looks like the opened maw of the Sarlaac pit

(that toothy abyss that nearly ate Luke Skywalker and did eat a certain bounty hunter) from the Star Wars movies.

These instruments, while fascinating conversation starters, are more than decor that simply hangs from the parlor's walls; they are functioning and well-used music makers for the Lofty Pursuits Marching Band and are part of a tradition that Greg Cohen says dates back to the 1800s.

"Back in the 19th century, businesses often advertised by having marching bands or hiring a marching band. Their logo would be painted on the drum, and there'd be banners," says Sarah Cohen.

In fact, many of the commercial jingles that are well-known today started out as sheet music for the older companies' marching bands.

"When Greg learned about marching band advertisement, he became intrigued by the concept," adds Sarah, with a hint of levity in her voice.

Much like a fictional candy-maker with a penchant for the extravagant, Greg Cohen's form of intrigue bordered on outright captivation.

After all, who had ever heard of a candy shop owning a marching band?

For the Cohens, however, their history in marching bands and music-making pre-dated the creation of their parlor's sponsored community band.

Sarah Cohen, in particular, had played in marching bands since her youth.

"I was in band all through middle school and high school," says Sarah. In college, Sarah was a member of the Florida State University Marching Chiefs and was later employed as a high school band director for many years afterward.

So when her husband started browsing online auctions for used, economically-priced instruments, Sarah served as the venture's skeptic.

"I was the one who knew how much work was involved

in this, and I told him, 'you are out of your mind. This is way too much work,'" Sarah remarks, adding with a laugh and a shake of her head: "But he kept buying instruments."

He had no band members, no band music and no history of his own in a band, but Greg Cohen began stockpiling instruments and forming a collection.

"I have this idea that if you build it, they will come," said Greg. "I wanted a marching band, so I gathered all the instruments."

For several years, Greg made eBay purchases for discounted and used musical instruments, but it wasn't until 2010 that his dream of creating a marching band would get the first gust of wind beneath its wings.

During Christmas of 2010, the market square where the Lofty Pursuits candy shop was located hosted a holiday festival, and Greg Cohen saw his opportunity...for what are the holidays without music too?

"They had Santa, there were various community groups who were performing, and Greg thought it would be a great idea to have a marching band for this event," said Sarah. "So, we formed a little band."

There were only about five to six people who turned out to play for the fledgling band at the time, and Sarah recalls a very brief - almost nonexistent - warm up and rehearsal

period. By the time the band moved out of the candy shop and began walking through the festival with their tubas and drums, they were one step above outright winging it.

Dressed as a jolly, candy-distributing Santa Claus and leading his band through the festival was Greg Cohen, his wife recounts. "Into all the stores in Market Square, he walked us in unannounced, and we marched through while playing."

And that, Sarah says, was the start of the Lofty Pursuits Marching Jerks.

The band members are quick to explain, however, that despite their name, they are a welcoming, non-rascally group.

"In the traditional soda fountain, the person who stood behind the fountain was known as the 'soda jerk,'" said Sarah Cohen. In keeping with their roots as a sweet-shop and soda fountain, the band chose to adopt the by-gone name and, Sarah says, they decided to become the Marching Jerks.

For many years, the Marching Jerks exclusively played at Christmas events and festivals while gathering together more musicians and band members.

"At a certain point, we realized that we wanted to play for more than just Christmas events," said Sarah, adding that the band decided to 'put their name into the hat' to play during the 2012 Springtime Tallahassee Parade. The small group of former high school musicians didn't plan to get accepted into one of Tallahassee's biggest parades only two years after their Christmas creation, so when the announcement came that their application had been accepted, the small band of rag-tag musicians was ecstatic.

And they were, indeed, rag-tag.

While today, the band estimates that they have approximately 80 musicians who cycle through their parades and events, the band has had as few as 10 band members show up for events, meaning that some juggling must happen when it comes to music selections, instrument choice, and performances.

Greg Cohen isn't listed amongst the musicians for the Marching Jerks (though he credits himself with being a decent kazoo player) and didn't have the same contacts when it came time to recruit musicians and former band members for his marching band.

Instead, that responsibility fell on the shoulders of his former band instructor and Marching Chiefs wife, Sarah Cohen.

One of Sarah's earliest recruitments was tuba-player Michael Staden, who credits his start in the band to the prompting - and possibly pushing - of Sarah Cohen.

The two had known each other in their younger years when they both played for the Marching Chiefs, although the two hadn't played band side-by-side in quite some time.

All the same, Sarah knew that her band needed the knowledge that Michael could bring to the group when it came to marching band, as well as Michael's personal skill playing the tuba.



Although, Michael claims that his experience level at the time of his recruitment to the Marching Jerks was dubious at best; despite playing for a few FSU homecoming games, Michael hadn't picked up his tuba for many years.

"I played for five or six years, and I quit. I just quit playing my horn," said Michael. Then Sarah approached him and attempted to lure him into joining the Cohen's band of misfit musicians, even though it had been many years since he'd played and Michael wasn't particularly looking to play publicly again.

Michael put up plenty of resistance at first, but eventually, Sarah managed to convince her former band-mate to give the Marching Jerks a try.

"She talked me into it," Michael laughs. "I said, 'I haven't played in a while,' and she said, 'it'll be fine. We play simple music. It'll be ok.' So I showed up."

Michael recalls that during the band's beginning, there wasn't much of a 'rehearsal' period before each event. The musicians would show up 30 minutes before an event, read over their music, conduct warm-up practices, and then they would be thrown directly into marching and making music.

But for Michael, it was enough.

"That little bit of playing got me into playing more and more," says Michael. Now, after several years with the Marching Jerks, Michael has found a reengaged passion for marching band and currently serves as the executive director of the Marching Chiefs alumni group.

After Michael Staden had been convinced to join the group, it was his turn to lure in the next band member for the now-growing band.

Which is where piccolo player Leslie Mille and her trumpet-playing husband, Keith Mille arrived into the picture.

Much like Sarah and Michael, Leslie and Michael were also both in Marching Chiefs but hadn't seen each other for many years.

Another similarity between Michael and Leslie's stories of recruitment was that neither had played their instrument in quite some time.

Life had gotten in the way, and Leslie hadn't played her piccolo publicly for many years.

Then, out of the blue, Michael reaches out to Leslie.

"He said 'you guys need to do this!'" said Leslie. "So I picked up my piccolo again."

Being a member of the Marching Jerks, where she was given the opportunity to practice and play with others, Leslie said, brought her musical career into focus more, and now Leslie is the Associate Director for Marching Chiefs.

The domino-effect of recruitment continued in the winter of 2016 when Leslie Mille convinced Kelli Gemmer, a flute player who had grown rusty with her instrument, to join the Marching Jerks.

In high school, Kelli played the flute, but it had been years since she'd touched her instrument - an argument she tried to hold when Leslie insisted she try out a few events with the Jerks. Like Michael's argument with Sarah and Leslie's argument with Michael, the excuse didn't last very long.

"She told me 'its fine!' and said, 'we play simple tunes! It's not that hard!'" says Kelli, so she chose to attend a few Marching Jerks rehearsals, if only to show how out-of-practice



she sincerely was. But instead, Kelli ended up staying with the band and has been an involved Marching Jerk for the past three years.

For these three members, their stories of returning to their instrument are narratives that can be felt by many of the 80 members who call themselves Marching Jerks.

While the band is open to all ages of players with any level of experience, the band seems to especially resonate with former high school and college band members who have gone from marching with their schools, to no longer having an opportunity to play their instrument.

Kelli Gemmer, who is one of the Marching Jerks who never played for the FSU Marching Chiefs, says that the Jerks gave her an opportunity to play in the band setting she knew in high school.

This regionally-acclaimed, award-winning marching band is filled with musicians who joined while barely remembering how to play. These very same musicians have now gained recognition all around the Big Bend of North Florida for their musical accomplishments.

The Marching Jerks have definitely made their way around since their humble beginnings with five musicians and a Christmas Santa.



The Marching Jerks, a community band that draws musicians from all over the Big Bend of North Florida, received its start after a Tallahassee candy-maker chose to launch a unique advertising opportunity. Today, the band is filled with former high school band members who are looking for an opportunity to play music with fellow musicians.

Today, the band is frequently spotted at the St. Andrews Mardi Gras Parade, the Mystic Crew of Salty Barkers parade, the Sopchoppy Fourth of July parade, the St. Marks Stonecrab Festival, the Panacea Blue Crab Festival, the Springtime Tallahassee parade as well as Tallahassee's veteran's day parade and Winter Festival and the Jefferson County Watermelon Parade.

The Marching Jerks have played and marched in support for several local humanity organizations and tourist-development events. They are also Relay For Life supporters and have provided musical entertainment for multiple cancer charity fundraisers.

The Marching Jerks have been spotted at the occasional high school football games and are the official alternate for Seminole Sound when it comes to FSU basketball and volleyball games.

The band plays a selection of everything from popular pop tunes and patriotic melodies, to sports chants and holiday selections.

"Wherever we go, we're fun," says Sarah proudly.

While the band members all wear their uniform shirts boasting the Lofty Pursuits logo whenever they march, the rest of their clothing ensemble is left up to the individual band members. This means that there is no shortage of puffy tutus, patterned leggings, feather boas, bright colors, and themed hats, which are all common sights to parade-watchers who are familiar with Marching Jerks' performances.

The band has seen remarkable growth in their nine years of marching and music-making, but the Cohens say that they are eager to see their group continue to grow and develop with new additions, new music, and fresh events.

"We would like to continue to grow," says Sarah. "We are always accepting new members."

Lofty Pursuits Marching Jerks only rehearse once a month, and no festivals or events are mandatory; every performance is based on whether or not the individual band members can make it. There is no requirement for band members to appear at a certain number of events or rehearsals.

The band, Sarah says, is made up of people who work jobs and have families, and they endeavor to work around those commitments when it comes to arranging practices and event participation.

"Most people cannot commit to every single performance," she adds.

Currently, the band's 80 members live everywhere between Perry, Fla. to Panama City, Fla., but despite the miles that might lay between these individuals, they all share a passion for playing and marching.

Despite her original reluctance when it came to the launch of her husband's dream for a candy shop marching band, Sarah says that the Marching Jerks has grown on her.

It's no longer an exclusive advertising opportunity contrived by a candy maker but is now a collection of musicians who have, together, built a community around their shared love for music and band.

"It has become a lot to me. It's transcended its original goals and has become so much more," says Sarah Cohen.

"The band is an odd thing," Greg Cohen adds. "We are not a high school band, and we are not a professional band ... but we are a real band."

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(850) 342-0184
(850) 342-0185 fax

7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday – Friday

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Hazardous waste is collected at the Main Office and at some of the collection sites. JCSWD prefers to accept all of the following items at the Main Office.

- Household: cleaners, cooking fats, oils & grease, aerosol cans, , kerosene, photo chemicals, chemistry sets, spot removers, adhesives, glue, resins, fluorescent tubes & bulbs
- Outside: gasoline, Insecticides, weed killers, pesticides, fertilizer, propane cylinders, swimming pool chemicals,
- Paints: oil-based, latex, stains, thinners & strippers, solvents & varnishes, wood preservatives, hobby supplies, artists' supplies
- Cars: engine degreaser, brake fluid, transmission fluid, motor oil, oil filters, batteries, antifreeze
- Batteries: all single use and rechargeable batteries
- Electronics: television & computer monitors, vacuums, blenders, etc. (anything with a cord)
- Medications: medications must be given directly to an employee at the JCSWD main office. Please remove the labels from bottles. Needles and similar supplies should be placed inside of a large bleach jug or similar and sealed securely. Note: Red Sharps Containers must be taken to the Health Department.

RECYCLING

Reduce! Reuse! Recycle! Recycling containers are located at all collection sites. Help keep reusable items out of the landfill. JCSWD collects the following:

- Cans: tin & aluminum (examples: food, dog & cat food, soda, beer)
- Paper goods: newspapers, magazines & office paper
- Plastics: soda & water bottles, milk jugs, laundry detergent bottles
- Cardboards: cereal & food boxes, laundry detergent boxes, shipping boxes, brown grocery bags. Note: Wax coated cardboard (example: meat and produce boxes) are not accepted.
- White goods: refrigerators, freezers, washing machines, dryers, air conditioner units, (anything metal)
- Glass: all clear, brown and green glass and jars

This program is partially funded by our recycling sales. Unfortunately, there is a high level of scavenging and theft of metal and aluminum cans from our collection sites, resulting in a loss of income to the County.

In an attempt to combat this loss, we have added OFFICE PAPER to our recycling program! The previous office space in the warehouse has been prepared for storage of office paper, which includes items such as copy paper, stationary, notebook paper, envelopes, magazines, file folders, and paper-based packaging. The campaign will be announced in April, 2015.



TREE DEBRIS

JCSWD provides a dedicated site for residents to dispose of tree debris. The site is conveniently located in a central area to county residents, just off Tyson Road at 8639 Landfill Road. No other items may be disposed of at this location. Call our office for access information.



ANIMAL CONTROL

At this time, the Animal Control program is limited to assisting the Sheriff's Department with dangerous and aggressive dogs. Stray animals are not accepted.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

A code investigation may be initiated upon a signed complaint by a county citizen. Our goal is to help citizens find solutions that will bring violations into compliance without the need for formal proceedings.



ADOPT-A-ROAD

This popular program encourages businesses, civic groups, or residents to adopt a two mile section of road to control litter, beautify and clean roadsides, and improve the appearance of the County road system.



TIRES

Citizens are allowed to dispose of only 4 tires per household per month. Commercial tires are not accepted at collection sites. JCSWD is a registered tire-hauler and can assist businesses with proper tire disposal.



CONTAINER RENTAL

JCSWD offers temporary container rentals for construction or cleaning projects and permanent container rentals for scheduled refuse pick-up. Sizes range from 4 yard, 6 yard and 8 yard (square) household to 20 and 30 yard (long) construction containers. Rental rates are as low as \$1 per day.

GRAPPLE SERVICE

JCSWD offers bulk grapple service for citizens who wish to have a large load of debris (tree or refuse) picked-up from their home. Each load is \$100 for county residents paying the landfill assessment.



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Author Karen Blixen once said, “To be a person is to have a story to tell.” Since the dawn of time, the telling of stories has remained an essential part of what makes us human. From the inception of visual stories through cave drawings and hieroglyphics, to oral traditions passed down through generations, to the written word and, eventually, digital universe, the necessity of storytelling is indisputable.

While the vast landscape of technology has pushed communication to new levels, oral traditions have remained a steadfast and integral part of society. Traditional storytelling takes place on a daily basis, occurring any time two or more people come together to socialize and communicate. Whether realized or not, each and every person is a storyteller and their stories are a part of what makes them who they are.

Perhaps no other recognizes the value of storytelling quite like Madison locals, Jim Glaser and Wanda Violet, a couple on a mission to revive and rejuvenate the art of storytelling in Madison County. Their mission is threefold: to promote storytelling in the area, bring positive growth to Madison County and, above all, provide an avenue for children to become involved in their community and learn to be storytellers.

“About five or six years ago, I got it in my head that I wanted to tell stories,” said Wanda Violet. More than that, Violet wanted to bring storytelling to Madison County. She told her husband, Jim Glaser, and the couple began to research and pray. Soon, they began spreading the word and community members started reaching out and assisting the duo.

Before long, the first-ever Madison County Florida Storytelling Festival became a reality. Every year, the event grew in size, speakers and popularity. Today, Madison County, surrounding residents and tourists look forward to the annual event, which gives many an opportunity to come together, hear fascinating stories and, perhaps, share one of their own.

This year, the 6th Annual Madison County Florida Storytelling Festival will be the first ever two-day affair, beginning Friday, Nov. 15, at 7 p.m., where some of the best storytellers in the Southeast will compete for cash prizes of \$100, \$200 and \$300 in the first-ever Storytelling Slam. After the storytelling competition, guests will enjoy a concert by singer, songwriter and storyteller, Michael Reno Harrell.

On Saturday, Nov. 16, beginning at 10 a.m.,

Madison County Florida Storytelling founders Jim Glaser and Wanda Violet are a dynamic duo. The couple moved to Madison County in 2009 and fell in love with the area. They enjoy the small town way of life and the people who make up their community. Glaser is a local artist and Violet is a former classroom teacher and professional development trainer.



the stories will continue to roll. There will be many featured tellers from the Madison County area and, as every year, they will tell stories that elevate community togetherness. Glaser and Violet, who prioritize Madison County’s youth, have provided an avenue for local students to tell their stories, as well. Students from Pinetta Elementary School, Lee Elementary School, Greenville Elementary School, Madison Creative Arts Academy, Madison County Central School, Madison County High School, James Madison Preparatory High School and New Testament Christian School will be invited to tell stories of all sorts during the Saturday event.

Also on the agenda for the 6th annual event, is open mic hour. Visitors and locals are encouraged to tell their stories during this special midday activity. In fact, several open mic participants have gone on to become featured tellers at recent events. Everyone is invited to place their name in a hat—if drawn, they are welcomed on stage to tell a five-minute story. The only requirement, according to Glaser and Violet, is that all stories, whether fiction or non-fiction, are family friendly and non-political. “We want to bring people together and politics have the tendency to divide,” says Violet.

Storytelling is a part of who we are. It strengthens cognition of our past experiences as well as the encounters of others. From shelling peas and swapping tales with Grandma, to listening intently as a veteran shares his memories of the Battle of the Bulge, stories develop our understanding of humanity. Through storytelling, we find meaning. And thanks to Jim Glaser, Wanda Violet and Madison County Florida Storytelling, locals and visitors will continue to become inspired.

For more information, visit mcfst.org or call Glaser and Violet at (850) 973-8813. Madison County Florida Storytelling is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. All donations are tax deductible and greatly appreciated. Tickets to this year’s events are available at The Country Store, located at 256 SW Range Ave, in downtown Madison; or on the website.

The Art of Words

*Story and photography by Savannah Reams, Editor-in-Chief
In collaboration with Madison County Florida Storytelling, Inc.*

Madison County Florida Storytelling

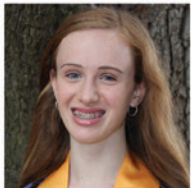
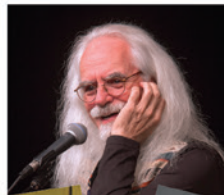


Presents: 6th Annual Story Festival

November 15 - 16, 2019
Madison County
Agricultural Complex
182 NW College Loop (Behind O'Neal's)

Saturday
Stories All Day
Starts 10 a.m.
Open Stage at Noon

Featuring Michael Reno Harrell,
Nancy Case and Susan Brolund



Riley Browning

Friday Night Concert & Story Slam/Contest 7 p.m.



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Wanda Violet

When Words are Not Enough

Local Talent Conveys Beauty Through Art



Artist Chris Vigh channels his love of nature to create masterpieces with the stroke of a pencil.

Story by Mickey Starling,
Staff Writer

Photography by Savannah
Reams, Editor-in-Chief

Artwork courtesy
of Chris Vigh

Before Chris Vigh could read, the beauty of nature had already captivated his attention. Many nights would find Chris sitting in his father's lap, listening as Bob Vigh would read Audubon

Society nature books until Chris could no longer fight the invasion of sleep. "I think I read him every book they published," said Bob Vigh.

By the time kindergarten rolled around, this budding artist drew his first sketch, which featured a tornado winding its path of terror through a field. During this same time period, Chris and his dad took a tour of a home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright that was in Oak Park, a suburb of Chicago.

After they returned home, Chris disappeared into his bedroom. He emerged several hours later with a Lego-built replica of the home and the yard. Bob was shocked at his son's ability to reproduce what he had seen in such remarkable detail, especially in Legos. In the following years, Chris' passion for art and nature continued to bloom and he developed a particular fascination with drawing sea shells and butterflies.

After graduating from high school, Chris moved with his father to Denver, Colo., where Chris spent a year sharpening his artistic talents at the Art Institute of Colorado. Nature themes continued to be his favorite muse, so Chris transferred to the Art Institute of Tampa, where he spent another year bringing to life the beautiful scenery of the nearby beaches.

In order to continue working in close proximity to this salt water paradise, Chris took a job at The Pier, which featured a number of shops and a large aquarium. Along with working in the shops, Chris also maintained the aquarium. One of these shops sold children's books and the owners were aware that Chris was a gifted artist. They asked him to create some drawings reflecting the restoration of Tampa Bay, which was a major project at the time.

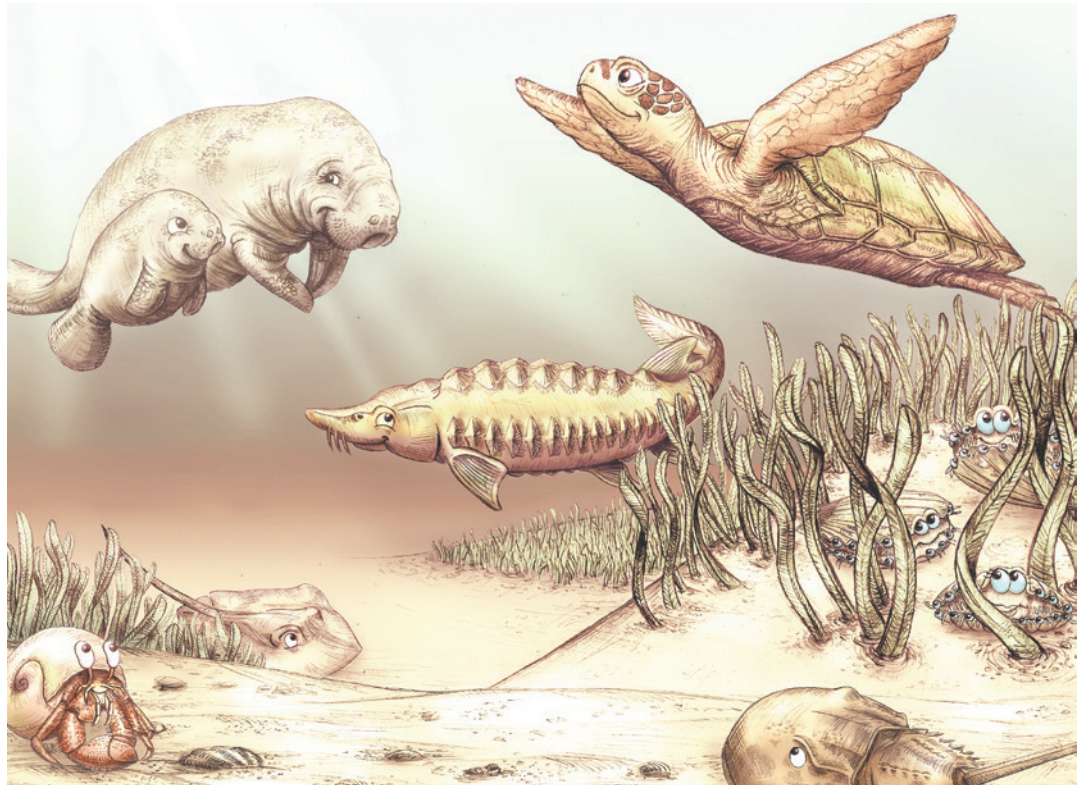
Chris had no problem getting his artistic juices flowing and began creating characters like Skippy the Scallop and many others. His array of characters were successfully used in an educational series that the aquarium produced to help kids understand the importance of keeping the ocean clean.

When Bob Vigh was laid off from his job with Tellabs, Inc., he decided to make good use of the free time he had with Chris. The pair took off on sightseeing adventures through Arizona, California, New Mexico and numerous other states. As Chris took in more of nature's beauty, he temporarily became less interested in drawing nature and more concerned with

preserving it. After more traveling, the Vighs settled in Ft. Myers, Fla., where Chris enrolled in Florida Gulf Coast College in 2009. Chris spent the next two years studying environmental science.

While attending college, Chris was also working part-time at Sunken Gardens, a botanical garden that served to fuel his intense love of plants. Chris was doing so well there that the company offered him a job that he could not resist, so he left school and devoted himself to the botanical garden.

As 2011 rolled around, health problems began plaguing Chris. He suddenly found it more difficult to focus and he started getting



Tampa Bay, Chris Vigh



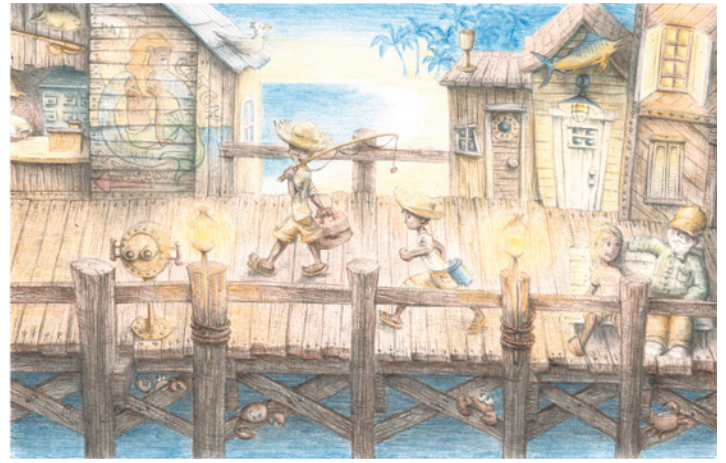
Hurricane, Chris Vigh

confused about even simple daily tasks. "I had to give up driving because I started running red lights and I almost hit a guy on one occasion," said Chris. In addition, Chris began having problems eating, causing his weight to drop from 130 lb. to 97 lb. in a short period of time.

The strange and sudden outbreak of these medical issues sent Chris and his father on a whirlwind of doctor visits and testing that rendered no conclusive results. The diagnosis he received had Chris taking a wide variety of medications, some of which were causing many negative side effects. None of the medications helped. As their search for answers continued, Chris began having trouble swallowing. Again, doctors were of little help. Some even suggested that Chris's problems were "all in his head." At this point, Bob Vigh was losing confidence in the advice he was being given. "At first, we trusted everything the doctors said, but we don't do that anymore," said Vigh.

One of the blessings that worked in the Vighs favor was that Bob has a gift for researching things and an attention to detail. Feeling certain that doctors were missing something vital for Chris's recovery, Bob kept finding information that led him to believe that food allergies could be playing a major role in the problems Chris was experiencing. After successfully pushing for more testing in this area, it was determined that Chris had numerous food allergies.

These findings represented a major breakthrough for Chris, who had seen some improvement in his condition prior to moving to Madison, Fla. in 2015. Before then, Chris had been confined to a wheelchair due to lack of energy and stamina. He started having trouble completing sentences and also continued to have memory and confusion issues, sometimes even forgetting how to eat or drink. Another diagnosis, coming in June of 2019, confirmed that Chris



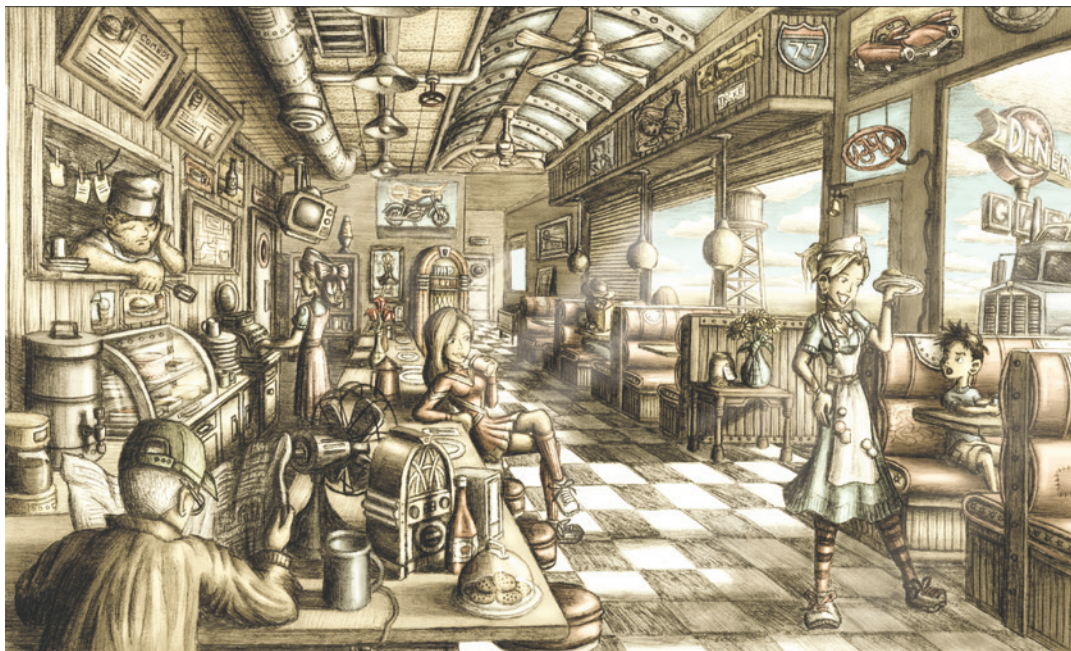
Boardwalk, Chris Vigh

was not absorbing many of the proteins and other nutrients necessary for the production of neurotransmitters that carry messages between neurons, or from neurons to muscles. If the body has insufficient neurotransmitters, many of which are amino acids broken down from proteins in the diet, then many body functions will be negatively affected.

Chris has been slowly improving since beginning to use amino acid based supplements as part of his diet. What has been frustrating to the Vighs is that they

had to do much of their own research to make these discoveries and improvements. "I knew more about my issues and how to research them than we could get the doctors to do," said Chris.

Though Chris has more neurological testing scheduled in the coming months, he remains excited about his love for nature and using the incredible gift that God has given him. "I don't want to whine," said Chris. "I'm not interested in being known as the guy with a problem. I thank God for the appreciation of His creation that



Waiting, Chris Vigh



Chris Vigh's sketch, titled Beach Girl, is an example of his innate ability to communicate emotion through art.

I can share with others. I want to be remembered for the passion for nature that my art reflects." Reflection puts it mildly where Chris's art is concerned. Many of his sketches look more like black and white photographs, rather than drawings.

Chris has begun drawing and sketching again, displaying with every stroke of his pencil the beauty that his words sometimes fail to express. Fortunately for Chris and the rest of us, his artistry speaks more eloquently than mere words could ever attempt. Some of Chris's work is available for purchase at C&D Bistro, in Madison. Chris has many pieces of art available and if you are interested in adding them to your collection, send Chris an email at bobvigh@msn.com.



Purple, Chris Vigh



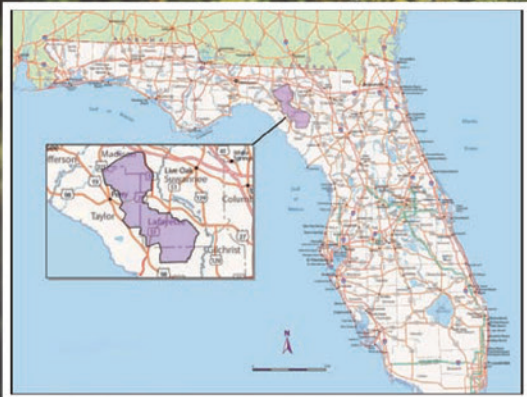
Carota, Chris Vigh

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WELCOME HOME, *Doc!*

The arrival of Dr. Jerry Padrta catapults Madison into a new chapter

Story and photography by Savannah Reams, Editor-in-Chief
In collaboration with Madison County Memorial Hospital

The Four Freedoms Monument, which sits in downtown Madison, Fla. across from the Madison County Courthouse, displays four angels who represent four fundamental freedoms. They include freedom of speech and expression,

freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. The monument was commissioned by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and later dedicated to Colin P. Kelly, Madison County World War II hero.

Today, with the arrival of Dr. Jerry Padrta, who will take on the role of Chief Surgical Officer at Madison County Memorial Hospital (MCMH), Madison County citizens' freedom from want and freedom from fear has been solidified. MCMH will now have their very own surgical officer and in-house surgeon, able to meet the needs of local and surrounding patients on a regular basis. His arrival eases the fear and anxiety which comes from a lack of access to available healthcare.

Dr. Padrta will head up the hospital's new surgical suite set to open in late 2019. He will be in charge of general surgery and laparoscopic procedures. The new operating room will provide elective surgeries to residents in the area as they continue their pursuit of wellness and healing.

"We are very excited to welcome Dr. Padrta to our hospital," said Tammy Stevens, CEO. "He provides not only top-notch clinical and surgical expertise, but also a passion for providing community-based care. I also expect that he will be an active member of Madison County and that he and his wife will fit in perfectly with our community."

With over thirty years of healthcare experience, Dr. Padrta has expertise in General and Laparoscopic Surgery. According to US News and World Report, the most frequent procedures conducted by Dr. Padrta are Colonoscopy and Upper Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. He is also rated extremely high in patient experience and satisfaction.

"This too is one of the reasons why we are excited to have Dr. Padrta join us," said Debbie Thomas, Quality Improvement Director. "We are zeroed in on creating an amazing patient experience here at the hospital."

Three different online health rating systems show Dr. Padrta with a five-star rating. His overall patient experience is excellent as it relates to thoroughness of examination, clarity of instructions, time with patients, attitude, outcomes and provider follow-up. Specializing in laparoscopic surgery, the conditions routinely treated by Dr. Padrta include cholelithiasis/cholecystitis, Malignant Neoplasm of the Colon and Varicose Veins, digestive tract conditions and Cardiovascular Disease.

To date, he has commonly performed appendectomies; colonoscopies; endoscopic retrograde; esophageal dilatation;



gallbladder removal; valgus repair; hemorrhoid, hernia and skin surgeries; thorascopies; wound care; and lower leg amputations.

Dr. Padrta is certified by the American Board of Surgery and holds a medical license in the state of North Carolina, Florida and Georgia. Dr. Padrta served eight years in Columbia County at Shands Lakeshore and is therefore not a stranger to our region.

“Surgical procedures are not set to begin until the end of 2019 or the beginning of 2020,” said Cindy Coulter, Chief Nursing Officer. “The hospital wanted to ensure plenty of time for Dr. Padrta to get to know the staff, set up his resources and provide input on the various surgical equipment and technology that is being installed as we speak.”

The new operating room is not designed to provide emergency surgeries at the hospital but, instead, the purpose is to provide a local solution to minor, pre-scheduled procedures which is a service that Madison has not had regular access to for many years. The exact procedures that are going to be provided will be based on the needs of the residents living in Madison and the surrounding counties. The goal is to create the programs, recruit the expertise and provide as many key resources and programs as possible, locally, so that residents do not have to travel out of town for routine surgeries.

“Dr. Padrta and his wife are so down to earth and personable,” said Lori Evans, MCMH Foundation Director. “That is another reason he was selected. We want to introduce them to our community so they can fall in love with them like we did. If you are involved with a church, club, business, provider’s office or organization, we want to hear from you. We would love the opportunity to bring him to meet you and your members.”

Dr. Padrta is originally from Florida, however he has lived all over, including Virginia, Pennsylvania and, most recently, North Carolina, where he worked at Albemarle Surgical Associates. Padrta has been married to his wife, Janice, for 24 years. Janice enjoys book club, painting and refinishing furniture. Together, they have three children: one daughter and two sons, the youngest of which is a sophomore in college.

Finally back “home,” Padrta says, “I wanted to relocate to Florida to be closer to my family. Also, my wife and I were looking for a more relaxed lifestyle that you might find in a small-town community facility.”

Padrta looks forward to easing the availability of surgical and wound care locally. However, in his spare time, he enjoys hog hunting, target shooting and disaster preparedness. “I think it would be fun to get involved in the disaster preparedness groups to see what could be done to minimize disasters that come our way,” said Padrta.

Above all, it is evident Dr. Padrta and his wife have much to give to the Madison community. His arrival begins a new chapter for Madison and surrounding residents. With the impending arrival of a new operating room, paired with Dr. Padrta’s skills and expertise, MCMH will be able to provide access to specialty care better than ever before. Residents can rest assured MCMH’s new surgeon cares and, even better, he is here to stay.

“You will do well if you have love in your heart,” says Dr.



Madison County Memorial Hospital CEO Tammy Stevens (right) greets Dr. Jerry Padrta (left) in front of the beautiful brick hospital building.



Dr. Jerry Padrta and wife, Janice Padrta, are happy to have arrived in North Florida! They are pictured standing in front of the iconic Four Freedoms Monument in downtown Madison.

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Padrta, who is a living example of someone who puts their whole heart into their job. It is clear he will not only be providing surgical services, but providing the kind of care and compassion of which this world needs more.

Madison County Memorial Hospital (MCMH), founded in 1937, is a full service, 25-bed Critical Access Hospital that provides state-of-the-art inpatient and outpatient care to residents and providers throughout the region. Voted Large Business of the Year in 2018, specialties include radiology, inpatient geriatric services, rehabilitation, laboratory, endoscopy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, swing-bed, acute, observation and emergency medicine. They continue to strive to be among the top-rated rural hospitals in North Florida and the hospital has added both TeleStroke and TeleCardiology to their service line.

With a vision to be the best family-centered health care in the region, they continue to help bring valuable resources locally to improve the health and quality of life of people in the community. "This new operating room is not just a dream of our beloved Board Chair, Howard Phillips, it's a dream of all of ours," said Tammy Stevens, CEO. "To be able to provide a much-needed service like this right here in Madison, that is our dream come true!"

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This cross has stood on the banks of Pickett Lake for many years. Its message is clear—at the Middle Florida Baptist Assembly, campers and visitors, alike, are pointed to the cross.

We love this place ...

THE POWER OF PICKETT LAKE

Story by Mickey Starling, Staff Writer
 Photography by Savannah Reams, Editor-in-Chief

Nestled near the border of Lafayette and Suwannee County, amidst the sprawling oak trees and pristine pastures that mark the gentle landscape, there is a road sign that says it all. “Salvation Road,” in Branford, Fla. is no ordinary sign and street. It has been inviting people of all ages to experience a deeper relationship with Christ for 62 years and the beloved Middle Florida Baptist Assembly (MFBA), with its rustic charm, continues to pursue its timeless mission, using the scenic surroundings and the presence of God as its primary attractions.

Known by the locals as simply “Pickett Lake,” MFBA was founded in 1955, with the first assembly held two years later. The camp’s opening was a huge success, with 800 people in attendance. Since those humble beginnings, the assembly has had over 150,000 visitors and more than 20,000 lives dedicated to Christ.

None of the life-changing moments at Pickett Lake would have ever happened without the prayers of Naomi Sapp, who with her husband, Newton, settled in Lafayette County, near Pickett Lake, in the late 1800s. The Sapps raised 10 children over the course of time and Naomi’s burden for the needs of children in the area only increased. For forty years, Sapp prayed for a permanent location for children to learn of the love that God has for them, while enjoying a healthy Christian atmosphere.

Sapp’s prayers were answered when her son, Theo, who had entered the ministry, approached his brother, Delmer, with a divinely-inspired request. Theo asked Delmer to

consider donating 20 acres of land in order to make their mother’s dream become a reality. Delmer happily agreed to do so and the process of having a Christian camp for kids was underway.

By 1972, two dorms, a chapel and a dining hall had been constructed. As the years have passed, more construction and improvements have been made. At first, a part-time camp director was hired. Then, in 1975, Walter McKinney became the full-time camp director. Today, The MFBA is directed by Tim Kinsey, who has faithfully served the camp since 1990. Several generations of campers associate Kinsey with their many fond memories of those hot summer days spent soaking up the sun and learning more about Jesus.

Kinsey has a few memories of his own of the many years he has spent with the camp. “I’ve repaired more bunk beds than I can count,” said Tim. Apparently, one of the favorite activities not on the campers’ schedules was the loosening of various parts of the bunk beds so that those sleeping on the top bunks would have experiences that would definitely improve their prayer life. After strategically loosening a few screws, the beds could collapse easily, sending the unsuspecting victims tumbling to the lower bunk. Tim also recalls the many times that campers insisted on lowering the thermostats to the point that a snowman could survive the night. For a while, Tim out-smarted campers by installing a fake thermostat that kids could adjust, making them feel better about the temperatures they were already enjoying. “That worked great until an adult figured it out and announced to everyone that it was fake,” said Tim, with a wily grin.

After 29 years on the job, the excitement never stops for Kinsey. This year, while a large number of kids were swimming in Pickett Lake, the lifeguard spotted a three-foot alligator cruising the far side of the lake. Every child within a mile of the camp heard the cry, “Gator! Everybody out of the water!”

Kinsey calmly approached the young alligator, which he referred to as a “poodle” and shooed him away and the happy campers resumed their swimming.

In recent years, this faith-based ministry has seen its share of ups and downs financially. For many years, the camp relied on regular giving from area churches to finance the operation. The camp is now predominately financed by the fees that various churches and organizations pay for their camps and meetings. The amount of churches using the facility has declined over the past decade, with several churches



Tim Kinsey has served as Camp Director at the Middle Florida Baptist Assembly for 29 years.

having outgrown the facility. Coupled with that issue, the camp used up much of their resources making additions and improvements to many of their buildings.

Though these developments present great challenges to the assembly's survival, there is plenty of reason for optimism that God still has plans for this camp to continue reaching kids for generations to come. For instance, Kinsey has sizably reduced the camp's budget and more churches have been giving and providing specific needs as they arise. One of those churches, Midway Baptist Church, in Lafayette County, donated \$12,000 to replace two roofs at the camp.

Another successful tactic for the assembly has been the development of homegrown camps that involve more area groups. Camp Connexion is a great example of a local camp that started using the facility 11 years ago, with only 45 campers in attendance. This year, 155 people attended their camp.

Kinsey is happy to report that there are several other groups who have started regularly using Pickett Lake and he is certain their numbers will increase over time.

Recent board meetings have also buoyed Kinsey's confidence in the future of the Middle Florida Baptist Assembly. "Our Director of Missions, Rev. Robert Dixon, is doing a great job and our members are forward looking," said Kinsey. "God will provide," says Kinsey, who knows all too well the power of this place.

For Kinsey, becoming the camp director was a provision from God that helped to save his family. Before taking the position, Kinsey worked with a concrete company that required him to be away from home much of the time. "One morning, my young son called me 'Tim,' which got me quickly praying for God to give me some direction about what I needed to change," said Kinsey. As God would have it, Kinsey was the only person to apply for the camp director's position who wasn't a pastor and he had maintenance experience.

The salary for his new job was much less than his previous income, but money was never the real issue. "I'm glad I paid attention to God and saved my family," said Kinsey. "I am happy here. I didn't plan on staying this long, but after the first year, I felt this was God's call on my life. It's home, now."

Financial difficulties are not new to Kinsey, either. Fifteen years ago, he recalls a board meeting with a hired consultant present. The consultant suggested closing the facility because he estimated that it would take three million dollars to upgrade the entire campgrounds. Kinsey calmly showed everyone present a video he had prepared that showed the spiritual impacts the camp was having on hundreds of kids. That year alone, 85 salvations were recorded. After seeing the video, one pastor exclaimed, "One salvation is worth a million dollars, so I say we make a resolution to never close this place."

That pastor's wisdom was never more evident than when a kid named Mikey showed up some years later. His mother dropped him off for camp, saying, "Call the sheriff if he gives you trouble, because I'm done." The following three days of camp were indeed troublesome for the young man who acted out repeatedly. Day four was resurrection day for Mikey, who could not resist God any longer. He experienced what



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church folks refer to as a “radical salvation.”

Mikey's transformation didn't stop when he left Pickett Lake. He was a new creation on a mission to share his new life with everyone he met. Eventually, this young man enrolled in Liberty University, in Lynchburg, Va. and took a part-time job driving a truck to help pay his way through school. One cold winter day, Mikey hit a patch of ice with his truck and lost control of the vehicle. The resulting accident killed Mikey, bringing his passion for Jesus to the ultimate reality of seeing Him face to face.

While Mikey and the angels were rejoicing, his mother sought to make the most of his young legacy. She brought Mikey's ashes to Kinsey with a simple request. “I would like to spread Mikey's ashes around some of his favorite spots here. He loved this place.”

Mikey's ashes are a powerful reminder that there are thousands of kids and adults who still need this place of refuge for wounded souls. There's healing in these waters and the air is often saturated with worship from those whose lives have been forever changed just because somebody dropped them off at camp. When they leave, they often find themselves echoing Mikey's sentiments, “We love this place.”


If you are interested in supporting the ministry of MFBA, call 386-935-0608, or email baptistcamp@gmail.com.



For decades, the united voices of thousands of men, women and children in worship have vibrated across the boards of these bleachers and skipped atop the waves that lap along the lake's shore. At the break of day, campers and counselors head for this outdoor worship center in order to begin their day with praise.



Countless dusty sneakers, laces trailing behind them, have walked down this aisle carrying broken hearts and returned back, forever changed.



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holiday

Christmas with southern charm:

North Florida-South Georgia prepares to celebrate

Story by John Willoughby,
Staff Writer

Upon taking a glance at a calendar, there are 11 holidays that are celebrated annually. Some holidays are one-day celebrations, others are weekly. But there's one celebration that lasts for an entire month, and that's Christmas.

It's undoubtedly the most wonderful time of the year – a joyous occasion that over 95 percent

of Americans celebrate with family dinners, music, laughter and giving. And while the traditions of Christmas caroling and White Elephant gift exchanges are common this time of the year, you can expect the residents of North Florida and South Georgia to indulge in the heart of these traditions during local events that are held throughout the area.



Victorian Christmas, Photo courtesy of City of Thomasville

Christmas on the Square

The Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce announces the 35th return of Christmas on the Square, held annually in the cool breeze of Downtown Live Oak. With over 30-40,000 people in attendance perusing through the downtown area and its near-400 craft vendors, the Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce hopes to provide an exciting experience, bigger and better than ever.

Christmas on the Square will kick off its event on Thursday, Dec. 5, around 6 p.m. with the Jingle Bell 5K, right after the one-mile fun run for children ages five to 12, which begins at 5:50 p.m. As night falls, Millennium Park will host "Movie in the Park" to round out the first night of exciting opportunity.

In the afternoon of Friday, Dec. 6, Santa Claus will make his way from the North Pole to visit the residents of the historic North Florida town while claiming his stake in Santa Land, where he will be accompanied by snow. Visit with Santa's helpers from Coca-Cola Inc., who will bring their friendly North Pole polar bear and nearly \$20,000 worth of gifts for the children in attendance. All the while, to get away from the hustle and bustle of seeing the big man in red, Christmas on the Square will feature numerous live performances in Millennium Park, as well as vendors, bounce houses and a rock wall.

Closing out the event on Saturday, Dec. 7, enjoy multiple food and arts and crafts vendors in Downtown Live Oak and stick around

to enjoy the lighted parade, which will begin at River Oak Technical College at 6 p.m. More event information can be found by logging onto www.suwanneechamber.com/christmas-on-the-square.

Victorian Christmas

If you're looking for a more historic celebration, the City of Thomasville, Ga. will take you back in time to celebrate their 33rd annual Victorian Christmas on Thursday and Friday, Dec. 12 and 13. For years, this South Georgia city has provided ample opportunity for many to get a glimpse of 1890s southern charm, where Christmas spirit is celebrated with shopping, caroling and holiday cheer. From 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on both nights, mosey through the cool South Georgia breeze as you enjoy holiday shopping and excitement in Downtown Thomasville, while being serenaded with live entertainment at The Ritz Amphitheater.

Enjoy multiple street performances and carolers. The Kings Voice and Broad Street Brass Ensemble are slated to appear during the event to provide gentle holiday melodies that will simply be music to your ears. You may also excite your taste buds by toasting marshmallows and roasting chestnuts. You can also take a step back in time to when the Savior of the world was born in a manger as the First Baptist Church of Thomasville displays a live nativity scene.

A night on the town during Victorian Christmas wouldn't be complete without an authentic carriage ride through Downtown Thomasville for a small



Victorian Christmas, Photo courtesy of City of Thomasville

charge of \$5. Before you go home, make sure to visit with St. Nick and tell him what you would like to see under the lighted noble fir tree on Christmas morning!

This free event is all you could ever dream of and more ... all it's missing is you! For more information about Thomasville's Victorian Christmas, visit www.thomasvillega.com

Light Up Madison

In historic Downtown Madison, Fla., the Kiwanis Club members delight in providing some of the best entertainment and holiday

excitement around, and this year, Light Up Madison will return for it's ninth year. This event will spark the beginning of the Christmas season, as the air will be filled with magical excitement for people of all ages.

Taking place on Saturday, Dec. 7, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., a colorfully decorated city park and the pristine appearance of decorated Christmas trees will surely set the stage for a family-oriented good time. Multiple non-profit vendors will be on hand to sell some of your favorite foods and holiday treats. There are also plans to have games for the children with some small prizes to

Continued on page 42



Light Up Madison, Photo by Chelcie Holbrook, Greene Publishing, Inc.

give away and, who knows, Santa Claus might even show up to fulfill Christmas wishes! Soon, it will be time to dress up in your favorite holiday attire, bring your lawn chairs and have a fantastic time.

The Kiwanis Club offers locals and visitors the chance to give to those less fortunate by hosting a food and diaper drive.

Celebrating the joyous occasion, Tri-County Electric Cooperative is set to sponsor the Light Up Madison parade, which will have local residents lined up along Madison's famous Range Avenue at 6 p.m. to gaze in awe at the decorative lights that adorn many floats and vehicles.

Perry's Downtown Christmas

Historic downtown Perry, Fla. kicks into the Christmas spirit on Saturday, Dec. 6, with the Santa's Little Helper's Annual Lighted Parade and Downtown Christmas festival, hosted in part by the Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce and Taylor County Historical Society.

For the past six years, citizens of Taylor County have lined historic Jefferson Street in downtown Perry to enjoy the presence of slick antique cars and shiners, as well as Santa Claus, himself,

as he is ushered through the nighttime air by the wailing of sirens from fire trucks and police cars. All of this and more will return to the streets of Perry, beginning at 6 p.m. on the night of the festival.

Celebrating with a tropical theme this year, the Taylor County Historical Society will be bringing back some of your favorite Christmas events, all the while accompanied by local vendors and delicious, seasonal food and fresh cookies.

For information about Santa's Little Helper's Annual Lighted Parade and Downtown Christmas, call the Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce at (850) 584-5366 or the Taylor County Historical Society at (850) 843-0332.



Christmas on the Square Jingle Bell Fun Run, Photo courtesy of Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce.



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holiday

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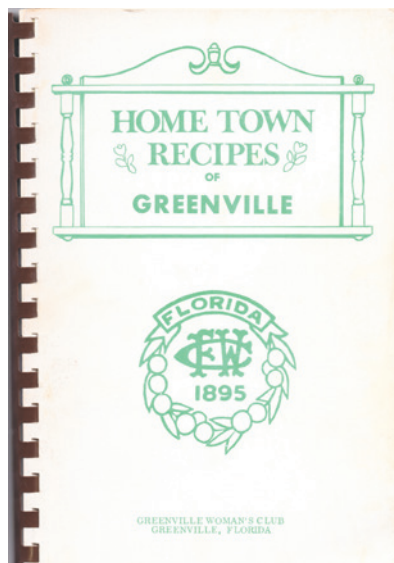
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Home for the Holidays: Cooking with southern legends

Foreword by Savannah Reams, Editor-in-Chief



gone. The Woman's Club of 1978-1979 in Greenville, Fla. put together a cookbook called "Home Town Recipes of Greenville." Within its worn and tattered pages are treasures, preserved forever in print. These recipes are a living legacy of the women who made this book with love. And we made sure to include some meals that aren't necessarily "standard holiday fare." Take this opportunity to change up your menu and cook up some old southern recipes from way back when.

I hope you enjoy a recipe or two from this selection. Keep it forever. Make it a holiday tradition at your home and pass on the love and laughter that comes from cooking with a southern legend.

- Hors d'oeuvres -

Cheese Sticks Pat Reams

2 sticks butter
½ lb. New York sharp cheddar, grated
¾ tsp. red pepper
½ tsp. salt
½ cup chopped pecans
2 ½ cups plain flour, sifted
Dash of garlic salt

Combine all ingredients thoroughly. Roll into little finger-sized pieces. Bake 20 minutes at 350 degrees on an ungreased pan. Editor's Note: It is extremely important to use New York sharp cheddar. Regular sharp cheddar does not work as well and results in a failed batch.



Cloud Nine Salad Doll Jones

1 can crushed pineapple, drained
¼ cup pineapple juice
1 eight oz. pkg. of cream cheese
1 regular container of Cool Whip
1 tbsp. sugar
½ cup chopped pecans
½ cup cherries, drained

Reserve ¼ cup of pineapple juice and blend with cream cheese thoroughly. Fold in Cool Whip, nuts, pineapple and cherries. Refrigerate over night.

- Side Dishes -

Sweet Potato Souffle Eloise Reams

Base:
3 cups mashed sweet potatoes
1 cup sugar
½ cup milk
½ stick butter
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla
3 eggs

Combine all ingredients and pour into baking dish

Topping:

- 1 cup brown sugar
- ½ cup self-rising flour
- ½ stick butter
- 1 cup chopped pecans

To prepare topping, blend all ingredients with hands and spread over potato mixture. Bake at 350 degrees until topping is light brown



Broccoli Casserole

Hazel Hanna

- 2 pkgs. frozen, chopped broccoli
- 2 eggs, well beaten
- ½ cup cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 stick of butter
- 1 chopped onion

Cook broccoli according to package directions and drain. Blend all ingredients together and fold into broccoli. Turn into baking dish and bake for 20 minutes at 350 degrees. (Bread crumb or grated cheese topping is optional.)

~Entrees~

Chicken Divan

Bernice McLeod

- 2 ten oz. pkg. frozen broccoli or asparagus
- 2 cups diced, cooked chicken
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. curry powder
- ½ cup shredded cheddar
- ½ cup buttered breadcrumbs

Cook broccoli or asparagus in salted water until tender. Place vegetables in

baking dish. Combine chicken, soup and other ingredients. Spread over vegetables. Spread crumbs and cheese over top. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes.

Beef Pot Roast

Shirley Hutto

- 3-4 lb. round chuck roast
- 3 tbsp. cooking oil
- pepper to taste
- salt to taste
- ¼ cup flour
- unseasoned meat tenderizer
- 1 tsp. Ac'cent (if available)
- 1 large onion, quartered
- 1 ½ cups water
- ¼ cup red cooking wine

Rub meat with water and sprinkle with meat tenderizer over entire surface and pierce deeply every inch over entire surface of roast with large meat fork. Heat oil in heavy skillet. Dredge roast in flour and brown slowly in oil. When well browned, remove pan from heat, drain the drippings and add the rest of the ingredients, all except wine. (You may use a Dutch oven, if preferred) Cover tightly and bake at 350 to 375 degrees for 1 ½ hours. Pour wine in and recover; bake until desired doneness is reached. Carve and salt meat and gravy after cooking is completed.

~Desserts~



Fresh Apple Cake

Ruby Patrick

- 2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 2 cups chopped, fresh apples
- 1 cup cooking oil
- 3 cups flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp vanilla

Sift flour, baking soda and salt together. In a separate bowl, mix cooking oil, sugar,

apples and pecans; add well-beaten eggs, dry ingredients and vanilla. Pour mixture into 2 nine inch layer pans and bake at 325 degrees until done.

Icing:

- ½ cup butter
- ½ can evaporated milk
- ½ cup brown sugar

Blend all ingredients in a saucepan and cook for 2 minutes.

Kentucky Derby Pie

Lettie Davis

- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup self rising flour
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 stick of butter
- 1 cup nuts
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 unbaked 8 inch pie shell

Mix sugar and flour with fork. Add eggs, melted butter and blend well. Add nuts, chocolate chips and vanilla. Mix well. Pour into pie shell. Bake at 325 degrees for 40-45 minutes.

Maple Nut Pumpkin Pie

Thelma McNelly

- 1 ½ cup pumpkin
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. cinnamon and/or other spices of preference
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 ¼ cup evaporated milk
- ¼ tsp. maple flavoring
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 unbaked pie shell

Mix pumpkin, sugars, salt and spices. Blend in eggs, milk and flavoring. Pour into unbaked pie shell and bake at 400 degrees for 50 minutes. Decorate with pecans or topping.





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Marvin Buchanan (left) and Matt Buchanan (right) measure a tree's girth in their cypress orchard at Central Florida Lands & Timber Nursery, LLC. (Photo Courtesy of Marvin Buchanan)

The Cypress Tree, a Lafayette Legacy

Story by Savannah Reams,
Editor-in-Chief

A rich history surrounds the cypress tree in Lafayette County, Fla., specifically in the town of Day. Generations of Day's families have contributed to the growth, harvest and regeneration of cypress—from cultivating its usefulness to researching and developing innovative ways to re-grow and restore the population of the coveted and valuable piece of God's creation.

Some of Day's earliest settlers, the Buchanan family, have been in the cypress business for six generations. In his book, "Cypress: From Creation, through Exploitation, to Regeneration," family patriarch Marvin E. Buchanan details the comings and
50 The Front Porch

goings of their family and their dealings with the great cypress tree.

"Cypress wood was the most sought-after wood in the southeast while it lasted," said Buchanan, who notes that the story of cypress begins with logging. Logging practices varied depending on the type of cypress required. There was red cypress (otherwise known as pond cypress), which grew exclusively in ponds and flatwoods; white cypress (also called bald cypress), which grew along rivers and swamps; and another type of pond cypress (referred to as tidewater red cypress), which grew along marshes and saltwater.

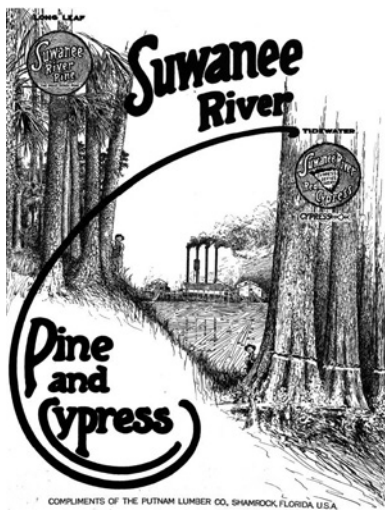
With the invention of the steam sawmill, the demand for cypress increased great-

ly. Loggers used local rivers to float the cypress trees downstream to concentration yards. Plenty of water was

required to move the mighty "felled" trees, so loggers chose time periods throughout the year when water lev-



Authentic Cypress Creations' cypress furniture is uniquely designed using the "live edge" of the cypress wood, meaning the craftsmen incorporate the natural edge of the wood into the design of each piece. (Greene Publishing, Inc. Photo by Savannah Reams, Editor-in-Chief)



A 1929 advertisement for Suwannee River Pine and Cypress from Putnam Lumber Company, in Shamrock, Fla. (Photo courtesy of the State Library and Archives of Florida)

els were higher. Logging in flatwoods ponds was much different. Red cypress was harvested using steam-powered winches and ramp sites that could be accessed by trams or trucks. Logging in tidewater swamps and marshes required both river and flatwoods techniques.

The dead trees from commercial logging operations were rafted together and floated downstream to sawmills. Buchanan's grandfather, S.C., and his grandfather's brothers, Will and Fred, owned a sawmill in the early 1900s. In addition to

the Buchanans, many sawmills surrounded Lafayette County, including Burton-Swartz, one of the largest sawmills, which was located in Perry, Fla., and eventually became Lee Cypress. Putnam Lumber Company, based in Shamrock, Fla., was another large sawmill and is currently located in Jacksonville, Fla. Smaller companies were located at Carbur, a small, historic lumber town in Taylor County; and Dowling Park, Fla.

Cypress had many uses in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Cypress cross ties were extremely valuable to the railroad—they were slow to rot and did not need treatment. The cross tie provided support for the rails that formed trams deep within the woods, according to Buchanan. Logging lines webbed throughout the deep swamps, where steam engines traveled along the tracks. The late Thomas Harvey Greene, Sr., of Madison County, was the biggest crosstie dealer in the southeast.

Cypress was used for many things—especially involving construction. In his writings, Buchanan details that a cracker house built by his granddaddy Snipes was almost entirely built from cypress trees. “The plates, sills, floor joists, walls, fireplace, rafters, lath and shingles were formed from carefully-selected [cypress] trees to precisely fit the spot it was

used,” said Buchanan.

Today, there is an ongoing effort to preserve Lafayette County's precious natural resource. As part of this effort, the Buchanan family and their company, Central Florida Lands & Timber Nursery, LLC, has collected seeds and budwood from the purest pond cypress and bald cypress in the county and have propagated trees and created an orchard. The orchard was developed with the help of the University of Florida School of Forestry and Dr. Don Rockwood, according to Buchanan. The family has made huge efforts to restore and preserve the cypress tree—an intrinsic part of their heritage. “Lafayette County will never look the same again but certain spots are being preserved, like Mallory Swamp, where the native cypress tree can reestablish its dominant position in the ecosystem,” said Buchanan.

The Buchanan family's newest endeavor involves their recently-launched business, Authentic Cypress Creations. Using cypress grown, sawn and assembled in Lafayette County, the Buchanans are designing custom-made furniture such as chairs, free-standing swings, porch swings, picnic tables, benches and



Men sitting on a particularly large cypress log transported by train to the Burton-Swartz Lumber Company mill in Perry, Fla., c. 1926. (Photo courtesy of the State Library and Archives of Florida)

more. The unique cypress pieces are “live edge,” meaning the craftsmen incorporate the natural edge of the wood into the design of each piece. Their creations are surely a sight to behold and preserve the historic, beautiful cypress tree and its fascinating legacy. In order to incorporate an interesting piece of Florida's history into your home, you're invited to call Julie at (386) 294-1211, or visit Central Florida Lands & Timber Nursery, LLC at 3087 N. CR 53, in Mayo. For inquiries, email cflat@windstream.net.



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Assembling and memorializing artifacts and memorabilia of the Day Junior High School

The memorial room houses photos, uniforms and artifacts that preserve the history of the Veterans of Day, Fla.



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Writings on the Wall

Revisiting the old Jefferson County Jail

Story by Merry Ann Frisbee,
Contributing Writer
Photography by Ashley
Hunter, Staff Writer

Standing outside the infamous buildings, you might hear wind whistling and the faint sound of moaning. The old Jefferson County Jail in downtown Monticello, Fla. stands sentinel to an older time, older spirits. The buildings had been mostly abandoned for many decades. Monticello Mainstreet has since restored the buildings and, if you dare, tours are available.

There are two buildings: one jail for men and, behind the main jail, a smaller holding facility for women. Former Mainstreet Director, Dr. Anne Holt says “This is a rock, all made of brick and cement, even the ceilings. If we had a really bad storm,

this is where I would want to be.”

Entering the jail is stepping into the world of incarceration in the mid 1900’s. It is impossible to tour without absorbing the stinging misery of its former inhabitants.

The remorse and longings of sad and lonely souls are scrawled on the flaking whitewashed brick walls. The pencil scratching and drawings are perilously close to becoming lost in the humid decaying old Jefferson County Jail.

The jail, a bunker-like building, was probably built in 1908 but tax rolls and county commission records differ slightly. Notes in the County Commission records talk about an expenditure for a jail in 1908 and the date on the locks, bars and ironwork read 1908.

The jail housed inmates

through the terms of 14 Jefferson County Sheriffs. It was abandoned as a place of incarceration in the 1970’s when a new jail was built. For 60 or so years, the jail was also home to a deputy sheriff and his family who cared for the inmates and to an endless stream of men and women on the wrong side of the law.

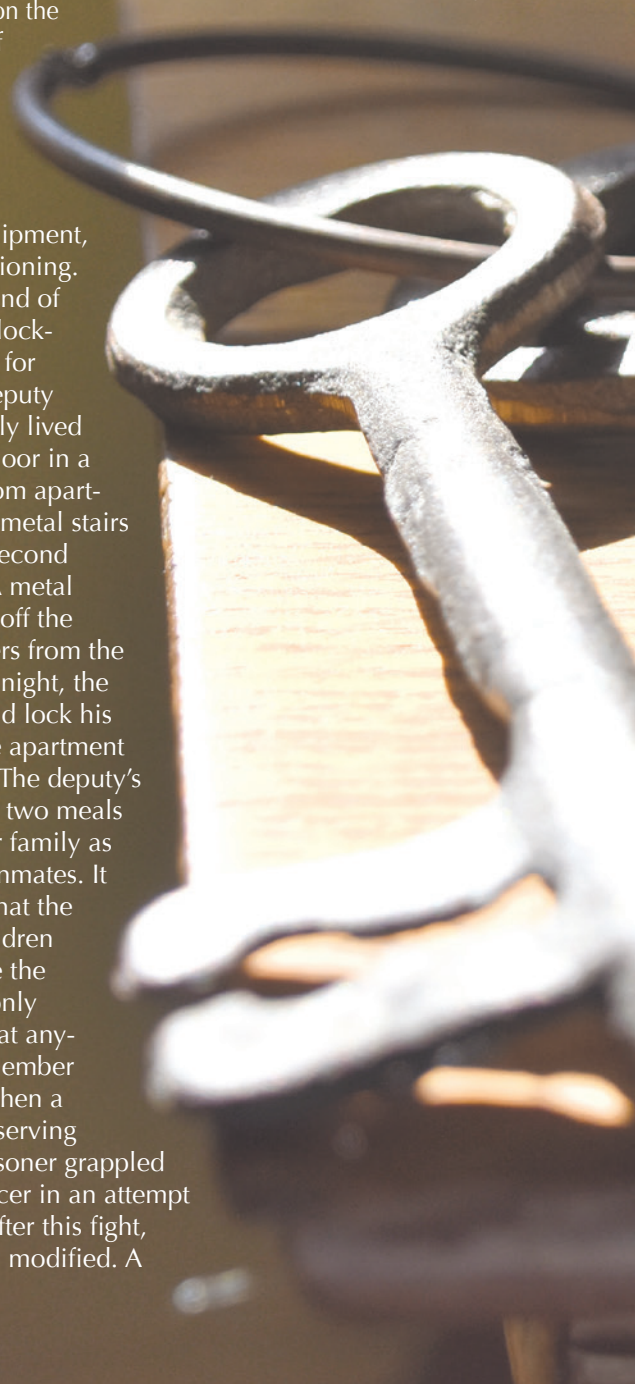
There are not and never were TV’s, exercise equipment, or air-conditioning. This is the kind of bare boned lock-up common for the era. A deputy and his family lived on the first floor in a three bedroom apartment. Dank metal stairs lead to the second floor cells. A metal door closed off the living quarters from the stairwell. At night, the deputy would lock his family in the apartment just in case. The deputy’s wife cooked two meals a day for her family as well as the inmates. It is reported that the deputy’s children helped serve the meals. The only break-out that anyone can remember happened when a deputy was serving meals. A prisoner grappled with the officer in an attempt to escape. After this fight, one cell was modified. A

slit large enough to pass a tray through was cut into the door.

Ike Anderson, now deceased, was from a local Monticello family. When he was just 16 years old, he was hired part-time by Sheriff Don Watson to work at the jail. Anderson said there were typically 10-15 people in the jail at once, including one or two women. Anderson said that a big mobster from Jacksonville named Fallen, came to Monticello and robbed a car dealership. He was caught and incarcerated in the old jail for one year.



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This was big-time news. Anderson adds that bootleg liquor was a law enforcement priority at the time, although it was hard to separate the moonshine makers from the drinkers. The corrections world was smaller and more personal then.

Even then, it was a different world one stair case away. The cells squeak now with disuse, but there is still a presence of the lives out on hold in the old place. There are several penciled notes about Judge Cooksey.

Sheriff Jim Cooksey served from 1945-1949. His son Kenneth Cooksey was appointed to the Jefferson County bench in 1953 and served for

decades as a Circuit Judge in Jefferson County. One writing says simply "Judge Cooksey." Another says "Cuspidor and spit tun in Judge Cooksey's office." "Been here 14 days" is likely a result of Judge Cooksey's sentence.

One sad man scribbled "Please help me." Others say "I ain't got nothing" and "Got everything going and nothing to lose."

The jail writers fell sway to the politics of the 60s, too. "To whom it may concern, cattle rustlers, arsonists, black panthers." One can also read scribbles that say "Mein Kampt" and "Barefoot communist pigs."

The saddest and least precise writings are personal. "I am glad to know that you had is all right. Baby or not baby I will still love you and your baby ..." A mild erotic drawing expresses longing

for female companionship.

In the 'nothing is new' category is a writing that says, "Back 20 years on property eat up in taxes. Charlie Christie" or "lawyer shister cross examiner."

One departed jailed writer laments, "Hate to leave here in a way." However, if you visit the jail you won't

hate to leave it. You will be relieved to get out into the fresh air. You may visit and leave the jail but the creepy, sad vibes of the jail will revisit you. It's eerily cool.

For more information about the work in progress at the jail or tours contact monticellojeffersonfl.com.





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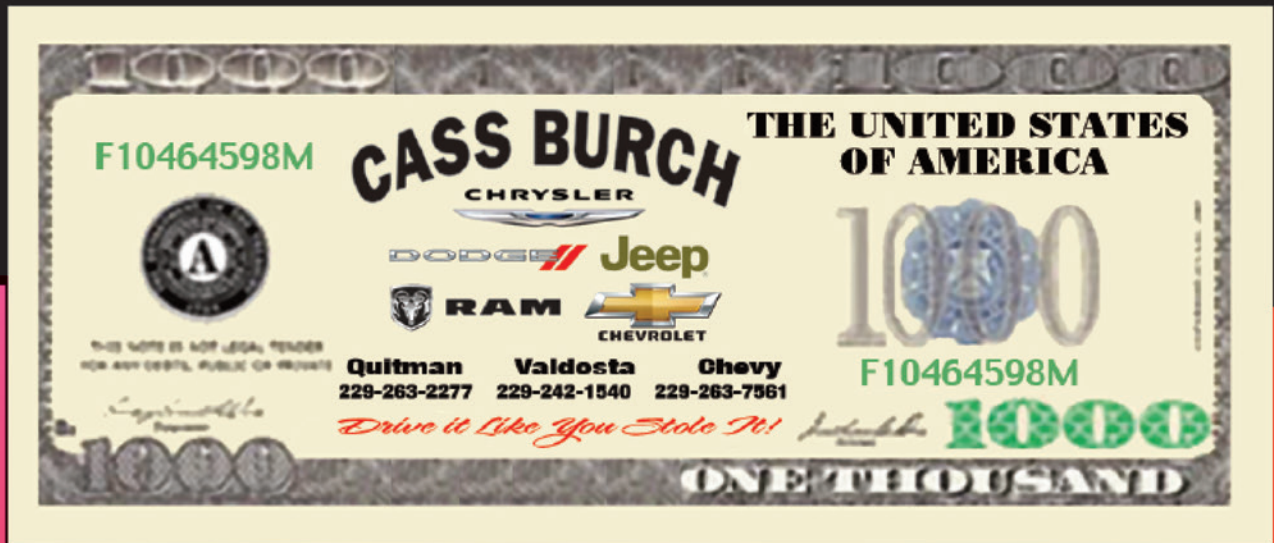
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Day Heritage Center:

Preserving the life and times of the past

Story and photos by Savannah Reams, Editor-and-Chief



School memorabilia from the old Day Junior Highschool are on display at the Day Heritage Center.

Just off of County Road 53, in the little town of Day, Fla., sits the Day Heritage Center, a dream turned reality upon the building's opening two years ago. However, Day citizens have been working on this project for 15 years and today they are still building their collection of memorabilia, antiques and items from times gone by.

The old, log home which now serves as the Day Heritage Center was built by John W. Day in the 1870s. The center's founders purchased the building four years ago, beginning renovations immediately. Their hard work paid off and for the last two years the center has been open and continuously experiencing growth.

"We want to preserve Day's past," said Marvin Buchanan, Day Heritage Center President. "We are a non-profit organization who cares about our history. Every single donation [item or mon-

etary] goes directly to the center and helps us continue to build a legacy."

Day Heritage Center houses a memorial room dedicated to the veterans of the town of Day. The space includes photographs, uniforms and other military memorabilia. Another room within the center features a display which includes keepsakes such as desks, clothing and other items from Day Junior High School. Alternate items of interest include antique dining sets, furniture, an old Singer sewing machine, a washing machine and a vintage Radio Flyer wagon—all relics of the town of Day.

The center does not currently have regular hours but appointments to visit can be made. Call Elouise Green at 386-249-3141 or Marvin Buchanan at 386-294-1211. The Day Heritage Center is located on Day Avenue, off of County Road 53.

The living room from the original log cabin of John W. Day features the fireplace and wooden beams from the original structure. Family photos line the mantelpiece and walls.



Children's items including a vintage Radio Flyer wagon are on display at the Day Heritage Center.



An antique china cabinet displays beautiful crystal glassware.

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travel

Foreword by Savannah Reams, Editor-in-Chief
Photos by Anita Newman, Contributing Photographer

The coastlines of western Florida, including Carrabelle, St. George Island and Apalachicola, are recognized as Florida's Forgotten Coast. However, these areas are not quite forgotten at all—widely-known throughout the country as beautiful vacation destinations, bringing in thousands upon thousands of tourists each year. There are many communities, however, which rest alongside Florida's Gulf Coast that are lesser known, brimming with beauty and deserving of attention.

In the North Florida region, dazzling coastline borders the edges of Taylor and Wakulla Counties, splashing against pristine properties, waterfront

villages, as well as natural state parks. Within the area, you'll consider yourself lucky to discover the fishing communities of Dekle Beach and Keaton Beach; eerie Hagan's Cove, with its four cross landmarks; the historic lighthouse and seaside community of St. Marks; as well as the Steinhatchee River, lined with pastel-colored houses and waterfront restaurants. To locals, these coastal communities are home; to visitors, they're discovered treasure.

The following photo series depicts the best of our local coastlines, detailing the beauty which can only be found within these hidden areas. Photographer and Taylor County native, Anita Newman, has a talent for telling stories through pictures. We hope that you enjoy the photographs she has shared. Because, sometimes, you simply need to see it to believe it.



THE SHORES

Native photographer captures the



Dekle Beach Canal at Sundown, Anita Newman

OF HOME

beauty of our local coastline



Storm Rolling in on the Steinhatchee River, Anita Newman



Hagan's Cove Crosses, Anita Newman



St. Mark's at Sunset, Anita Newman



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The Emergency Home Energy Assistance For The Elderly Program (EHEAP) May Be Able to Help!

Funds are now available from the Area Agency on Aging for North Florida, Inc. to provide emergency home energy assistance for elders. Households with persons 60 years of age and older with low incomes who are in immediate danger of losing their source of home heating or cooling may be considered for eligibility.

To apply for assistance, please contact the Florida Elder Helpline at

1-800-963-5337

Eligibility is household income based. Submission of application does not guarantee payment.



**Area Agency on Aging
for NORTH FLORIDA**



What's happenin'?

OCTOBER

17-27: The Covey Film Festival in Thomasville, Ga. is referred to as “a vehicle to entertain, educate and engage audiences through the screening of over twenty acclaimed films.” If you’re a movie buff with an affinity for the South Georgia-North Florida region, make sure you visit this popular festival!

19: Big Shoals Pumpkin Fest at Big Shoals State Park, in White Springs, Fla. will be held from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m. Enjoy pumpkin bowling, face painting, pumpkin decorating, a costume parade, a treasure chest with prizes and a hayride through the woods.

19-20: The Withlacoochee Fall Ride is held annually at McCulley Farms, in Jasper, Fla. Set up camp near the old McCulley farmstead and get ready for a weekend of history, horseback riding and fun. Call (386) 938-1147 for more information.

24-27: Suwannee Hulaween will be held at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park from Thursday, Oct. 24, until Sunday, Oct. 27. The four-day music festival will feature performances from The String Cheese Incident, Anderson.Paak, Andy Frasco, Bassnectar and more.

25-26: The Florida Forest Festival is held the fourth Saturday in October, annually. The Florida Forest Festival is a celebration of the forestry industry in Taylor County. With the World’s Largest Free Fish Fry, lumberjack shows and competitions, arts and crafts, the antique car show, Heritage Village, children’s games and story telling, this event promises to have something for everyone in the family and the best part is the event is free. For more information about this event, call (850) 584-8733.

30-31: Rural Folklife Days at Stephen Foster Folk Center State Park in White Springs, Fla.

31: Trunk or Treat in downtown Perry, Fla. The streets will be lined with food vendors and vehicles passing out candy from their decorated trunks to all the children! Downtown stores will also stay open for shoppers. To enter your vehicle in this event please contact the Chamber of Commerce at (850) 584-5366.

31: Trick or Treat in downtown Madison, Fla. Businesses and community members will line Range Street with decorated booths in order to pass out candy and provide spooky fun for area children.

31: Haunted Old Jail Tour at the Old Jail Museum, in Jasper, Fla. Call (386) 855-0652 for details.

31: Haunted Trail Walking Tour beginning at Monticello Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce, located at 420 W Washington St, in Monticello, Fla. These tours are approximately 90 minutes, with exclusive access to two haunted sites in Monticello. Advanced tickets are necessary and are \$20 each. Tour times are 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. Tickets are available at www.monticellojeffersonfl.com/events or call (850) 997-5552.



NOVEMBER

9: The 5th Annual Jefferson County BBQ Festival has been scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 9. It will be held in Monticello, Fla. at the Downtown Club, located at 380 North Cherry Street. Besides the famous BBQ Contest, there will be a People’s Choice Contest as well as Pie Baking and Bakers Contests. There will be a beer garden with college football games on. And don’t forget the Corn Hole Tournaments!

15-16: The Madison County Florida Storytelling Festival will span over two days and will be taking place at the Agriculture Arena at 182 NW College Loop on Friday night at 7 p.m. with a Michael Reno Harrell concert and a storytelling contest with cash prizes. Then, beginning Saturday morning at 10 a.m., listen to stories from local tellers as well as student tellers throughout the day. Participate in Open Mic Hour and throw your name in the hat for the chance to tell a story on stage.

26: Lighting of the Park Celebration at Jasper City Park, in Jasper, Fla.

28-30: Old Tyme Farm Days and Swamp Meet will be held at Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park, in Live Oak, Fla. There will be an antique farm equipment auction, exhibits, an antique engine show, food vendors, chainsaw carving, a kids music expo and, on Thursday, Nov. 28, a big Thanksgiving dinner at 12 p.m. Bring your tent, RV or rent a cabin and celebrate Thanksgiving, family and tradition. Admission for non-campers is \$10 per carload per day. Bring lawn chairs.

30: Sweets N The Streets Christmas Festival at Central Avenue Walkway, in Jasper, Fla.

DECEMBER

1-30: Suwannee Lights, the annually anticipated sparkling event in Live Oak, Fla. at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park and Campground, will be back in action throughout the month of December. The 2019 event will feature more lights, expanded displays and a bigger show. The event will begin nightly at 6 p.m. and last until 10 p.m.

5-7: 35th Annual Christmas on the Square will take place in Live Oak, Fla. on Thursday, Dec. 5, until Saturday, Dec. 7. Festivities will include the Jingle Bell Fun Run and Walk, the lighting of the Christmas Tree in Millennium Park, arts and craft vendors, food vendors, live entertainment, bounce houses, kids slides, a fireworks show, Santa Land and a 100 percent chance of snow!

6: Downtown Christmas and Santa’s Little Helpers Parade in downtown Perry, Fla. is an eagerly awaited annual event. Vendors and businesses will be open after hours and throughout the evening. The parade begins at 6 p.m.

6: White Springs Christmas Parade in downtown White Springs, Fla. Call Town Hall at (386) 397-2310 for more information.

6-23: Festival of Lights at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, in White Springs, Fla.



7: Pearl Harbor Remembrance ceremony at Hamilton County Veterans Park, in Jasper, Fla.

7: Light up Madison is one of Madison, Fla.’s largest annual events. Not only do local businesses dress up their storefronts, but folks from neighboring towns and counties enjoy an afternoon of shopping, dining and watching an elaborate Christmas parade. The events begin at 4 p.m. and end with the dazzling nighttime parade.

12-13: The 33rd Annual Victorian Christmas will take you back in time to Thomasville, Ga.’s Victorian past. Stroll the bricks and be entertained by performers, carolers and musicians. Shop, dine, and welcome the holiday season in downtown Thomasville!

Mark Your Calendars!



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GHOST TOURS & STORYTELLING
ON FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS

OCT 12-13

FARM TOUR

OCT 26

BEER FESTIVAL

NOV 2

VETERAN'S DAY LUNCHEON

NOV 9

JEFFERSON BBQ FEST
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NOV 29

BLACK FRIDAY - SHOP LOCAL!

NOV 30

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

DEC 6

CHRISTMAS DOWNTOWN

DEC 6-7

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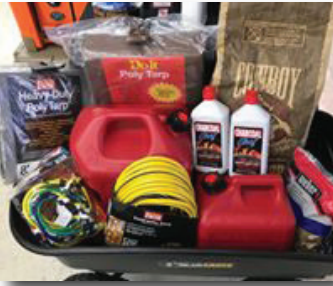
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Santa Works at the Bank

Rick Patrick, Columnist

I have very vivid memories of my kindergarten Christmas party at Happytime Kindergarten in Perry, Fla. Of course, Santa was there to visit with all of us. Before the party, my sister had told me that Santa was not real, so I was eager to go straight to the source and ask him myself. When I had my chance to speak to the big guy, I told him what my sister had said and I told him that I knew he was real and he could come see me for Christmas and he could just pass over my sister. Santa chuckled at this and assured me that he was real and that he could overlook my sister's lack of faith. As I was talking to Santa that evening, I couldn't help but think that there was something strangely familiar about his voice.

Soon after that, I went to church and saw Mr. Henry Fulmer. Mr. Fulmer worked at the bank and was a very gregarious man with an easy laugh. If there was ever anyone who exemplified the "Christmas Spirit" every day of the year, it was Mr. Fulmer. He was also one of the "greeters" at our church. Each Sunday, he would stand near the entrance of the church and warmly greet anyone and everyone who happened by. I don't know if that was

an official title, or if perhaps it was just something that Mr. Fulmer simply enjoyed doing.

When I heard Mr. Fulmer, I recognized his voice as that of Santa from my kindergarten Christmas party. Could Mr. Fulmer really be Santa in disguise? I always wondered about that. Mr. Fulmer certainly had the "look." He wasn't very tall, was heavy set, and had a very boisterous voice. You could even say that Mr. Fulmer was "jolly." So it became a bit of an "inside secret" for me. Santa was real, and he worked at the bank. Years later, even into adulthood, whenever I would speak to, hear or think of Henry Fulmer, I would think of Santa.



Later, when I got a little older and reached "the age," I asked my mom the big question many young people ask. "Is Santa real?" My mother's response was a stroke of pure genius, I thought. She told me, "Santa is part of the spirit of Christmas. As long as you believe in him, he is real. But if you ever stop believing in him, then he won't be real anymore." Since that time, I have chosen to believe.

So, even to this day, if you ask me, "Is Santa real?" I will tell you without hesitation, "Yes he is very real, and he used to work at the bank."

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