



WASTE PRO
Caring For Our Communities

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

To show our commitment, we regularly give to causes that support our environment, educate citizens and lend a helping hand to the people in our neighborhoods.



CALL TODAY TO GET STARTED!
850.689.8600



VISIT US ONLINE
wasteprousa.com

inside
2 sections



1B
Pace standout Grant Wise signs with Clemson Tigers

2A City of Milton holds first-ever tree lighting ceremony

- 4A: Florida Blue Foundation awards children's hospital with mental health grant
- 4A: Milton Police Department awarded over \$40K for new radios

2B Lawrence dives into success at state

- 3B: News and notes from the area sports scene
- 4B: Panthers plan to see hard work pay off this wrestling season

Weekend Weather

Friday
Partly Cloudy
64°/42°

Saturday
Sunny
56°/35°

Sunday
Sunny
56°/34°

SANTA ROSA'S

Press Gazette

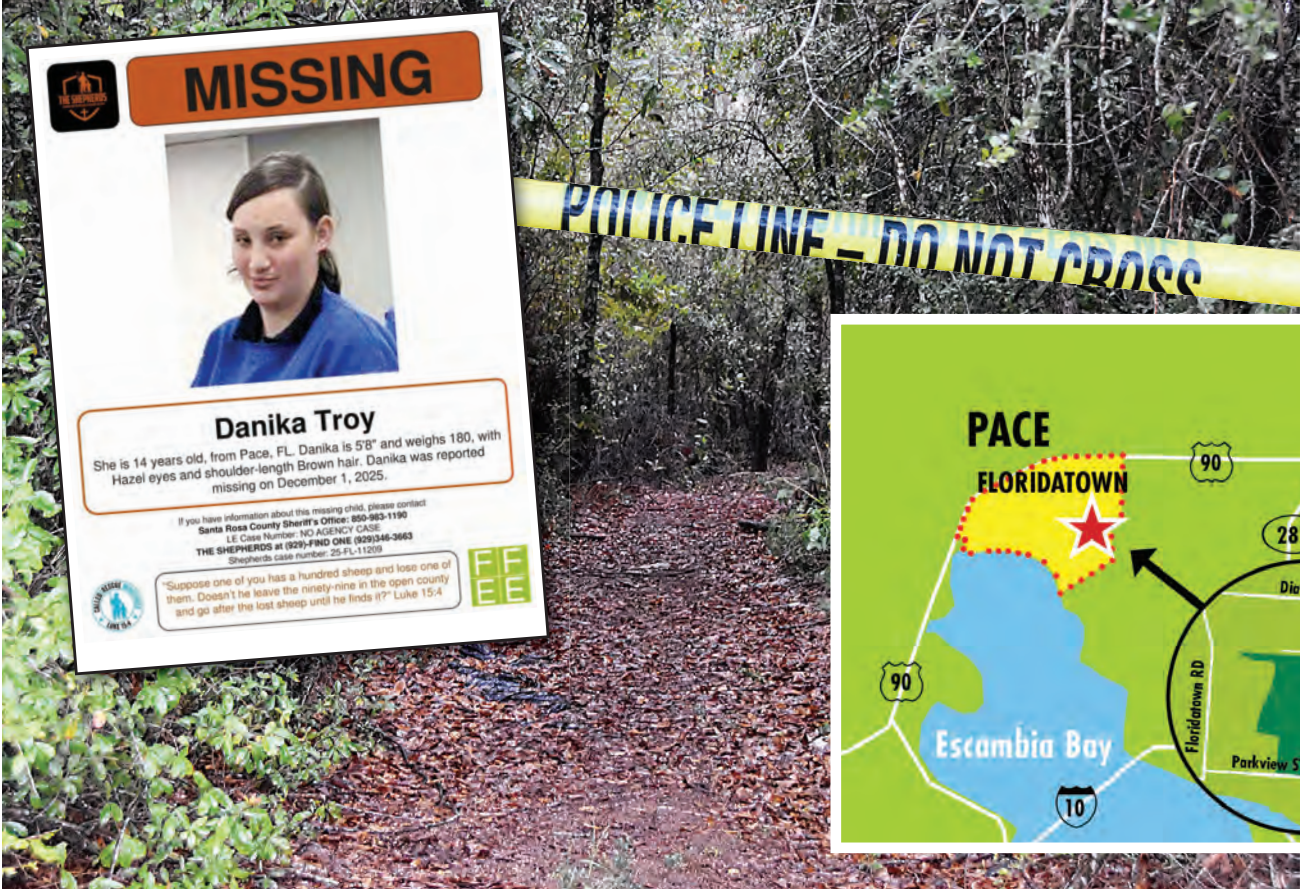
SERVING NORTH SANTA ROSA COUNTY

DECEMBER 11-17, 2025

\$1.25

NEWS & INFORMATION
WEEKLY IN PRINT DAILY ONLINE

Two juveniles arrested for murder of 14-year-old in Pace



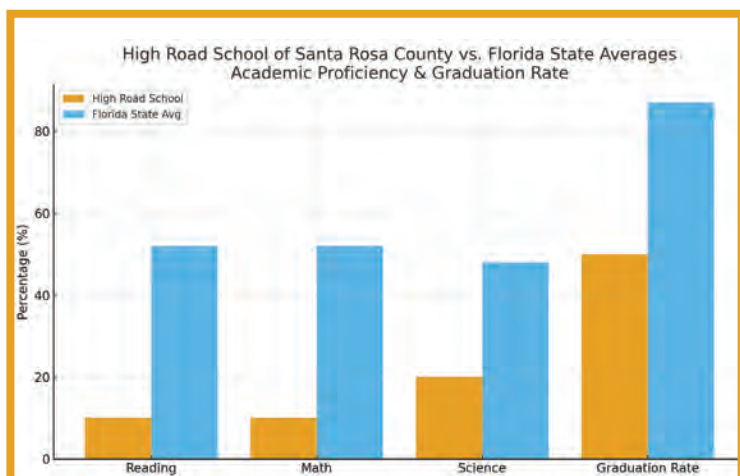
By Hansen Hasenberg
news@srpressgazette.com

Two juveniles have been arrested in connection with the homicide of Danika Troy, 14, who was reported as a runaway Monday, Dec. 1. Troy's body was found the following day and Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office confirmed it was Troy Dec. 3.

During a Thursday, Dec. 4 news conference, Sheriff Bob Johnson said Gabriel Williams, 16, and Kimahri Blevins, 14, were arrested for premeditated murder in the first degree. According to Johnson, a citizen stumbled upon the body, which was laying in the woods off Kimberly Road in the Floridatown section of Pace and called the Sheriff's Office around 11 p.m. Dec. 2. What they found was horrific.



Photo by Madison DeVito, Location map by Dickie Williams
The location where Danika Troy's body was found burned and shot. Two juveniles have been arrested for the murder of the 14 year old.



High Road School / Pace, Florida — By the Numbers

High Road School of Santa Rosa County, is run by Specialized Education Services, Inc. and serves approximately 123 students in grades K–12 in a small, alternative-school setting. With roughly nine teachers, the school maintains a 14:1 student-teacher ratio.

The campus serves students with significant academic, behavioral, or emotional needs, most of whom receive services through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). About 73% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and the student population is predominantly White (74%), followed by Black (14%) and multiracial students (7%).

Academic proficiency at High Road is well below Florida averages. Only 10% of students are proficient in reading and math, compared with statewide performance of about 52% in both subjects. Science proficiency is approximately 20%, and the school's graduation rate is below 50%, compared with the state average of about 87%.

High Road operates as an alternative program under contract with Santa Rosa County District Schools, serving students who require specialized supports not typically available in traditional classrooms.

Sources: NCES; Public School Review; SchoolDigger; Niche; Florida DOE



Submitted photo
Sheriff Bob Johnson addresses the media about the murder of Danika Troy, 14, in Pace.

Troy was reportedly shot multiple times and burnt with gasoline by her alleged killers. Johnson said Williams stole his mother's handgun and used it in the commission of the crime. Steve Williams, a private citizen and K9 handler, found Troy, along with a group of others, while performing a grid search for a different missing person case near Kimberly Road.

Williams said his team was shaken by what they saw. According to Williams, there was about a 30-foot area around Troy which had been burned. Ammunition casings for a 9mm were also found.

"Not only was the person who found the body traumatized but our Major Crimes detectives have to see stuff like this," Johnson said. "You don't want to see a burnt child with bullet holes. That's not something you sign up for but unfortunately you get put in that position."

Copyright © 2025
Santa Rosa Press Gazette
5842 Commerce St., Suite D
Milton, FL 32570

Subscribe Now!



WILL ESTELL, REALTOR
850.499.0174
IMWILLESTELL@GMAIL.COM

SERVING THE EMERALD COAST INCLUDING DESTIN, CRESTVIEW, MILTON AND NAVARRE AREAS.

VISIT COCONUTPALMREALESTATE.COM TODAY!

LOOKING FOR LOCAL REAL ESTATE?
Contact Will Today!

SCAN QR TO LEARN MORE





LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Dec. 12

Light up Milton will take place at 5158 Willing St, Milton from 5-9 p.m. Spread holiday cheer and enjoy free fun for the whole family at the City's Annual Light Up Milton Event. At 5 p.m., Santa arrives at the Riverwalk Pavilion. At 5:30 p.m., there will be a Tree Lighting Ceremony. At 6 p.m., the Blackwater Pirates Lighted Boat Parade begins. At 7 p.m., fireworks will be over the Blackwater River.

Dec. 13

The Holiday Market will be at 5158 Willing Street in Milton from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Check out photos with Santa, holiday shopping, food trucks, live music and bounce houses.

Saturday with Santa (Jay) will take place at the Jay Library 5259 Booker Ln, Jay, from 10-11:30 a.m. Santa will take a break from his preparations at the North Pole to visit Santa Rosa County Libraries. You'll be treated to a Christmas story and a gift from Santa. Bring a camera to take a picture with Santa. All ages are welcome. Area Friends of the Library are sponsoring this visit.

Wreaths Across America will be held at Milton Historic Cemetery 5641 US-90, Milton, at noon. Each year, the event is held to place wreaths on the graves of service members, so their sacrifice, service and memory are never forgotten.

"One Day: A Christmas Production" will be performed at Pine Terrace Baptist Church, 6212 Pine Blossom Rd, Milton. Performances will be on Saturday, Dec. 13 at 6 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 14 at 6 p.m. This production will tell the story of Jesus' birth through music and storytelling.

Dec. 20

Saturday with Santa (Milton) will take place at the Milton Library 5541 Alabama St, Milton, from 10-11:30 a.m. Santa will take a break from his preparations at the North Pole to visit Santa Rosa County Libraries. Attendees will hear a Christmas story and receive a gift from Santa. Bring a camera to take a picture with Santa. All ages are welcome. Area Friends of the Library are sponsoring this visit.

Dec. 23

As the Page Turns Book Club will be at Jay Library 5259 Booker Ln, Jay, from 4-5 p.m.

Visit the Jay Library on the fourth Tuesday each month for As the Page Turns, an adult book club where patrons choose what to read. January's selection is a historical fiction novel "The Underground Library" by Jennifer Ryan. The rest of the year is reader's choice within a specific genre. This meeting's genre is Holiday Favorites, and the suggested title is "The Christmas Cottage" by T. Davis Bunn. Holiday-favorite movie "It's a Wonderful Life" (rated PG) will be shown.

Jan. 17

Send Weekend is taking place at Pine Terrace Baptist Church 6212 Pine Blossom, Milton at 9:30 a.m. The student ministry will head out to visit and encourage homebound church members, as well as spend time at local nursing homes.

Jan. 31

The Milton Mardi Gras Parade will take place at 5629 Byrom St, Milton at 3 p.m.

This year there is a new route. The parade will start at James St and Stewart St and roll down Stewart Street and end at the Burger King at Hwy 90 (the parade will not turn on Berryhill).

Santa Rosa's Central Landfill rates to increase in 2026

Staff report
news@srpressgazette.com

Santa Rosa County residents will have to pay a bit more to use Central Landfill next year.

Effective Jan. 1, 2026, the Santa Rosa County Central Landfill's Tipping Fees will increase as provided in the rate resolution passed by the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners Feb. 9, 2023.

A rate increase of \$1 per ton will be assessed

for Class I, Class III, and Recycling fees. The fee increase will have no impact on the minimum charge of \$10.

Please direct all questions or comments to the County's Environmental Office by calling 850-981-7135 or emailing Environmental-Dept@santarosa.fl.gov.

For more information about the Central Landfill, visit <https://www.santarosa.fl.gov/351/Central-Landfill>.

City of Milton holds first-ever tree lighting ceremony



City Manager Ed Spears listens to Keep Santa Rosa Beautiful Chair Christina Schweiger's remarks.

Photos by Madison DeVito

By Madison DeVito
news@srpressgazette.com

The City of Milton hosted their first-ever Christmas tree lighting ceremony on December 2 at City Hall, officially kicking off the holiday season with the Milton community. The event was attended by city employees and community members. Refreshments like cookies and hot chocolate, with, of course, whipped cream and marshmallows as add-ons were available as the overcast sky and chilly winds had people huddling together and burrowing into their jackets.

The event kicked off with the Liberty Church Worship Group singing hymns in front of the unlit tree, instruments and sheet music in hand as they swayed before the crowd.

The Christmas tree is a 12-foot native juniper tree donated by Keep Santa Rosa Beautiful and Panhandle Growers, Inc., a Milton-based organization that has been growing ornamental and shade trees for communities across the Southeast



Milton Police Chief Jennifer Frank helps a young attendee prepare his hot chocolate with extra marshmallows and whipped cream.

since 1987. The tree was described by City Manager Ed Spears as a "living symbol of growth and friendship." It was planted at City Hall in the same area that there used to be a tree out front, though the previous tree died and was removed some time ago.

"[The spot] has been a blank palette for a while," Spears admitted at the ceremony. "We thought we would replace it with something that is a visual sign of growth and life and [something] that we could use every year as the City Hall Christmas tree."

Spears went on to thank the Keep Santa Rosa Beautiful board of directors and their chair Christina Schweiger, as well as Panhandle Growers owners

John Davy and Glen Strange, for the donation and the city's landscape and public works departments for getting the tree ready.

"I can attest, City Hall has been Santa's Workshop today," Spears joked. "There have been elves everywhere to get us to this moment. It's been a beehive of activity."

Spears invited Schweiger up to the podium to speak, but she had little to say except for expressing how excited she was for the special occasion and how Keep Santa Rosa Beautiful was looking forward to their partnership with the city to create more beautiful trees.

Milton celebrates Arbor Day each year as a Tree City USA community by holding a public

tree planting. The trees they plant, including the newly donated juniper tree, help reduce stormwater runoff, improve biodiversity and enhance air quality to name a few long-term benefits.

"This is a wonderful example of community partnership and stewardship," Spears said. "Planting native trees strengthens the health of our environment, beautifies our public spaces and provides benefits that will last for generations."

The ceremony concluded with Milton City Council members and representatives from Panhandle Growers and Keep Santa Rosa Beautiful standing for pictures as the tree lit up behind them.

The city also hosts Light Up Milton annually, a night filled with fun where they light a tree on Willing Street, bring Santa Claus in to visit, hold a winter market, host a boat parade and launch fireworks. Light Up Milton was originally scheduled for Dec. 5 this year, but due to the inclement weather, it will now take place on Dec. 12.

Murder

Continued from page 1A

"Unfortunately for the Troy family, they have to go through this," Johnson added.

As of press time, the State Attorney's Office had not decided how the juveniles will be charged, whether as adults or children.

Due to the nature of the crime, Johnson believes they should be tried as adults and go to regular prison, not a juvenile detention facility.

"You do the adult crime, you have to do the adult time," Johnson said.

Not much is known about a motive for the killing, but Johnson said Blevins and Williams were classmates with Troy at High Road School of Santa Rosa in Pace. Johnson said they may have been friends.

Williams reportedly told investigators Troy made hurtful comments about him, which upset him.

High Road is a spe-



This area off Kimberly Rd. in Pace is where the murder of Danika Troy occurred.

Photo by Madison DeVito

cialized school which contracts with Santa Rosa County District Schools to educate students with "academic, emotional, and behavioral needs" through smaller class sizes and more individualized teaching strategies.

SRCDS public information and community and family outreach officer Nadia Colin confirmed all three juveniles were students at High Road as of this school year.

"Santa Rosa County District Schools is

deeply saddened by the tragic loss of one of our students. Our hearts are with the family as they face an unimaginable loss. We have been notified of the arrest of two students in connection with this off-campus incident. We are devastated by this situation and are fully cooperating with law enforcement as their investigation continues. Additional counseling and support services are being made available to students and staff at the affected

school. Due to the ongoing investigation and to protect the integrity of the process, we are unable to provide additional information at this time."

According to the Sheriff's Office, Blevins and Williams are being held in the Department of Juvenile Justice as of Dec. 4.

Johnson said the evidence of who was involved in the killing was clear and referred to it as a "ground ball," a baseball reference meaning it was simple.

Johnson said the evidence of who was involved in the killing was clear and referred to it as a "ground ball," a baseball reference meaning it was simple.

Johnson said the evidence of who was involved in the killing was clear and referred to it as a "ground ball," a baseball reference meaning it was simple.

Get to know your community.

Subscribe to the Santa Rosa Press Gazette
850-623-2120
srpressgazette.com

BILLBOARD

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Lighthouse PCA launches trades at Milton campus

This August, Lighthouse Private Christian Academy (PCA) opened a new campus in Milton to continue providing their students with new opportunities and a transformational, Christ-centered education.

The new campus, located at 6225 Dixie Rd, is now home to the middle and high school students at the Lighthouse Private Christian Academy in Milton.

CEO and founder Joanna Johannes says everything fell into place and this new campus was definitely a "God thing."

Thanks to the generosity of Mike Papantonio and his associates and being able to trade another Lighthouse property, the Lighthouse team was able to renovate the campus and get it ready very quickly for the 2025-2026 school year.

Lighthouse PCA recently added trade enrichment to their curriculum. Trades taught at the Milton campus include auto mechanics, culinary, agriculture, and electrical contracting.

College is a great option after high school graduation, but it's not the only option available. Introducing the trades to students while they are young opens options for careers that are not traditionally taught.

"Our students are excited about the trades that we're bringing to the Milton campus because the focus at our other campuses is college preparatory," Johannes said. "At the Milton campus, we're opening up our ideas and broadening the horizons now to trades to remind students that college isn't the end all for everyone."

The students truly love going to school here because it is different than anything they've experienced in education before. "Learning should be fun," Milton campus administrative principal Andrea Johnson said.

The new campus has opened numerous new opportunities for the school, such as agriculture and the 4-H program. The 5-acre property features a large greenhouse and outdoor gardening area, as well as fields of blueberries and a blueberry shop. Students are learning the whole farming process, from growing the blueberries to

training and first-hand experience.

"We're partnering with Jen-vo Electric, a female-owned electrical contractor based in Milton. The owner Jennifer Williamson has been amazing. Our kids are learning about contracting and going

"As we continue to grow, we will add more trade classes. We are looking into HVAC and welding," Johannes added.

The mission of Lighthouse Private Christian Academy is to inspire students to have a love and joy for learning, for a lifetime, by providing a transformational, Christ-centered education. "It's always

Lighthouse and what helps set them apart. They are committed to excellence on and off the field while teaching the students godly values and developing integrity.

In the 2024 school year, Lighthouse Private Christian Academy won the state championship for football, basketball and baseball in the Sunshine State Conference. Many of the students are involved in teams and look forward to practice and games after school. Lighthouse is looking to expand their cheerleading team. They currently have a varsity team and want to grow their program to cheer at more games, such as junior varsity. The school also recently started a drumline for the high school students, which the kids are very excited about. The drumline started with eight students and now there are 30 that play at football games and a small ensemble plays at the basketball games as well.

"We take care of each other, and the student body takes care of each other. We're like a giant family. It's a school, but we're all connected, and we pride ourselves on being kind to one another," Administrative Principal Johnson said.

The Word of God is embedded into everything Lighthouse does and all the curriculum is based off scripture.

"A lot of parents just want their kids to be in a safe environment and we provide that," Johnson said. "Through this safe environment, they're finding love, they're finding Jesus, they're finding themselves, they're becoming leaders."



picking and cleaning the blueberries and then selling the berries to Bailey's Produce & Nursery on Davis Highway in Pensacola.

In the basic and advanced auto mechanics classes, students are working on vehicles on campus. They are learning to fix breaks and carburetors and change oil and tires. Next semester, Lighthouse hopes to add woodworking to the mix.

And it's not just the boys that are excited about the trades. Some of the girls in culinary are equally as interested in learning mechanics.

Lighthouse is partnering with local companies to give the students hands-on

out with them on the road to clients," Johannes said.

In the culinary class, students are learning how to cold cook and make Italian food and pizzas. Lighthouse has been partnering with local Italian restaurants, allowing students to immerse themselves in authentic culture and cuisine.

Students learn these trades during their enrichment hour during the school day and if they want to continue their education after hours, they can do so through an after-school apprenticeship.

about the kids and providing them what they need to succeed," executive principal and athletic director Ricky Broxson said. "I've taught a lot of these students in science, and they are all bright, every single one of them."

For students that want to gain college credit in high school, Lighthouse provides dual enrollment for students that are academically ready.

Athletics are a huge part of

Lighthouse Private Christian Academy

lighthousepca.com

K-5th grade Milton Campus: 6163 Dogwood Dr. Milton, FL 32570
6th-12th grade Milton Campus: 6225 Dixie Rd., Milton, FL 32570

LIGHTHOUSE PRIVATE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
LIGHTHOUSE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY K-12
6163 Dogwood Drive
Milton, FL 32570
850.417.6380
lighthousepca.com/milton

S
SOUTHERN SPECIALTY
1981 HWY-87 S,
NAVARRE
850.684.1355
APPAREL | GIFTS | GOURMET

SET FREE FOUNDATION
HELPING WOMEN OVERCOME TRAUMA
850-463-5191 • INFO@SETFREEREFUGE.COM

GOOD NEIGHBOR THRIFT STORE
WE CARE
850-515-0109
9025 Navarre Pkwy
(just east of Navarre Bridge)
Mon., Wed., Fri. and Sat.
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
for both shopping and donations
Full line of all thrift store items

CENTURY 21
Island View Realty LLC
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
VACATION RENTALS
REAL ESTATE
850-939-2366
NAVARRE21.COM
8443 GULF BLVD D18, NAVARRE, FL 32566

FREE ESTIMATES!
HE. ROBERTS ROOFING
COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL
850.281.6509
HEROBERTSROOFING.COM

ATTENTION: Milton/Pace Homeowners who are frustrated with their Lawns!
Have you threatened to cement the whole thing over and paint it green?
Before you do that, call me for a **FREE LAWN CONSULTATION!**
850-240-7935
www.FatherAndSonLandscape.com
Skip Orth
Lawn Expert, 30 Years

BRANDING STRATEGY CONSULTING SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES HOSTING PRINT & MORE
SandpaperMarketing
SANDPAPERMARKETING.COM
WE'RE SOCIAL
+1 850 939 1900
7502 HARVEST VILLAGE CT
NAVARRE, FL 32566

Get on Board our BUSINESS BILLBOARD!
Call today!
Santa Rosa's Press Gazette 850-623-2120

Florida Blue Foundation awards children's hospital with mental health grant

By Madison DeVito
news@srpressgazette.com

On Dec. 1, the Florida Blue Foundation presented Studer Family Children's Hospital with a four-year mental well-being grant that will expand access to mental health support for children and their families receiving care in Northwest Florida.

The four-year grant will fund a new program called Sacred Support, as well as the addition of a licensed mental health therapist inside the children's hospital who will provide support to children and families facing long hospital stays, traumatic injuries or new medical diagnoses. 10 rural counties in the area are the target of the grant: Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla, Walton, Washington, Escambia, Okaloosa and Santa Rosa counties. The program is not a quick consultation for therapy; it's comprehensive and integrated mental health care.

"This generous grant will allow us to create a new Sacred Support program," Ascension Sacred Heart Foundation President Adrienne Maygarden said. "The program will offer individual, family and group therapy sessions as well as parenting support. Sacred Support ensures that no child or family faces the emotional challenges of illness or injury alone."

"When I was working in the PICU, I saw firsthand the emotional and mental toll that a serious diagnosis or injury can have on a child and on their family. Even when



President of Studer Family Children's Hospital Dr. Jason Foland listens to Meredith Harrison speak to the crowd. Photos courtesy of Ascension Sacred Heart

the medical crisis was under control, the fear, anxiety and emotional trauma can linger long after discharge," President of Studer Family Children's Hospital Dr. Jason Foland informed attendees. "Those moments stayed with me, and they're why today is such an important day for our hospital and for our community."

After Foland's remarks, he welcomed Meredith Harrison to the podium to speak about her perspective on how the grant will impact experiences at the children's hospital. Harrison is the mother of Carter Harrison, a patient at the hospital that was diagnosed shortly before his first birthday with a rare disease that requires significant medical treatment for the rest of his life.

"I was very excited when I heard about this new grant from Florida Blue and the Florida Blue Foundation...As a family this definitely would have been some-



Florida Blue Northwest Florida Market Leader Hong Potomski expresses Florida Blue's excitement at the partnership.

thing that we would've very much appreciated and taken advantage of if this was around when Carter was a baby, and we will be taking advantage of it, I'm sure, soon in the future," she said with a smile. "But we, as a family who have gone through this, the doctors and the nurses and the staff take care of the child, but a lot of times, the resources kind of fall short when taking care of the rest of the fami-

ly...This grant will give direct resources and access to not only just take care of the child but kind of bringing the family together more and taking care of the whole family and the wellbeing of the family."

Harrison said that she and her family, as people who have dealt with troubling diagnoses or multiple hospital stays before, are very thankful for what the grant will provide.

Harrison's comments were followed by Ascension Sacred Heart Foundation President Adrienne Maygarden's words, who thanked the Florida Blue Foundation for their generosity to help the hospital better take care of families. Florida Blue Northwest Florida Market Leader Hong Potomski spoke next, expressing Florida Blue's gratitude for the opportunity to part with Studer Family Children's Hospital and Ascension Sacred Heart Foundation.

"In order for families to take care of their little ones, they must take care of themselves first," she said, smiling at Harrison. She told media later that the grant presentation on Dec. 1 highlighted the impact of the three organizations' partnership, which she said, "will help bridge the gap in mental health services for those who need it most."

Potomski said that Florida Blue is proud to be a part of the change.

Director of school safety pleads no contest to battery charge

Staff report
news@srpressgazette.com

Daniel Hahn, the director of school safety for Santa Rosa County District Schools, has pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor battery charge.



Hahn

Hahn, 59, was arrested for battery Oct. 7 after he allegedly rubbed another employee's shoulders against her will. The incident took place at Gulf Breeze High School earlier this school year.

The incident, which made the female employee feel uncomfortable, was reportedly part of a string of inappropriate or unwanted behavior including Hahn showing the woman inappropriate pictures of himself in Halloween costumes, asking the employee to send "sexy pictures of herself to him and asking her if she wanted to attend a class he was teaching at GBHS."

According to Hahn's arrest report, the woman and him had no personal relationship outside of work.

Hahn reportedly agreed to a pre-trial diversion program contract. If the contract is fulfilled, Hahn can avoid traditional prosecution and have his case dismissed.

Santa Rosa
Press Gazette
850-623-2120 or
srpressgazette.com

Milton Police Department awarded over \$40K for new radios

By Madison DeVito
news@srpressgazette.com

On Dec. 1, the Milton Police Department announced they had been awarded a grant for \$41,438.65 to purchase new radios.

The grant was given through the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistant Grant program, which according to the U.S. Department of Justice is "the leading source of federal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions."

"The radios were fully funded through residual JAG funds, unused grant money from across the state that has been reallocated to meet urgent needs like this one," Milton Chief of Police Jennifer Frank told the Gazette. "This is an excellent example of how state resources can be directed to support local law enforcement priorities."

The grant will allow the MPD to purchase five new portable radios, Motorola APX



Chief Jennifer Frank at a June City Council meeting, where she announced one of several new grants she would secure in her first months as Police Chief.

N70 models, which the department said addressed an "urgent operational need tied directly to officer safety, effective communication and public safety." In the field, the radios are used by officers for real-time communication with emergency dispatch, coordination with other law enforcement officers and calling for emergency assistance in critical sit-

uations. Unfortunately, 22 out of 26 radios, or roughly 85% of the department's radios are no longer able to complete those critical functions reliably, a liability for officers in the field.

MPD's current radios are Motorola APX 6000 A models. These radios were introduced in 2008 and are now over 17 years old, classified as "end-of-life." They're no longer supported by

their manufacturer and replacement parts aren't available, meaning that any units the department sends in for service are deemed to be beyond repair. Not only that, but the current radios lack Bluetooth and LTE functionality, meaning they can't connect with other law enforcement tools like mapping systems or officer tracking capabilities, which Frank said

are now standard in most law enforcement communication equipment.

"Perhaps most critically, these outdated radios have limited signal range and fail to work in multiple areas of the city, creating dangerous communication dead zones," Frank admitted. "In these areas, officers cannot call for backup or coordinate during critical incidents, which puts both officers and the public at risk."

Modern radios now also include additional features like GPS tracking, enhanced range, LTE connectivity (a high-speed wireless communication) and improved officer safety features, which the department's current radios don't support.

"In today's law enforcement environment, radios are integrated with other critical technologies. The new radios will seamlessly connect with our existing body cameras and our upcoming

record management system and computer-aided dispatch software, allowing for a more efficient and safer workflow," Frank said.

Finally, Frank said that the city and the department have plans to continue to replace their outdated radios. Last fiscal year, they used unexpended funds to purchase three new radios, which was a significant step forward but still left many officers unequipped with modern tools they need. They will continue to work toward fully replacing their radios in a phased approach.

"We will continue to seek grant funding in combination with establishing a capital equipment replacement fund to ensure that we don't fall behind on technology again in the future. This will allow us to stay ahead of emerging communication needs and continue to prioritize officer and public safety," Frank concluded.

Local krewe and United Cajun Navy will unite for holiday toy drive

By Madison DeVito
news@srpressgazette.com

Patrick Fitzgerald and the Emerald Coast Krewe of Airship Pirates have been holding their annual toy drive now for six years.

The krewe itself, which Fitzgerald is a member of, is only 8 years old, having been started back in October of 2017. It was started with the mission of helping the community after an organization Fitzgerald was in fell short of doing the amount of community work that people wanted. So, members from the original group moved and started the Krewe of Airship Pirates. The Airship Pirates now serve the community in a number of differ-

ent ways, including getting involved in disaster relief for things like hurricanes, tornadoes, house fires and other issues.

"We've been kind of bored this year," Fitzgerald joked, mentioning that for the first time in a decade, no hurricanes made landfall in Florida this season. He did assure the Gazette, however, that the krewe is fully stocked and ready to go so that they can be first on scene in the event of an emergency.

Donating

Six years ago, the krewe partnered with A&R Custom Tinting in Gulf Breeze, who had been doing their own toy drive for years at that point. Fitzgerald said that since the

krewe has been there, the event has grown exponentially each year and that this year is going to be their biggest drive yet; they've had to switch locations from A&R Custom Tinting to the krewe's location on Avalon Boulevard after partnering with the United Cajun Navy. Not only will they be partnering with the Cajun Navy for the toy drive, they'll also be working with them for disaster relief.

Currently, the krewe has about 3,500 toys with the goal to reach 5,000 before the day of the toy drive. When it comes to Christmas, they typically adopt a few families so that underprivileged kids can have something under their trees on Christmas morning,

as well as buying the families dinner and the parents items that they can use, fostering four to five families a year. This year, the krewe will also be working with East Milton Elementary School to help children there, Fitzgerald said, because of the number of students at the school that are on free or reduced lunch plans or whose families can't afford to go crazy on Christmas.

"We're providing, I think, 75 bags of toys for the kids there," Fitzgerald said. Besides East Milton children and the families they adopt for Christmas, the organization will also be distributing toys to Northwest Florida Ronald McDonald House, Santa Rosa Kids House, Interfaith

Ministries, For the Children in Milton and other charitable organizations in need.

Festivities

Overall, Fitzgerald was thoroughly excited for the event and how it's coming together. The event will feature circus performers, free food and hot chocolate, and a winter wonderland area for kids. Not only that, but Lifeguard Ambulance, Avalon Fire Rescue and Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office will be participating, bringing an ambulance, a fire truck and the sheriff's office K9 unit, respectfully. Lifeguard will also be flying Santa Claus on their very own helicopter during the event so that the children in attendance can meet him.

"I just want people to come here and just have the joy and the Christmas spirit," Fitzgerald said proudly. "If people could come [to the event] and we could put smiles on their faces, I don't care if they bring a toy. If they do, it's great, but if not, they can just come and enjoy the day and see Santa."

"I just want [people] to have joy," he concluded.

The Krewe of Airship Pirates will be accepting donations of new, unwrapped toys, non-perishable foods, pet food and pet supplies at the event. It will take place on Dec. 14 at 4352 Avalon Blvd. in Milton from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will be the final day to drop off toys before the drive closes.

Get to know your community.

subscribe today
Santa Rosa Press Gazette
 850-623-2120
 or srpressgazette.com

Transform Your Bathroom and Change Your Life.

Premium Quality, Style, & Innovation

Professional Installation Included

Lifetime Warranty

Easy to Use

Made in Tennessee

Bubbles, Massage Jets, & More

FREE TOILET + \$1,500 OFF*

For your FREE information kit and our Senior Discounts, Call Today Toll-Free

1-855-709-2133

*Free toilet with purchase and installation of a walk-in tub or walk-in shower only. Offer available while supplies last. No cash value. Must present offer at time of purchase. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Market restrictions may apply. Offer available in select markets only. CSLB 1082165 NSCB 0082999 0083445 13VH11096000



For God's sake

By Rev. Michael Bannon
Compass Community Church

As I write, Thanksgiving Day is a week past, and the leftover turkey has been eaten up. We enjoyed meals of roast turkey with mashed potatoes, open-faced hot turkey sandwiches with gravy, many cold turkey sandwiches, and even pasta with turkey. We had turkey in one form or another every day for a week. It would have been a tedious experience, but we like turkey.

In Numbers 11, the newly freed people of Israel grumbled their dissatisfaction yet again to Moses over their daily fare – manna. “Oh, that we had meat to eat!” they lamented, “We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.” Their thankless eyes regarded their former life as slaves in Egypt as better than what the LORD had done for them. This angered Moses, but “the anger of the LORD blazed hotly.”

Moses had his own grumble-fest over the burden of leading these thankless, grumbling people. He groused to the LORD, “If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.” His thankless eyes regarded death as better than serving the LORD. The LORD's response was unexpected.

He told Moses to assemble the leaders of the people to hear His response to their grumbling about meat and a better life in Egypt. “You shall not eat just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before him, saying, ‘Why did we come out of Egypt?’”

Like a caterer whose banquet guest list had just doubled, Moses quailed at the prospect of providing meat for 600,000 people for every meal every day for a month. The LORD said, essentially, “I've got this.” He caused a wind to blow a one-yard-deep load of quail to the Israelite camp. “While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck down the people with a very great plague.”

The Israelites had cried out to God to deliver them from slavery in Egypt – He did. He promised them a rich land and to lead them to it. He provided daily food and water for their journey. They grumbled. He even gave them a glimpse at the promised richness of the land. In disbelief, they turned their hearts back to Egypt.

I cannot criticize. I am no different, grumbling discontent, at times missing my former life, while God's provision for my life in Christ is rich beyond measure. “Godliness with contentment is great gain,” the Scriptures advise. So, I pray, Lord, teach me contentment.

FAITH

Pine Terrace Baptist Church prepares for Christmas production



Members of Pine Terrace Baptist Church perform their 2024 production, *Savior for All*.

Photos submitted by Pine Terrace Baptist Church

By Madison DeVito
news@srpressgazette.com

Pine Terrace Baptist Church (PTBC) will be holding their Christmas production, “One Day,” on Dec. 13 and 14 and welcome people in to experience their church.

For One Day, PTBC runs their productions Broadway-style. There's singing, live music, a choir, soloists and a full cast of actors to tell the story of Jesus's birth, death and resurrection. This will be their second annual performance.

“This year's theme is ‘One Day,’ and the retelling of the story centers on the disciple John,” PTBC Worship Pastor David Hogg told the Gazette. “He

kind of opens the narration, and he is worshipping the Lord and reflecting on the things that he experienced with Jesus and the stories that he told and the scenes go all the way back to the Old Testament prophets and work through the promises of God about the coming of Jesus and his advent, and then culminate in his birth... That's kind of the telling of the story: John remembering the promises of God and that one day [the promises] would be fulfilled and they were, in the person and work of Jesus.”

Hogg, who has been with the church for nearly two and a half years, said those involved in the production work nearly all

year to prepare for it. In January or February, Hogg puts a team together to brainstorm ideas for the upcoming Christmas. The first thing the team does is get an outline going of what they want the performance to look like and start figuring out music. They usually come up with around five selections to use for the occasion, and later in the spring they'll start developing the script. Again, it begins as a rough outline of what they want the production to be before they start fleshing it out scene by scene and adding more song selections, too. The group is always looking for specific traits for specific characters. They'll work on that over the

summer, and when fall comes around, both the church and children's choir will work on the songs while the actors rehearse. From the time Thanksgiving is over to the time of the performance, the cast and crew are going through dress rehearsals to prepare.

The production isn't to put on a show, however. The church doesn't want the event just to be a performance. They want people to be able to use their gifts, whether that includes singing, acting or more technical work like audio visual or lighting. According to Hogg, not many churches do these types of shows anymore. He admitted that it takes time and resources to put the production on,

and while a couple of churches in town still do them, the shows are seen less and less. PTBC knows the program helps them reach out to their community, engage with them and provide opportunities for members of the church who serve there to use their gifts and talents to do things that honor the Lord.

“We want our church to be, you know, not just a place you attend, but to be part of your life and your service for the Lord,” Hogg explained. “Whether [that's] singing music here, going on a mission trip, whatever.”

Pine Terrace will hold their performances on Saturday, Dec. 13 and Sunday, Dec. 14. Both shows will begin at 6 p.m.

Be careful, reading
Santa Rosa Press Gazette
could make you become
aware.

subscribe today
Santa Rosa Press Gazette
850-623-2120 or srpressgazette.com

BIBLE TRIVIA

By Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Immanuel (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. Which Old Testament prophet said the most about the birth of Christ? Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah
3. From Matthew 1:18, when Mary be-

came pregnant, she and Joseph were ...? Married, Engaged, Just friends, Strangers

4. In Luke 2:8-11, how did the shepherds learn of Christ's birth? Magi informed, Joseph announcement, Mighty wind, Angel appearance

5. Where did the wise men go first when they arrived in the Holy Land? Nazareth, Jerusa-

lem, Bethlehem, Hebron

6. What does the Bible record as to when Jesus was born? Late September, Dec. 25, March 17, Does not

ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Isaiah, 3) Engaged, 4) Angel appearance, 5) Jerusalem, 6) Does not

(c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

SANTA ROSA
**HOME &
 GARDEN**

Stay safe and jolly this holiday



As merry and bright as the holiday season is, it can turn dark in an instant. Here are some tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission on staying safe and cheerful with holiday decor.

Lights

Use lights that have been tested for safety and are approved for use (indoor or outdoor) in the location in which you're using them. Check for broken or cracked

sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections. Fasten outdoor lights securely to firm supports and use no more than three standard-sized sets of lights per extension cord.

Trees

Many artificial trees are fire resistant, but it bears checking for a tag all the same. Real trees should be kept fresh. Check for freshness by making sure the tree is green and needles are hard to pull

away from branches. Needles should bend but not break and the trunk should be sticky with resin. Place any kind of tree away from fireplaces, heaters, radiators and other heat sources.

Candles

Never use lit candles on a tree or near other evergreens, real or fake. Use candles in non-flammable holders and keep them away from wrapping paper. Keep candles

where they cannot be knocked down or blown over and keep them out of the reach of children.

Trimnings

Use non-combustible or flame-resistant materials for artificial icicles or tinsel. Avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable and keep trimmings with small parts out of the reach of children. Decorations shouldn't look like candy or food.

Paper

Making paper decorations is an adorable past time, but make sure to choose materials that are flame-resistant. Don't place paper decorations near open flames or electrical connections. Remove wrapping paper from around the tree and fireplace as soon as presents are opened. Do not burn paper in the fireplace.

Fireplaces

Before lighting a fire, remove greens, boughs, paper decorations and anything flammable from the fireplace area. Make sure the flue is open and keep a screen in front of the fireplace while a fire is burning. Be careful with fire salts that produce colored flames when thrown on the fire. They can contain heavy metals that can cause gastrointestinal irritation or vomiting.

Working for you.  Every single day.™
 FPL



At FPL, we plan for storm season all year long. From strengthening poles to better withstand severe weather, to clearing lines for improved resiliency, you can count on us. Learn more at FPL.com/Storm.

**Showcase your business
 on this page!**
 Call for details
 Santa Rosa Press Gazette
 850-623-2120
srpressgazette.com

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

The VA year in review

Veterans who have a relative who gets medical care under CHAMPVA (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs) will be happy to know that the massive backlog of applications has been eliminated.

CHAMPVA covers the 900,000 veterans' dependents, survivors, caregivers and spouses who need care. Until recently there were over 70,000 applications that were stuck in a backlog, some taking 150 days to process.

That backlog no longer exists, even though 4,000 new applications are coming in per week. As of now, the process has been automated, which speeds things up. Appeals have seen similar success with a recent 20,000 appeals being reduced to 1,000.

Other things have been happening at the same time, per a VA news release:

The VA has set over a million appointments in the early morning, during evenings and on weekends to make it easier to get an appointment.

They're spending \$800 million to improve facilities.

This year they broke a previous record and processed 3,000,000 disability claims.

The VA hooked up with Medicare and Medicaid to pinpoint \$106 million in duplicate billing.

Permanent housing was found for over 51,000 homeless veterans.

The VA canceled the plan to install \$77 million worth of electric charging stations.

And in big dollar amounts, the VA has stepped up to deal with a potential \$272 million in medical bills that were caused when the previous administration halted the processing of co-payment claims for community care. The problem at the time was the PIT, the Program Integrity Tool, which was supposed to identify waste and fraud in community care billing. Instead, it was creating duplicate claims, overwriting claims and more. (The VA Office of Inspector General identified 18 defects in the program, which they estimated consisted of 40 million community care claims.)

As of last month, PIT is processing claims again.

(c) 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

MILITARY



Raptor launch

U.S. Air National Guard Photo by Senior Airman Halley Clark

An F-22 Raptor assigned to Joint Base Langley-Eustis takes off during exercise Checkered Flag 26-1 at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., Oct. 29, 2025. Checkered Flag and Weapons System Evaluation Program, two large-scale exercises running concurrently, brought together U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force, as the 122nd Fighter Wing validated its aircraft conversion by demonstrating full mission readiness and the ability to employ live munitions in joint combat training.

2025 accomplishments highlight recent town hall

Eglin Air Force Base Public Affairs

Thankfulness was the theme of the 96th Test Wing commander's town hall meetings at the Enlisted Heritage Hall Nov. 24.

Brig. Gen. Mark Massaro thanked people for mission commitment and for looking out for each other.

He touched on many 96th TW's 2025 mission accomplishments.

The 96th Maintenance Group's work with the 96th Range Group to reconfigure F-16 Fighting Falcons for the Viper Experimentation and Next-gen Operational Model, or VENOM, program to test autonomy software was highlighted.

"We're developing that capability for future applications for our warfighters," Massaro said.

MXG's work on the flying program resulted in more flying by the wing than ever before.

He also highlighted the Range Group's work on setting up instrumentation at sites along the Panhandle of Florida, north and south of Tampa, and the Florida Keys to capture data and monitor weapons testing.

The commander also spoke about autonomous surfboards, equipped with cameras to collect data for



U.S. Air Force Photo by Michelle Gigante

Brig. Gen. Mark Massaro, 96th Test Wing commander, speaks to his employees at a commander's call Nov. 25, 2025, at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

use in long range weapons testing. The 96th Cyberspace Test Group supported Long range testing by testing data control and command and control data links.

The CTG will stand up the Long-Range Weapons Kill Chain Combined Task Force, where multiple wings will work on the LRKC mission portfolio.

"[This portfolio] tests a variety of different command and control data links we need to put in place to be able to sense a target, shoot a target from very long distances, and communicate that information to see what's going on," Massaro said.

SEEK Eagle, MXG and the 96th Operations Group worked on the Fixed Wing,

Air Launched, Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems Ordnance, a low-cost, air-to-air counter-unmanned aerial weapons, ensuring it could be safely employed from the F-15E.

"FALCO was critical to our warfighters," the commander said. "We responded in a very short turn to get a combat capability out to [U.S. Central Command], and they were able to employ it successfully."

The 96th Medical Group provided services in a resource constrained environment while also undergoing a lot of organizational change.

Massaro talked about the 96th Civil Engineer Group's work, focusing on the base's taxiway. Eglin's runways and taxiways also

used by commercial aircraft showed heavy wear and tear.

"[CEG] repaved taxiway hotel at the beginning of the year, and we have a plan to completely rebuild it," the commander said. "[CEG] redesigned that taxiway and is going to be doing some work in the next year to reinforce it and make it more efficient."

The 96th Mission Support Group played a very large role in Massaro's base defense priority developing a background check system for customers accessing Eglin Test and Training Range and waterways for recreational activities. The MSG and OG are also working on the c-UAS mission, preparing the base's defense against aerial threats.

The 96th Force Support Squadron worked through childcare challenges due to the government shutdown, and the 96th Communications Squadron kept communications flowing with its existing infrastructure.

The commander admitted there was much more work done by various wing organizations to keep things moving forward that he didn't mention.

"You all have done this work in every way, shape or form," he acknowledged. "The successes we have in 2025 and will continue to do in 2026 is because of the people, our Airmen, capital A. Those that wear uniforms and those that wear collared shirts. It's all you, and I am happy and thankful to be part of this team."

Secretary of Air Force gives update on recent DAF efforts

Secretary of the Air Force
Public Affairs

In a memorandum to commanders, Secretary of the Air Force Troy E. Meink and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ken Wilsbach said: "The Air Force must be prepared to fly and fix so we can fight and win. We will maintain this posture through increased focus on readiness and modernization in a commander-focused service."

In March 2024, several initiatives were announced to prepare the Air Force for competition. Since that announcement, fluctuations in priorities, resources, and methods have led to significant changes in those efforts; these are listed below:

Implemented/Continuing

■ Large Scale Exercises: The Department Level Exercise (DLE) was executed over the summer of 2025 as the largest exercise in the Indo-Pacific since the Cold War. Continuous evaluation of this exercise series will ensure the required resource investment is leading to valuable readiness returns.

■ Warrant Officers: Since Dec. 6, 2024, the Air Force has graduated over 100 warrant officers. We will continue to recruit warrant officers to expand technical expertise in the cyber and information technology fields.

■ No/Limited Notice Inspections: Unit readiness will continue to be evaluated through honest evaluations of capabilities and areas in which to improve.

■ DAF Integrated Capabilities Office (SAF/IC): SAF/IC drives critical modernization recommendations, integrating air and space capabilities. The Department of the Air Force chief scientist will be incorporated into SAF/IC.

■ Office of Competitive Activities (SAF/OC): SAF/OC was established in November 2024. It will continue to lead the legacy DAF mission areas and several new competition-focused mission areas as directed by the Secretary of the Air Force.

■ Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) Integrated Development Office (IDO): The IDO provides increased speed to DAF warfighter capability

delivery by increasing focus, rigor and data to accompany early acquisition efforts.

■ Multi-Capable Airmen: Airmen will continue to receive training outside of their primary Air Force Specialty Code to ensure the flexibility required for distributed operations and agile combat employment.

■ Restructuring Spares Systems: A list of prioritized support was established for the FY26/7 Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBES) process.

■ Wing Units of Action (UoA): The USAF wing will remain the primary unit of action using an Air Expeditionary Wing 2.0 construct, where a single wing will source the majority of the command-and-control and base operating support with teamed augmentation from additional wings. In garrison, the wings will retain the group organizational construct, with group commanders, and will not transition to A-staffs. Our focus is to minimize change-fatigue to Airmen and enable commanders to concentrate on readiness, lethality, and mission ac-

complishment.

Terminated

■ Airman Develop Command (ADC): Air Education and Training Command (AETC) will remain the Air Force's training and development major command and will not become ADC.

■ Integrated Capabilities Command: This function is being integrated into Headquarters Air Force A5/7 with the appointment of a chief modernization officer by April 1, 2026.

■ Reorientation of Air Combat Command (ACC): ACC's mission remains to organize, train, and equip combat ready Airmen.

■ Service Component Commands: Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT) and Air Forces Northern Command (AFNORTH)/Air Forces Space (AFSPACE) will remain Numbered Air Forces (NAFs). Air Forces Southern Command (AFSOUTH) will remain the Air Component to United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), but 12AF will be re-established

as a NAF inside of ACC including the mission of organizing, training, and equipping Air Force Forces assigned to 12AF.

■ Combat Wings and Base Command Relationship: New Air Base Wings (ABW) will not be established. Current standing ABWs will remain.

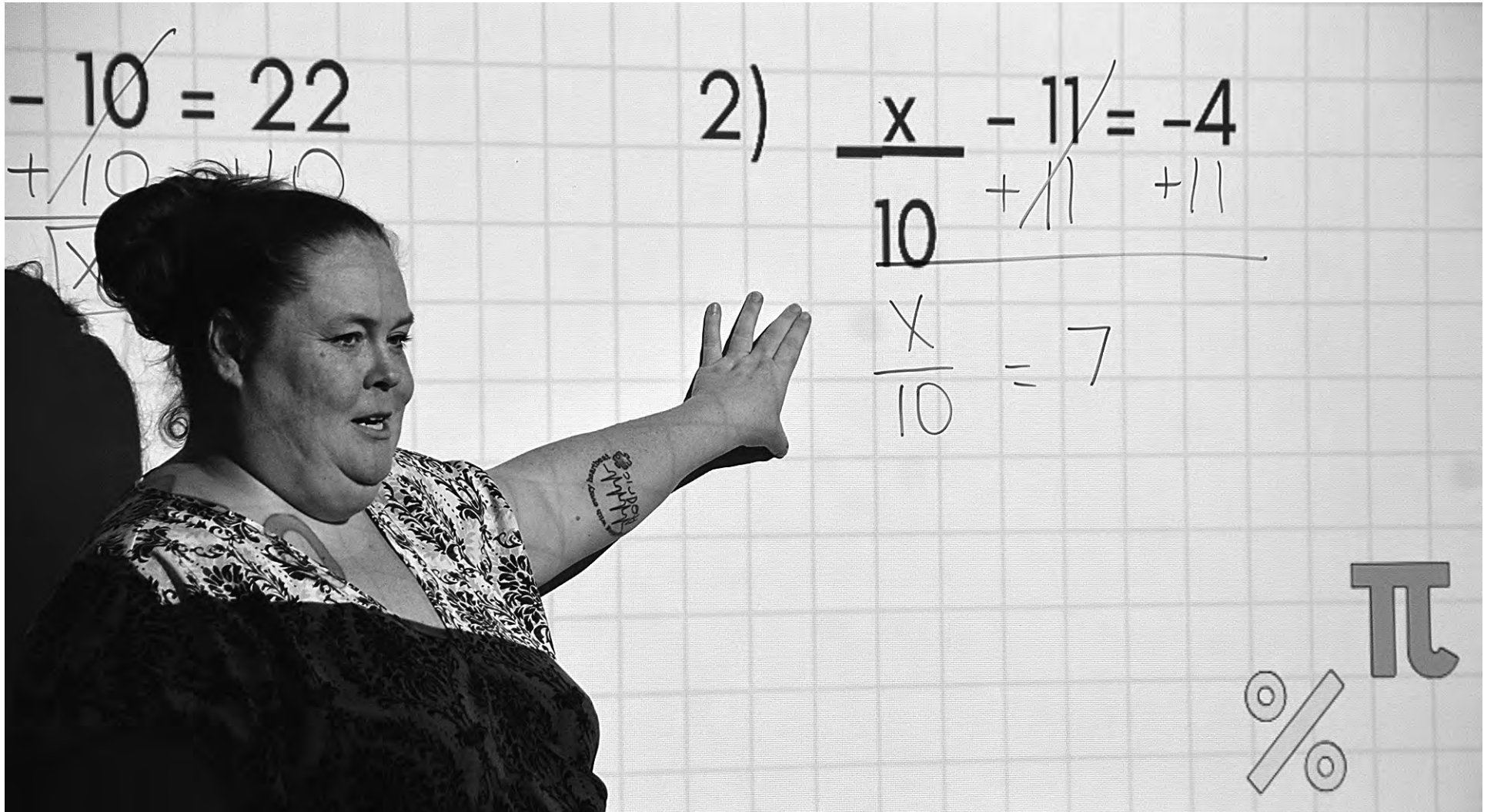
■ Program Assessment and Evaluation Office: This program will be integrated into the Office of Studies and Analysis (SAF/SA).

■ AFMC Information Dominance Systems Center, Air Force Nuclear Systems Center, and Air Dominance Systems Support Center: The creation of these centers has been terminated in favor of more effective sustainment and support approaches.

Meink and Wilsbach concluded the memo saying: "As our adversaries and the strategic environment continue to evolve, our approach to ensuring a credible and ready force must also adjust. Air superiority is not guaranteed. Through flexibility and clear-eyed assessment, our Air Force will continue to fly, fix, and fight now and into the future."

EDUCATION

Avalon Middle ESE teacher shows students their value, helps them grow



Photos by Madison DeVito

Audra Hughes walks students through an equation on the board.

By Madison DeVito
news@srpressgazette.com

Audra Hughes wanted to be an astronaut. She was four when she saw her first shooting star, and from that moment on, she wanted to go to space. Well into college, working on a degree in engineering physics, that was still her intention; she wanted to be an astronaut, to be the first person on Mars. A car accident put a stop to those plans—Hughes was in a wheelchair for six months and spent the year after that relearning how to walk.

Hughes then decided that she wanted to be an attorney and argue cases before the Supreme Court, but she didn't have the money to move to New Orleans and go to Loyola's law school. So, Hughes taught English in South Korea for a year to save money for school, but, before she knew it, she had fallen in love with teaching. Now, four years into being a teacher for Santa Rosa County District Schools and six years into teaching overall, Hughes has been nominated for the



Hughes is a double certified ESE teacher, as well as the ESE Department Chair and part of the Social Thinking Unit at Avalon Middle School.

district's Teacher of the Year award.

"There's something about having little two-year-olds that barely speak their own native language, let alone [that] some of them had never seen a foreigner before, and having them progress within a year to be able to have conversations and tell you about their weekends and their trips and things like that, it was very touching," Hughes said. "I was very much like, 'Okay, now I'm totally changing it,' and I became a teacher after that."

Profession

Currently, Hughes serves as a math and science teacher at Avalon Middle School in Pace, where she has self-contained unit classes. She teaches math and science to sixth, seventh and eighth graders in small groups, as well as unique skills and learning strategies. Most of her students, she explained, are on the autism spectrum, but not all. However, they all have some kind of social or emotional deficit that they need extra support with. Some of them have sensory issues, where they may be uncomfortable when there is too

much or not enough noise, making traditional general education classes difficult for them.

"A gen ed classroom, with so many kids, so many noises, so many smells, [can be difficult for them]," Hughes explained. "Throughout the day and throughout [the students'] careers here at Avalon, we start introducing them and preparing them for regular gen ed inclusion classes. So, by the time they reach eighth grade, they might have one or two classes with us, and the rest of the time they're with their non-disabled peers in regular inclusion classes."

Similar to how Hughes didn't always want to be a teacher, she also didn't always teach ESE students. Her first year teaching, she taught science, civics and world history and her second year she taught only eighth grade science. Hughes was a dual certified ESE and science teacher. She had a student pushing into her class from the social thinking unit, which at the time she didn't know existed. Hughes thought the disabled student being in her class was cool. As the mother of a child with a disability, she said, she's very big on inclusion.

"My kid is just, you know, not like everyone else," she began, "but he deserves all of the opportunities that everybody else does, and so seeing that kid able to flourish in my classroom, and also show other students that it's okay to be a little different, it's okay to have an obsession and want to talk about it... Seeing that, I wanted to be a part of that."

The next year, the self-containment position opened up, Hughes had all of the certifications for it and took the

job. She's been teaching in that type of unit for three years now.

Passion and purpose

Hughes' favorite part about being a teacher is being part of a student's story and part of their growth. So many times, when she sees children, they're discouraged. They don't think they can do whatever task they're trying to complete, big or small. Hughes is able to show those students that they can do it, that regardless of what they're going through, they have value, and one bad day isn't going to break them.

Nomination

Hughes got teary-eyed when the Gazette asked about her reaction to being nominated for Teacher of the Year.

"Having peers look to you for that [award] is really an honor," Hughes said, her voice thick with emotion as she apologized for just that. "To have that recognition that [peers] see and [they] appreciate what you're doing and you're doing a good job... So, to have that, especially from peers, is really meaningful."

Chick-fil-A THE RIDGE Presents **PHS Student of the Week**

Madison Miller

Age: 17
Class: Class of 2026
Parents: J.R. and Katie Miller

Favorites
School subject: Science
Extracurricular activity: golf and javelin
Hobbies: going to the beach and spending time in the sun and gardening
Car: Corvette
Store: Pacsun
Musical Artist: The Marías
Movie:
TV show: "Grey's Anatomy"

Fast Facts
Cafeteria food must-have: Cookies
Last book read that wasn't required: "An Abundance of Catherine's"
Pet peeve: Slow drivers and slow walkers
Person most admired: My cousin Haley Cobb
Person I'd like to meet: Taylor Swift
First job: Most likely will be a CNA in the area
Top accomplishment: getting my associates degree at graduation

Future
After-graduation plans: getting a masters in nursing at the University of South Alabama
Career goal: Nurse Practitioner specializing in neonatal care or dermatology

Eat Mor Chikin • 5023 Highway 90 • (850) 995-9456

Chick-fil-A THE RIDGE Presents **MHS Student of the Week**

Kacie Maliner

Age: 17
Class: Class of 2026
Parents: Shelley Straley Gehringer & Robert Maliner

Favorites
School subject: English
Extracurricular activity: BETA
Hobbies: Crochet, Reading, Tennis
Car: Red Jeep Wrangler
Store: Target
Movie: "Jumanji"
TV Show: "Supernatural"

Fast Facts
Cafeteria food must have: Ice cream
Last book read that wasn't required: "Pride & Prejudice"
Pet peeve: People being lazy
Person most admired: Myself
Person I'd like to meet: Matthew McConaughey
First job: Sous chef
Top accomplishment: BETA club president

Future
After graduation plans: Going to college
Career goal: FBI

Eat Mor Chikin • 5023 Highway 90 • (850) 995-9456

SANTA ROSA'S
PRESS GAZETTE

Volume 4 • Issue 50

Santa Rosa Press Gazette is published weekly. Santa Rosa Press Gazette and its entire contents and style are fully protected by copyright and registered according to copyright laws. Santa Rosa Press Gazette cannot be reproduced in any form for any purpose without the expressed written permission of Santa Rosa Press Gazette.



To Contact Us:

Santa Rosa Press Gazette
5842 Commerce Rd. Suite D
Milton, FL 32570
Phone: (850) 623-2120
Web: srpressgazette.com
Email: news@srpressgazette.com

Editor/Publisher
Gail Acosta

gail@sandpaperpublishing.com

Business Development
Sandi Kemp

sandi@srpressgazette.com

Production Manager
Dickie WilliamsSports Editor
Brian Lester

sports@srpressgazette.com

Reporters

Hansen Hasenberg
news@srpressgazette.com

Madison DeVito

news@srpressgazette.com

Bookkeeper

accounts@srpressgazette.com

Circulation

Jessie Morgan
info@srpressgazette.com

EDITORIAL

In Our Opinion

Our youth need direction and healthy relationships, not detachment

The murder of 14-year-old Danika Troy should shake Santa Rosa County — and our country — to its core.

According to the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's department, Troy was shot multiple times, her body burned with gasoline and abandoned in a wooded area off Kimberly Road. Two juveniles, ages 16 and 14, now stand accused of first-degree premeditated murder. All three were classmates at a specialized school serving students with academic, emotional and behavioral needs.

This was not an impulsive scuffle or an accident. It was deliberate, brutal and deeply disturbing. While the courts will decide punishment, the broader community must wrestle with a more uncomfortable truth: we are failing our children long before violence reaches this level.

This is a crisis hiding in plain sight

Youth mental health in America is in sharp decline, and the warnings have been clear for years. Depression, anxiety and emotional dysregulation among teenagers have surged to unprecedented levels. The U.S. Surgeon General has labeled youth mental health a national public-health emergency — not a trend, but a crisis.

What could be the cause of the deterioration of our youth's mental health?

Screens are not harmless distractions

At the same time youth mental health has worsened, childhood itself has been fundamentally reshaped. Screens — video games, smartphones, social media — now dominate free time that was once filled by play, social interaction and creative problem-solving.

Research increasingly links excessive screen use to higher rates of depression, anxiety, attention problems and conduct disorders in children and adolescents. Studies show that youth who spend four or more hours per day on screens are significantly more likely to struggle with emotional regulation and aggressive behavior.

When boredom, frustration or conflict arise, many children today lack the tools to process them offline. Instead, they retreat — or explode.

Youth religious participation has declined sharply

Multiple long-term national surveys document a

steep drop in religious engagement among adolescents:

■ The share of U.S. teens attending religious services weekly has fallen dramatically since the early 2000s.

■ Teenagers identifying as religiously unaffiliated ("nones") has risen rapidly, now representing about one-third to nearly half of Gen Z, depending on the survey.

Sources: Pew Research Center; General Social Survey

This decline parallels drops in:

- Adult supervision outside the home
- Intergenerational relationships
- Structured moral instruction
- Community-based accountability

Cultural pessimism about the future

Many young people are told on social media and possibly by people in their lives that,

- The world is broken
- The future is bleak
- They are victims of forces beyond their control

This mindset fuels hopelessness instead of empowerment.

Acting out can turn lethal

Mental distress does not always present quietly. For some young people, it manifests as anger, defiance and aggression. National data shows an increase in youth violence in recent years, including a sharp rise in firearm-related deaths and injuries among children and teens.

In this case, investigators say one suspect stole a handgun from his mother.

Access to weapons combined with emotional instability, poor impulse control and unresolved conflict is a formula for catastrophe.

A we cannot postpone making changes

Danika Troy's death must force a real examination of what went wrong and what will continue to go wrong if the community doesn't address the needs of our community's youth.

Accountability matters — but prevention matters more

When children with emotional and behavioral challenges commit acts of extreme violence, it signals a failure that reaches far beyond the individual. It reflects missed warning signs, weakened support systems and a culture increasingly comfortable with detachment.

Schools cannot replace parents, devices cannot replace supervision, and children need boundaries and a moral code found in the Bible. Therapy and discipline cannot be chosen only after a crisis erupts. Young people need consistency, boundaries, purpose and real human relationships long before tragedy strikes.

A moment we cannot afford to ignore

Danika Troy's death must mark more than another headline. It must force an honest examination of how we are raising children — and what we are no longer willing to provide. We cannot continue pretending unlimited screen exposure is harmless, or that spiritual, moral and community anchors are optional. We cannot wait until mental distress becomes criminal to take it seriously.

Our youth do not need isolation, distraction or lowered expectations. They need guidance, accountability and connection.

Anything less is a risk we should no longer be willing to take.

Out and About

By Sandi Kemp



We were sad that Christmas was basically canceled in our area this past weekend due to the weather. I almost wanted to post the Bad News is: Jingle Bell Run, Christmas Parade, Christmas in the Park — All canceled. Good News is: Christmas will be celebrated Dec. 25. Thankfully, Crestview was able to move their parade to Sunday evening.

Speaking of Christmas, Emerald Waterfront is now taking orders for take home family Christmas feasts. Please see the ad in this issue for more details. And there is still time to have an impromptu holiday party at Emerald Waterfront. There are also special nights including "Date Night" on Tuesdays with a special menu.

And it is almost time for the New Year's Day Plunges. Apparently, there are three in Navarre, but we have only received information on two of them. The original plunge, the Penguin Plunge is at Juana's Pagodas and benefits a very worthy cause, the Kiln Walk.

I recently gave my husband a birthday card and as I was writing in the blank card, I thought to myself that I was very brave to buy a blank card and not have some stranger or AI try to express the sentiments that I had for my husband on his birthday. I expressed the same to him when I handed it to him. He said it is pretty sad that we now have to question everything as to whether or not it is AI. Logically, I decided to ask AI about the future of AI detection. Question: "How are we going to be able to tell in the future if something is produced by artificial intelligence or humans?" ChatGPT said: Short answer: **it's going to get harder.**

There you go, I just interviewed AI and I got the answer straight out of the proverbial horse's mouth. My son-in-law, Jon, and I almost got kicked out of church Sunday. I was laughing so hard that I was crying. My almost 3-year-old granddaughter looks a lot like I did at her age and is as sassy as I am sure I was. In fact, her parents have said they feel like they are raising a mini-me. She even sticks her stickers all over the toilet like I did, and bursts out laughing for no apparent reason except to hear herself laugh. I used to have people walk up to me at my youth group and ask me to laugh by silly laugh. And, best of all — she l-o-v-e-s books and anything printed. She wants to read you about three books before bed and picks the longest books. Just when you think you are done, she says, "one more — The Bible." She knows we won't turn her down when she asks to read the Bible. We told her that her uncle can't read — the uncle that has a master's degree in electrical engineering. When we get together, she sits down with him to teach him how to read — even though she is just remembering what we read to her because she isn't quite reading the words yet. She looks at her uncle with

such pity because he "can't read." So back to church... she was trying to be quiet during the sermon and was asking us to draw various pictures on a piece of paper that she was passing around. She got to me and she leaned over and whispered, "draw Ho Ho." I drew a quick bearded man with a hat, and she picked it up off my lap and examined it carefully and handed it back to me, and whispered, "try again." Jon thought that was hilarious but not for the reasons I was thinking it was hilarious. We both started giggling uncontrollably, but as quietly as possible. I had tears running down my face. He later said, "I don't know why you were laughing but I thought it was hilarious to see Sandi being schooled by little Sandi."

and she leaned over and whispered, "draw Ho Ho." I drew a quick bearded man with a hat, and she picked it up off my lap and examined it carefully and handed it back to me, and whispered, "try again." Jon thought that was hilarious but not for the reasons I was thinking it was hilarious. We both started giggling uncontrollably, but as quietly as possible. I had tears running down my face. He later said, "I don't know why you were laughing but I thought it was hilarious to see Sandi being schooled by little Sandi."

She got to me and she leaned over and whispered, "draw Ho Ho." I drew a quick bearded man with a hat, and she picked it up off my lap and examined it carefully and handed it back to me, and whispered, "try again." Jon thought that was hilarious but not for the reasons I was thinking it was hilarious. We both started giggling uncontrollably, but as quietly as possible. I had tears running down my face. He later said, "I don't know why you were laughing but I thought it was hilarious to see Sandi being schooled by little Sandi."

Quote of the week: "Here is what discipline actually is: It's choosing your future self over your current comfort. Every time. The workout you don't want to do. The expense you don't want to skip. The habit you don't want to maintain. Discipline is just self-love with delayed gratification." Scott D. Clary (1991-) Canadian entrepreneur, business executive, author, educator, speaker and podcaster.

By the Numbers: Youth Mental Health and Behavior

■ 1 in 5 U.S. children experience a mental, emotional or behavioral disorder each year.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

■ 1 in 6 adolescents worldwide experiences a diagnosable mental health condition.

Source: World Health Organization

■ Teen persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness have increased significantly since 2010.

Source: CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey

■ Youth engaging in 4+ hours of daily screen time show higher rates of depression, anxiety and conduct problems. Source: National Institutes of Health; peer-reviewed longitudinal studies

■ Firearms are the leading cause of death and homicide is the third highest cause of death for 10-24 year olds among U.S. children and adolescents. Source: Kaiser Family Foundation; CDC

■ Youth suicide attempts and ER visits for psychiatric distress have risen dramatically in the past decade.

Source: CDC; U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory

New Data Shows Steady Drop in Religious Attendance, Especially Among Youth

■ Nearly 1 in 4 U.S. teenagers say they never attend religious services, even though a majority still identify as Christian. Pew Research Center

■ Less than two-thirds of adults today report having had a childhood marked by regular religious service attendance — a significant decline compared to earlier generations. Pew Research Center

■ Among all U.S. adults, fewer than one-third now report weekly or near-weekly church attendance. Gallup.com

■ The share of children under 12 present in regular worship services is shrinking: just 13.8% of regular participants are under age 12 (as of 2020). convergence.org

■ Over decades, weekly attendance among young adults has dropped sharply: from 26% in 1975 to about 15% by 2022. The Heritage Foundation

Subscriptions:

Available at \$48 for 52 weeks or for \$38 for 26 weeks. The publisher reserves the right to change subscription rates during the term of subscription. Notice of a rate change may be by mail to the subscriber, by notice in the newspaper, or by other means. Subscription rate changes may be implemented by changing the duration of the subscription. There are NO refunds.

Deadlines:

For inclusion in any Thursday edition, stories and ad reservations are due at 5 p.m. on the previous Friday. Press releases and story submissions are welcome and encouraged, but will be printed on a space available basis, subject to editor approval.

Tell us what you think!

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor is your chance to write to us and tell us what you think. Letters should not exceed 350 words and must include your full name, mailing address, and phone number. Letters may be edited. Send letters to editor@srpressgazette.com.

Fine Print

Santa Rosa Press Gazette

Volume 4 • Issue 50

Santa Rosa Press Gazette is published weekly. Santa Rosa Press Gazette and its entire contents and style are fully protected by copyright and registered according to copyright laws. Santa Rosa Press Gazette cannot be reproduced in any form for any purpose without the expressed written permission of the Santa Rosa Press Gazette.

Advertising

Santa Rosa Press Gazette reserves the right to reject or revise any copy which it considers not in the public interest, either because said copy is not in keeping with usual newspaper advertising acceptability standards or for any other reason deemed material by the publisher. Advertising set to resemble news matter must carry the word "Advertisement" at the top of the advertisement. Newspaper news department type cannot be used in reader ads.

Mission Statement

Our newspaper's only license to publish is the freedom of the press clause in the Constitution. Santa Rosa Press Gazette is pledged to an aggressive, responsible and fair pursuit of the truth without fear of any special interest and with favor to none. It is our social responsibility to listen to the voiceless, avoid any and all acts of arrogance, and to face the public politely and candidly.

Santa Rosa Press Gazette is published weekly for \$48 per year, 5842 Commerce St. Unit D, Milton, FL 32570
Sorry, no refunds on subscriptions.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
SANTA ROSA PRESS GAZETTE,
5842 Commerce St. Unit D, Milton, FL 32570

Disclaimers

Correspondence and editorial submissions from our readers are welcome. Submitted articles shall become copyrighted by Santa Rosa Press Gazette, either in written or electronic format. Santa Rosa Press Gazette reserves the right to edit or reject all editorial or advertising material submitted. Santa Rosa Press Gazette will not be held responsible for the return of any unsolicited materials.

Though we take great measures to prevent mistakes, neither the advertiser nor the publisher is responsible or liable for misinformation, misprints, typographical errors, etc. herein contained. Publication of advertising contained herein does not necessarily constitute endorsement. Signed columns or letters to the Editor are the opinions of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Publisher.



Caroline

EYE ON GOVERNMENT

STATE NEWS

Drag show law to get another look

By Jim Saunders
News Service of Florida

A full federal appeals court will take up a battle about a 2023 Florida law designed to prevent children from going to drag shows, after two rulings blocked the law on First Amendment grounds.



Uthmeier

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Monday said it will hold a full-court, or "en banc," hearing in the state's appeal of a preliminary injunction issued in 2023 by U.S. District Judge Gregory Presnell. The order also vacated a May decision by a panel of the Atlanta-based appeals court that upheld the injunction.

Monday's order did not explain the court's reasoning. But it went along with a request by Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier, who in June sought a rehearing.

The Central Florida venue Hamburger Mary's challenged the constitutionality of the law, which seeks to prevent venues from admitting children to adult live performances. It defines adult live performances as "any



The full 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will take up a case about a 2023 Florida law aimed at preventing children from attending drag shows.

show, exhibition, or other presentation that is performed in front of a live audience, which, in whole or in part, depicts or simulates nudity, sexual conduct, sexual excitement or specific sexual activities, ... lewd conduct, or the lewd exposure of prosthetic or imitation genitals or breasts."

It would allow regulators to suspend or revoke licenses of restaurants, bars and other venues that violate the law. Also, it would prohibit local governments from issuing public permits for events that

could expose children to the targeted behavior.

While the law did not specifically mention drag shows, it came after Gov. Ron DeSantis' administration cracked down on venues in South Florida and Central Florida where children attended drag shows. It also came amid a series of controversial laws passed by Republicans in Florida and other states about transgender-related issues.

In upholding the preliminary injunction issued by Presnell,

a panel of the appeals court, in a 2-1 decision on May 13, said that "by providing only vague guidance as to which performances it prohibits, the act (the law) wields a shotgun when the First Amendment allows a scalpel at most."

"The Constitution demands specificity when the state restricts speech," said the 81-page majority opinion, written by Judge Robin Rosenbaum and joined by Judge Nancy Abudu. "Requiring clarity in speech regulations shields us from the

whims of government censors. And the need for clarity is especially strong when the government takes the legally potent step of labeling speech 'obscene.' An 'I know it when I see it' test would unconstitutionally empower those who would limit speech to arbitrarily enforce the law. But the First Amendment empowers speakers instead. Yet Florida's Senate Bill 1438 (the law) takes an 'I know it when I see it' approach to regulating expression."

Judge Gerald Tjoflat dissented.

The panel's majority opinion focused, in part, on the use of the words "lewd conduct" in the law. It said the term is overbroad.

But in a June 3 petition for a rehearing, lawyers in Uthmeier's office contended that the majority's "First Amendment analysis makes it nearly impossible for a state to regulate the exposure of children to age-inappropriate performances."

"(Lewd) conduct' draws on the well-settled meaning of 'lewd' in Florida law, defined by the state's highest court to include the 'indulgence of lust, signifying that form of immorality which has a relation to sexual impurity' and 'indicat[ing] gross indecency with respect to the sexual relations.'" the petition said, partially quoting from a Florida Supreme Court decision. "Florida judges and juries have successfully applied the term for decades. And the (U.S.) Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld use of 'lewd,' without further definition, in federal obscenity statutes."

Monday's order and a court docket did not indicate when the full court might hear the case.

By Florida News Service

Gun age bill teed up in House

The Florida House could be ready after the 2026 legislative session starts in January to take up a bill that would lower the minimum age from 21 to 18 to buy rifles and other long guns. The House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday voted 13-7 to approve the bill, which would undo a 2018 law that increased the minimum age to 21. The law passed after the February 2018 mass shooting at Parkland Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that killed 17 people. The Judiciary Committee was the final panel scheduled to hear the bill (HB 133), meaning the proposal is positioned to go to the full House during the upcoming session. The House has passed similar measures in recent years, but the Senate has not gone along. The Republican-controlled committee's vote Tuesday was nearly along party lines, with Rep. Hillary Cassel, R-Dania Beach, crossing party lines to oppose the bill. Supporters of the bill, which is sponsored

by Majority Leader Tyler Sirois, R-Merritt Island, said it would protect Second Amendment rights for people under age 21. "In my view, this is the correct public policy to pursue, to restore the rights of law-abiding 18-year-olds," Sirois said. But opponents argued the increased minimum age was a crucial part of trying to bolster gun safety after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting. "There is no right that is absolute in the Constitution," Rep. Mike Gottlieb, D-Davie, said. "We, as lawmakers, make laws that benefit the health, safety and welfare of the public. That is why we have this rule in effect after Parkland." The National Rifle Association has challenged the constitutionality of the law. A federal district judge and the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the law. The NRA has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to take up the issue.

'Rural Renaissance' on Senate fast track

The Senate Appropriations Committee next week is scheduled to take

up Senate President Ben Albritton's priority "rural renaissance" bill, possibly setting the stage for it to go before the full Senate after the 2026 legislative session starts in January. The bill (SB 250), which is aimed at boosting such things as health care, education, transportation and economic development in rural areas, has only been assigned to the Appropriations Committee. If the panel passes it Dec. 10, the measure would be ready for the full Senate. The Senate backed a similar measure during the 2025 session. But the package got broken up in the House and did not pass. The bill for the 2026 session, sponsored by Sen. Corey Simon, R-Tallahassee, for example, would provide \$25 million for a new program aimed at helping physicians, physician assistants and advanced practice registered nurses set up practices in rural communities, according to a Senate summary of the bill. As another health-care example, the bill would increase Medicaid reimbursement pay-

ments for what are known as "critical access" hospitals in rural areas. As examples on other topics, the bill would create a program to provide student-loan payment assistance for educators in rural areas; increase money to help rural counties resurface and rebuild roads; and create an Office of Rural Prosperity at the Florida Department of Commerce, according to the summary. Simon represents a sprawling, largely rural North Florida district.

Citizens policy count dips

After a huge drop the previous week, the number of policies at the state's Citizens Property Insurance Corp. decreased slightly last week. Citizens had 437,097 policies Friday, down from 439,079 a week earlier, according to data posted on its website. Citizens had 567,650 policies in mid-November, but the number plummeted because of what is known as a "depopulation" program aimed at moving policies into the private market. Citizens

is at its lowest total since October 2019, when it had 419,475 policies. Officials have estimated Citizens will have fewer than 400,000 policies by the end of the year. Citizens was created as an insurer of last resort but, starting in 2020 and 2021, saw explosive growth as private insurers shed customers and raised rates amid financial problems. Citizens peaked at about 1.4 million policies in September 2023. But with legislative changes to shield insurers from lawsuits and the depopulation program, the policy count has steadily decreased over the past two years. State leaders and Citizens officials have long sought to reduce the size of Citizens, at least in part because of financial risks if Florida gets hit with a major hurricane or multiple hurricanes.

Bores tapped for FPL president

Scott Bores, who most recently has served as vice president of finance at Florida Power & Light, has been promoted to president of the utility,



Bores

NextEra Energy, FPL's parent company, announced Monday. Armando Pimentel, who has served as president and chief executive officer, will remain as CEO. In a prepared statement, John Ketchum, chairman, president and CEO of NextEra Energy, said Pimentel "has no immediate plans to retire" and is expected to continue as chief executive through at least 2026. Bores joined the utility in 2011. Monday's announcement came after the Florida Public Service Commission last month approved a FPL base-rate settlement that will take effect in January and last four years. "Scott's customer-first mindset, knowledge of the business, financial expertise and leadership throughout the rate case make him particularly well qualified for this new position reporting to Armando," Ketchum said. Pimentel was named president and CEO in January 2023.

JANUARY 1, 2026

1TH Juana's Penguin Plunge 'n Paddle



FREEZIN FOR A REASON

LONG SLEEVE DRI-FIT SHIRT | SUP ADVENTURE COURSE
RAFFLE | LIVE MUSIC | FOOD | DRAFT BEER



FREEZIN FOR A REASON!
PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE GULF COAST KILN WALK



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 9AM-NOON: Final registration & packet pick up in the Club
- 10AM-NOON: Bloody Mary Bar
- 11AM-3PM: Live Music with BT Turner
- 12:30PM: Paddleboard Adventure Course
- 1:30PM: Plunge
- 2-4PM: Party with food & drink
- 3:30PM: Raffle



SCAN TO REGISTER

Late: Dec. 1-30: \$35, \$45 SUP
 Day of: \$40, SUP \$50
 Raffle Tickets in Advance:
 5 for \$20

2026 SPONSORS



MIKE AND WANDA VEAL



JUANASPAGODAS.COM

Pace standout Grant Wise signs with Clemson Tigers

SPORTS

Wise choice!



Grant Wise poses with his family for a photo on his signing day. Wise signed with the Clemson Tigers.

By Brian Lester
sports@srpressgazette.com



On the morning of his signing day, Pace offensive lineman Grant Wise was in a familiar place, working hard in the weight room.

It highlights his work ethic, something that has helped put him in a position to be one of the nation's best football players.

"His work ethic is unreal," Pace head coach Vance Smith said. "He lifted this morning like it was his last lift ever. It's the way he approaches every day."

Wise acknowledges hard work has been key for him and saw all of his work, be it on the field or in the weight room, lead to signing his name to a national letter of intent with Clemson last Wednesday afternoon in the high school's media center.

"It's a great opportunity. All glory to God. He gave me the opportunity. I can't wait to get up there and work hard," Wise said.

Wise has been committed to Clemson since the spring after a whirlwind recruiting process over the last couple of years that started slow and quickly picked up steam.

The four-star recruit had more than 30 offers, including from Alabama, Michigan, Florida, Miami and Georgia Tech.

"The last few years have been crazy. I've been flying all over the country visiting schools," Wise said. "The biggest thing about Clemson was the coaches and the players I met there. You want to find the right people to do life with for the next four years, and Clemson felt like that place."

Schools in the mix for Wise did take a stab at getting Wise to flip his commitment but he stayed loyal to the Tigers.

"Teams came after me, but I stayed with Clemson. I believe in the program," Wise said.

Wise has been a dominant force at Pace, starting 45 consecutive games and never allowing a sack.

He was an integral part of the Patriots' success, especially the last



Photos by Brian Lester

Grant Wise has played a key role in the Pace Patriots' success on the football field over the course of his career.

two years when they won 20 games, back-to-back district titles and made two straight appearances in the Sweet 16 of the playoffs.

He's also a state champion weight lifter, winning titles in Olympic and traditional as a junior.

His dad, Ty Wise, who coaches on the defensive side of the ball at Pace and is a former Miami Hurricane standout, talked about what helped put his son in the position that he is in today.

"He's fundamentally sound and a detail oriented player. That's really helps set him apart," Wise said. "He's not just a guy going through the motions. He's a student of the game."

Smith calls Wise the best to ever play at Pace, and that's saying a lot considering the program's history.

"He's the best football player to ever play here in my opinion," Smith said. "And we have had a lot of great players come through. The way he has represented us, you couldn't ask for a better person. His future is bright."

Wise plans to enroll early at Clemson and is thankful for his time with the Patriots.

"Pace is a special place," Wise said. "The fans make it amazing and we have the best coaching staff. Playing football with my brothers has been a great opportunity for me."

With college football ahead, Wise is excited about the opportunities in front of him and it's a safe bet you'll find him in a weight room somewhere getting work in as he gets ready for the next level.

"I'll continue to work and do what I do," Wise said. "I know college football is going to be different and hard, but I have to remember to keep working, keep my head down and keep grinding."



RELIVE THE MOMENT
CHECK OUT THE LATEST SPORTS GALLERIES!

PressGazette

Scan the QR code or visit
yourcommunityphotos.com





Brian Out Loud!

By Brian Lester

sports@srpressgazette.com

I wasn't sure what to think of the Florida Invitational Tournament when it first became a reality last year.

It's basically the high school football version of the NIT for those looking for the best way to describe it.

It started out as just being for the Rural classification. It's now for every class.

Yes, it's still football. And yes, a championship is at stake. But the tournament doesn't involve the top teams in Florida.

And the tournament still has its issues. For starters, there were teams that were supposed to play in the FIT this year but opted out during the tournament because they didn't want to spend the money on travel.

Look, I get the expense factor. Travel isn't cheap in high school athletics, especially when all the money comes out of the team's own pocket.

But you know going into a tournament that travel is a potential part of the equation based on where you are seeded. It doesn't sneak up on you.

Because four teams did not play in it in the end, leaving a total of eight participants instead of 12, top seed Fort White got a pass to the championship game and played in just one game in the tourney.

We can't have that moving forward. If we are going to have the FIT be a legit thing, than it needs to operate like a real postseason event.

On the flip side, the FIT has its positives.

It gives teams that didn't make the cut for the actual FHSAA playoffs a chance to play another game or two.

For a program like Central, which is in just its second year of varsity ball, those extra practice reps are invaluable.

Led by head coach Joe Surratt, once an assistant coach at Navarre, the Jaguars won a game in the tourney before being eliminated by Port St. Joe in the second round.

The extra two games can't be replicated anywhere else. It gives a team like Central and others a taste of the post-season and what it takes to be successful in it.

Now, is the FIT a way for the FHSAA to make a little extra money because it is putting on an extra tournament? Of course it is. But we all know money talks.

I don't know if the FIT will stick around beyond this season. Maybe it does. Like I said, there are some issues that need to be resolved.

What I do know is the FIT has the potential to be a great thing moving forward. It gives teams extra opportunities to play football and that's not a bad thing in the end.



Lawrence dives into success at state

By Brian Lester
sports@srpressgazette.com

Donovan Lawrence was confident going into the FHSAA 3A state swimming and diving meet last month in Ocala.

That confidence shined through in his performance as the Pace standout finished as a runner-up.

"Getting second (at state) is a really big accomplishment," Lawrence said.

No doubt about it. It was rewarding feeling for him to see the time he poured into the sport pay off.

"It's a pretty good feeling. All my hard work, I feel like it definitely paid off," Lawrence said.

Lawrence said keeping it simple – well, as simple as you can keep it in diving – was key to his success at state.

"There's a lot of strategy involved," Lawrence said. "Some divers try to do a lot of hard dives, but I focus on what I do best. I got second throwing some relatively easy dives, as some would say. I stuck with the dives I am good at."

This was Lawrence's third consecutive trip to state and it marked the second time

he has placed in the top 10 as he finished eighth his freshman year.

He won a third district championship in a row this year and was a regional champ for the first time.

He started competing in diving while still in middle school and has made big strides in the sport.

He puts in a lot of work. He practices a couple of days a week at UWF and also practices two days in Mobile.

"You have to keep working at it if you have high hopes in the sport," Lawrence said. "It takes a lot of time to get everything down."

Focus is also essential. "A lot of it is mental," Lawrence said. "Staying focused in practice and during meets is important."

Lawrence hopes to dive in college and is all in with being ready for his senior season in 2026.

"I hope to win state. I'm really going to lock in this year to be ready," Lawrence said.



Submitted Photos
Pace's Donovan Lawrence finished as a state runner-up in diving this season. Lawrence competed at state for a third consecutive year and finished in the top 10 for the second time.

TEAM BRUCE BAKER, MBA RE/MAX INFINITY Presents **MHS Athlete of the Week**



Loghan Goodwin

Sports: Basketball

Class: 2027

Parents: Alberta Goodwin and Kenneth Morris

Plans after graduation: Go to nursing school and play college basketball

Favorite activity outside of sports: Spending time with my family

Favorite TV Show: Any reality TV show

Favorite Movie: "White Chicks"

Favorite Store: T.J. Maxx

What is the best part about being an athlete? The community it brings around you and the relationships you build

Favorite Sports Memory: Beating Crestview to go to the district championship

What is your biggest strength as an athlete? Ability to be coachable

If you could be a pro athlete for a day, who would you be? Serena Williams



Loghan Goodwin

News and notes from the area sports scene



Submitted Photo

The Pace Patriot girls soccer team poses for a photo after handing Catholic its first loss of the year.

By Brian Lester
sports@srpressgazette.com

Pace's girls soccer team handed Pensacola Catholic its first loss of the year last Wednesday night, beating the Crusaders 1-0 in a hard-fought game on a chilly night.

A first-half goal by Kylin Williamson was the difference as Pace won its third consecutive game. This is also the third shutout win in a row.

The Patriots have earned all three of their wins during the streak via shutout, outscoring the opposition 11-0 and improving to 3-2. Catholic (6-1-1) came in unbeaten.

The night before, Pace dominated Escambia 7-0 on the strength of a four-goal effort by Sydney Crow.

Sadie Miller, Bella Arey and Williamson all scored for the Patriots in that game while Southern Union commit Zoe Mattes notched a shutout victory in goal behind another strong performance.

Milton's girls soccer team beat Tate for the first time in six years last Tuesday, winning 1-0



Press Gazette File Photos

Goalie Paityn Settlemires and the Panthers beat Tate last week.

over the Aggies. Breckyn Greenfield scored the lone goal for the Panthers.

The Panthers ended a two-game losing streak and earned their third shutout win of the season thanks in part to the effort of goalie Paityn Settlemires.

Pace's boys soccer team topped Milton for the second time this season, winning 4-1.

AJ Bon-Jorno delivered a hat trick in the victory while Ziad Benrika also scored for the Patriots, who improved to 5-4-1 with the win.

Milton's boys basketball team won its second consecutive game last Tuesday, topping Niceville 63-39.

Sergio Robinson led the charge with 18 points. Zi Hudson dished out eight assist and had no

turnovers. Zander Harper grabbed a team-best six rebounds. The Panthers are 4-1.

Milton's girls basketball team bounced back from last Monday's loss to Niceville with a 63-7 win over Northview the next night.

The Panthers scored a season high in points and gave up a season low in points to an opponent as they improved to 4-2.

The one-two punch of Grace Jarrett and Makenna Enfinger was enough to help power Central past Pensacola Christian Academy 53-38 last Tuesday.

Jarrett poured in 17 points and Enfinger added 16 as the Jaguars improved to 2-3. Jaci Perritt added 9 points in the victory.

Central's boys basketball team won its

fourth consecutive game last Tuesday, rolling over Pensacola Christian Academy 60-40. The Jaguars are 5-1.

Jay's girls basketball team picked up a 57-47 win over Paxton last Tuesday to push its record to 3-1.

The Royals turned the tide in the second half, outscoring Paxton 21-13 in the third after trailing 21-20 at halftime.



Zi Hudson brings the ball up the floor in a preseason game. Hudson tallied eight assists and had no turnovers in Milton's win over Niceville.

TEAM BRUCE BAKER, MBA RE/MAX INFINITY Presents **PHS Athlete of the Week**



Olivia Ikier
Sports: Basketball and track
Class: 2026
Parents: Deanna and Chip

Plans after graduation: Go to UWF and major in nursing to become a pediatric nurse
Favorite activity outside of sports: Hanging out with friends, coaching, going to Taco Bell and going to church
Favorite TV Show: "Outer Banks"
Favorite Movie: "Tangled"
Favorite Store: Target

What is the best part about being an athlete? Friendships and relationships that I have created and the lessons learned about being a leader and keeping a good mindset
Favorite Sports Memory: Finding out I made varsity freshman year
What is your biggest strength as an athlete? Being able to lead the team whenever we are down
If you could be a pro athlete for a day, who would you be? Cameron Brink



Olivia Ikier

GET ALL YOUR LOCAL SPORTS HERE.

Subscribe to the Santa Rosa Press Gazette
850-623-2120
srpressgazette.com

Panthers plan to see hard work pay off this wrestling season



Photos by Brian Lester

Milton's wrestling team is gets work in over the summer. The season got underway last week.

By Brian Lester
sports@srpressgazette.com

Milton's wrestling team spent a lot of time this summer preparing for the season.

It's a great time to get in work and has the wrestlers feeling ready for the year, which is now officially underway.

"I've really been pushing myself in the gym and on the mats," senior Cayden Marshall said. "I want to have a better season than I did last year."

Junior Tim Griffith is hoping for the same and has his sights set on a state tourney berth. He believes he's made strides.

"I've always had the



Cayden Marshall (yellow shirt) wrestles against Aiden Herbert during a practice this summer.

physical part down, but now I have extra knowledge and can be more crafty and technical," Griffith said.

And putting in work is

key in wrestling. "It takes time to learn. Even if you are talented, you still have to work hard to get better. You have to put the time into

it," junior Connor Allen said.

Mario Lugo is in his second year as the head coach of the Panthers and said the summer

program went well, serving as a good build up for the season.

"I started the program to give kids opportunities to get more work in," Lugo said. "In the summer, you can polish technique and create that muscle memory so you don't even have to think about the move when you are in the heat of battle in a match."

Marshall is among the wrestlers who hopes to make a run at state. He used to be in karate and then fell in love with wrestling after giving it a try.

"I feel I've gotten stronger mentally and physically," Marshall said. "I feel I have a good

foundation to build on for the season."

Junior Aiden Herbert is confident as well after a productive summer of wrestling workouts.

"You get those extra reps in and work on technique, and it really pays off in the season, when things are more intense," Herbert said.

Lugo said over the summer he was pleased with how summer played out and is hoping to see it all pay off this season.

"I'm very happy with the work the kids have put in. They have the tools to be successful and it's always rewarding to help these kids succeed," Lugo said.

Griffith earns all-conference recognition

By Brian Lester
sports@srpressgazette.com

Reice Griffith is one of 17 from Mercer to earn All-Southern Conference honors.

The kicker from Pace earned first-team honors this season.

Griffith has had quite a junior season, setting program records for field goals and points scored this year while earning special teams player of the week honors three times.

He has made 40 field goals in his career, including a personal-best kick of 51 yards, and has racked up more than 250 career points.

Griffith is in his third year as a starting kicker for the Bears, who won the Southern Conference championship this season.

Photo provided by Mercer Athletics
Reice Griffith has been named to the All-Southern Conference team.



Your source for local sports coverage in Santa Rosa
subscribe today
Santa Rosa Press Gazette
850-623-2120 or srpressgazette.com

Waitman waking up each day and living the NFL dream

By Brian Lester
sports@srpressgazette.com

Corliss Waitman is a starting punter for the NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers, but his connection to Milton, and what the city and the high school he once played at means to him, remains strong.

In August, Waitman donated 250 backpacks filled with school supplies to Milton High students in honor of his great grandfather, who was well known in the community. One of his grandfathers was a school custodian.

"That lineage of the Waitman family, I try to do my part and give back to a school that has done so much for me," Waitman said. "Every time I come back it's good vibes. I'm just trying to pay it forward."

Waitman is in his fourth season of playing in the NFL, but he's been in the league five years overall if you count the 2023 season that he spent on the New England Patriots' practice squad.

"It's a blessing, and it seems like a dream, but I wake up each day and live the dream," Waitman said. "It's a great life to be in the league, but it comes with preparation and consistency. I'm truly blessed to be in this league and try to be the best I can be."

He is in his second full season with Pittsburgh, averaging 45.8 yards per punt, and he loves being a part of the Steelers' organization.



Corliss Waitman is in his second season as a punter for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Photo credit: Karl Roser/Pittsburgh Steelers

After all, it was here in Pittsburgh where he launched his career.

Waitman was on the Patriots' practice squad at the time. The Steelers gave him a call on Christmas because they needed a punter for their game against Kansas City the next day.

"This is where it started for me. I truly love it here," Waitman said. "The culture is different and coming back here things are still the same. It shows you how strong the culture is."

A job is never guaranteed in the cut-throat business of the NFL and Waitman went into camp this summer



Corliss Waitman is averaging better than 45 yards per punt this season for Pittsburgh. Waitman is a Milton alum who has been in the NFL since 2021, spending the last two years with the Steelers.

knowing he would have to work hard to win it.

One thing was for certain, however, and that

is he believed in himself.

"You can't control everything in the football business, but you have

to control what you can control," Waitman said.

"Effort, attitude and trust in God, and He will

do the rest."

He's maintained his position by doing all that and showing up ready to work hard.

"It's about passion and mental toughness and showing up every day and doing your job," Waitman said. "If you really love this and you have passion, you use that to keep you going."

For Waitman, who has worked hard to get to where he is today, he doesn't take playing in the NFL for granted.

"It's crazy and I am grateful to be here," Waitman said. "It's a blessing. I just have to keep my head down and keep going."

Second-half surge lifts Pensacola Catholic past Pace, 50-42

By Mac Knefely
sports@srpressgazette.com

Pace's boys basketball team showed signs of growth in a 50-42 loss to Pensacola Catholic last Wednesday night.

Pace (0-7), playing the year with many underclassmen, played a virtually mistake-free first half, even seeing a 15-3 lead, before the visiting Crusaders took control after intermission.

Despite the lack of experience, Pace head coach Houston Ramsay is encouraged by his team's progress. He said five of the seven losses have come down to fourth-quarter battles.

"They fought as hard as they could. It was a very physical game. The refs let us play on both ends of the court," Ramsay said. "This was another one of these close games that we've got to turn the page on and figure out how to win."

Aside from some inexperience at the varsity level, Pace has dealt with injuries early on.

"We've got some guys with broken hands, turned ankles. We're just trying to get everybody healthy and get our football guys caught back up to speed," Ramsay said. "We'll either make our shots or we won't, but we'll continue



Pace's Aiden Aikens drives past a Catholic defender.

Photos by Mac Knefely

to hang our hat on our defense every night."

The first period was a defensive battle as the Patriots held a 4-2 lead thanks to a layup by Evan Scott and a floating jumper by Bryson Hazelwood.

Pace turned up the offense in the second, scoring the next seven points on a three-pointer by Brody Neal and jumper by Aiden Aikens. A technical foul called on the Catholic coach gave the Patriots two free shots to make it 11-2.

JT Leslie later extended



Pace's Jeremiah Leslie scoots past a Catholic defender.

the Pace lead to 12 with 5:26 left in the half, but Catholic began its rally after a timeout.

The Crusaders pulled within 15-14 with just under two minutes to go, but Isaac Dull an-

swered with a corner three-pointer and Scott added a layup before Catholic scored on a jumper to get within 20-16 at the break.

The game was tied at 34-34 after three quarters before the Crusaders broke a 38-38 tie and never looked back.

"Their run in the second period kind of got in our heads. At half, coach said when we've got them down we've got to keep them down," Neal said. "But we didn't come back out with the same energy,

and that hurt us a lot. Our defense is there. But we didn't shoot well from the field and turned the ball over."

Despite the loss, players and coaches were proud of the overall effort.

"Usually, we don't match the other team's physicality, but we did that tonight," Aikens said. "We played real tough basketball. We started getting to rim and getting fouls. We were making most of our shots early, but at the end we've just to mature and finish the game out."

FOR THE RECORD

SRC BUSINESS LICENSES

■ 11/27/2025, Deborah Markley, Deborah Goldberg Consulting, LLC, Service, 8903 Tara Cir, Milton, FL 32583
 ■ 12/1/2025, Elmer E Baker Jr, Steelbilt Structures LLC, Service, 1420 Champions Green Dr, Gulf Breeze, FL 32563
 ■ 12/1/2025, Logan Keigley A.R.M. Handyman LLC, Service, 4521 Piedmont Way, Milton, FL 32583
 ■ 12/1/2025, Kevin Cornman, Cornman Pizza LLC, Lounge, Restaurant Food Truck, 3755 Gulf Breeze Pkwy Ste L, Gulf Breeze, FL 32563
 ■ 12/1/2025, Happy Book Merch, Happy Book Merch, Retail Sales, 6655 Ridge Crest Dr, Milton, FL 32570
 ■ 12/1/2025, John Samuel Long, JKP Trucking LLC, Service, 3744 Cornerbrook Dr, Pace, FL 32571
 ■ 12/1/2025, Oksana Peery, Oksana Peery, Professional, 8572 Laredo St, Navarre, FL 32566
 ■ 12/1/2025, Zachary Potts, Gulf Coast Inflatables LLC, Service, 5553 Mulat Rd Milton, FL 32583
 ■ 12/2/2025, Corby L Usry III, R & F Adventures LLC, Service, 4195 Madura Rd, Gulf Breeze, FL 32563
 ■ 12/2/2025, Mallorie Okahashi, Dance Academy of Santa Rosa, INC, 6784 Caroline St, Milton, FL 32570
 ■ 12/2/2025, Nancy Kuykendall, Nancy Kuykendall Manufacturing, 6131 Tansey St, Crestview, FL 32539
 ■ 12/2/2025, Elizabeth Daniels, Parsonage Creations LLC, Retail Sales, 5962 Parsonage Cir, Milton, FL 32570
 ■ 12/2/2025, Shawn Cypret, Shawn Cypret Construction, Contractor, 2007 Casa Dr Oro, Navarre, FL 32566
 ■ 12/2/2025, Kimmons, Bennie L, Southern Vinyl Siding LLC, Contractor, 6347 Clear Creek Rd Milton, FL 32570
 ■ 12/2/2025, Ellis John Xavier Sr, Patty's Grill LLC, Service, 4109 Polks Ave Pace, FL 32571
 ■ 12/2/2025, Arlene D Kabalka, Bright Sands Vacation Rentals LLC, Service, 7324 Rexford St, Navarre, FL 32566
 ■ 12/3/2025, Kristi Berry, Arrow Boutique LLC, Retail Sales, 911 Gulf Breeze Pkwy Ste A, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561
 ■ 12/3/2025, Mary Trivigno, Azalia's Boutique, Retail Sales, 3100 Gulf Breeze Pkwy, Gulf Breeze, FL 32563
 ■ 12/3/2025, Jud Boyd, Diamondback Bush Hogging, Service, 298 W Beech Ave, Crestview, FL 32536
 ■ 12/3/2025, Bernard Alidor, Remedy BJJ, Schools, 4237 Highway 90, Pace, FL 32571
 ■ 12/3/2025, Michael Dehner, Strong Matters S&C LLC, Service, 5436 Dogwood Drive, Milton, FL 32570

MARRIAGES

■ Kathryn Denise McMackin to Robert Sean Bales
 ■ Franklin Don-El Foster to Lisa Mae Wolfe
 ■ Samuel Dale Taylor to Tamika Ariana Ballantyne
 ■ Amelia Grace Trostle to Christian William Rian Wadbrook
 ■ Caleb Andrew Quick to Raegan Mercedes Wooten
 ■ Rebekah Lynne Page to Austin Mack Ladd
 ■ Megan Amanda Churm to Brian Thomas Green
 ■ Becky Carole Padgett to Clay Lee Clement
 ■ Cate Yvonne Hodges to Dale Michael Utsey
 ■ Michele Maree Mason to Joseph Patrick Henry
 ■ Joseph Tyler Williams to Elizabeth Noel Petrossi
 ■ Olivia Alexandria Braswell to Robert Michael Lenzo
 ■ Brian Walter Harris to Chaselee Brook Porter
 ■ Tyler-Marie Smith to Steven Edward Terry
 ■ Meeya Jacy Gonzalez to Alec Edmund Morrow
 ■ Maylen Lee McKnight to David Carter Braley
 ■ Dechawuthi Anekjindarat to Porraanee Paauew
 ■ Brennon Larue Lee to Shila Lynn Reid
 ■ Douglas Robert Smith to Louise Jeanne Burch
 ■ Xavier Alexander Vallianos to Mariah Celine Rios
 ■ Christopher Adams to Alaina Mary Poimboeuf
 ■ William Robert Grantner to Nancy Lynn

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Touse
- 5 Resistance unit
- 8 Prego rival
- 12 Bickering
- 13 Zodiac animal
- 14 Pub orders
- 15 Tabula —
- 16 Sheer fabrics
- 18 Santiago resident
- 20 Playful sea critter
- 21 Mormon church, for short
- 22 Top card
- 23 Army bigwigs
- 26 Scolding
- 30 "Humbug!"
- 31 Cooking fuel
- 32 French pronoun
- 33 Upbeat
- 36 Rose protector
- 38 Weeding tool
- 39 Spanish gold
- 40 Parlor pieces
- 43 Bar exercises

DOWN

- 17 Central points
- 19 Asner and Harris
- 22 Sounds of relief
- 23 Telly network
- 24 Fan's cry
- 25 Sashimi fish
- 26 Automobile
- 27 "As I see it," in a text
- 28 Fish-fowl insert
- 29 Tom Collins liquor
- 31 "My word!"
- 34 Stages
- 35 Ritz
- 36 Part of TNT
- 37 Truthful
- 39 "Holy cow!"
- 40 Con job
- 41 Columbus' home
- 42 Evergreens
- 43 Crossword hint
- 44 — Bator
- 45 Lima's land
- 46 "Shoo!"
- 48 Quirky

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18					19				20			
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	29
30						31				32		
33			34	35					36	37		
			38					39				
40	41	42				43				44	45	46
47						48				49		
50						51				52		
53						54				55		

© 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY
 Santa Rosa Press Gazette
850-623-2120
 or srpressgazette.com

Weekly SUDOKU

6	8		3		1	7		5
					9		8	
						3	1	4
8		1	9					
	3					5	7	
	2	5	7		3	1	6	9
	4		2	3				7
3		7	1		5	8		
2			6	7	4	9		

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
 ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

© 2025 King Features Synd., Inc.



"Is this the night we give Daddy the big welcome-home routine, or is tomorrow _____?"

SCRAMBLERS

Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag!

God TIDEY

Fold PLATE

Rouse WEAKO

Hint LIMPY

TODAY'S WORD

ARRESTS OF NORTH SANTA ROSA COUNTY RESIDENTS

Arrest and incident reports are taken from the information released from law enforcement agencies. Charges or citations reported in the Santa Rosa Press Gazette do not imply guilt. Guilt is determined by the courts. Information on this page is public information. Names on arrest records will not be withheld by request for any reason. Every effort is made to provide accurate information. If an error in the named charge occurs, Santa Rosa Press Gazette will correct the named charge in a future publication when it is brought to our attention. Juveniles are named only if the arrest involved a felony offense.

<p>November 27</p>  <p>Merle Seay Painter, 60, 7700 Block of Canary Lane, Milton, Charge: Probation violation</p>	<p>November 27</p>  <p>Airech Kristofur Johnson, 29, 3400 Block of Quail Drive, Pace, Charges: Battery – domestic violence – touch or strike (x2), criminal mischief damage property \$1,000+, family offense – deprive custody of minor/incompetent person</p>	<p>November 29</p>  <p>Joshua Robert Wise, 29, 4300 Block of Sunshine Park Drive, Milton, Charge: Failure to appear</p>	<p>November 29</p>  <p>Charles Patrick Taylor, 53, 3700 Block of Carabella Lane, Pace, Charges: Larceny – other theft, nonmoving traffic violation – fail to register motor vehicle, attached registration license plate not assigned, moving traffic violation – drive while license suspended, drug equipment-possession and or use</p>	<p>December 2</p>  <p>Justin Lawayne Brewer, 25, 4900 Block of Lambert Lane, Milton, Charges: Battery – domestic violence – cause bodily harm, larceny – petit theft merch/farm/transit</p>	<p>December 3</p>  <p>Pamela Sue Bennett, 46, 6500 Block of Bruce Lane, Milton, Charge: Battery – domestic violence – touch or strike</p>	<p>December 2</p>  <p>John Nicholas Dienst, 38, 5000 Block of Brookside Drive, Pace, Charge: Probation violation</p>	<p>December 2</p>  <p>James Allen Williams, 55, 9400 Block of Allison Creek Lane, Jay, Charge: Trespassing – fail to leave property on order of owner</p>
 <p>Natalie Michelle Cipraini, 44, 4500 Block of Simmons Road, Pace, Charges: Battery on specified personnel, resist officer – obstruct without violence, drugs-possession – controlled substance without prescription, drug equipment-possession and or use, drugs-health or safety – possess harmful new legend drug without prescription</p>	<p>November 28</p>  <p>Olina Myriam Strott, 19, 4700 Block of Cyril Drive, Milton, Charge: Battery on person 65 years of age or older – domestic violence</p>	 <p>Elijah Levi Coker, 23, 4400 Block of Marvin Reaves Road, Jay, Charges: Dangerous excessive speeding – 100 miles per hour or more while passing another vehicle or changing lanes, public order crimes – violated nonresident drivers license exemption</p>	 <p>Kenneth Alan Finney, 64, 6800 Block of Mertis Way, Milton, Charges: Moving traffic violation – drive while license suspended/revoked, drive on permanently revoked driver license, fraud-impersonation – false ID given to law enforcement officer</p>	 <p>Charlene Trenee Cureton, 32, 4200 Block of Castille Avenue, Milton, Charge: Battery – domestic violence – touch or strike</p>	 <p>Martina Carolyn Mae Hayden, 33, 4600 Block of Carl Booker Road, Milton, Charges: Failure to appear (x2), probation violation, resist officer – obstruct without violence</p>	 <p>Dani Costner Vines, 49, 4900 Block of Wabash Pine Court, Pace, Charge: Probation violation</p>	 <p>John Erik Claudio, 40, 5100 Block of Peach Drive, Pace, Charges: Fraud-false statement – false information to purchase weapon firearm, contempt of court – violated domestic violence injunction possessing firearm/ammo, possession of weapon or ammo by convicted felon, possession of firearm with final injunction for domestic violence in effect</p>
 <p>Laura Judith Gurling, 53, 4100 Block of Luther Fowler Road, Pace, Charge: Domestic violence – aggravated battery with a deadly weapon</p>	 <p>Michael Loyce Simmons, 64, 6400 Block of Renee Circle, Milton, Charge: Battery</p>	 <p>Joshua Wayne Enfinger, 36, 5200 Block of Chestnut Avenue, Pace, Charges: Drugs-possession – controlled substance without prescription, drug equipment-possession and or use, obstructing justice – tamper with evidence in criminal proceeding</p>		 <p>Zebadiah Daniel Thomas, 50, 4700 Block of Praline Lane, Pace, Charges: Probation violation (x2), fraud – manufacturing/selling/advertising items intended to defraud a urine drug test</p>	 <p>Mitchell Eugene Eddins, 45, 6100 Block of Warren Road, Milton, Charges: Crimes against person – fail to report death to medical examiner or law enforcement officer, larceny – petit theft merch/farm/transit \$100-\$750</p>		



Order Your Take-Home Holiday Family Feast

OVEN-READY & PREPARED TO SERVE 4-6

- 2lb Honey Glazed Ham
- 2lb Roasted Turkey & Gravy
- Cornbread Stuffing
- Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes
- Collard Greens
- Sweet Potato Casserole
- Cranberry Relish

PICK-UP ON CHRISTMAS EVE FROM 10AM - 1PM

- 8 Yeast Rolls with Honey & Strawberry Butter
- House Salad
- 1/2 Pumpkin Pie

\$79.95

8491 NAVARRE PKWY | 850.710.7334

EMERALDWATERFRONTNAVARRE.COM

HO, HO WHOA!

This year, give a gift they won't return.

Every photo you see in Santa Rosa Press Gazette - and even some you haven't seen - is available to purchase online!

Photos are available as digital downloads, prints, wall art, keepsakes and more. Just visit our site, choose an image you love and click the BUY button

See our photo albums at
yourcommunityphotos.com



HEALTHY
LIVING

The ABCs of supplements



Many people — more than half of U.S. adults, the CDC says — take vitamins or other dietary supplements such as amino acids, enzymes and minerals.

The National Institutes of Health says

products sold as dietary supplements come with a label that lists the active ingredients, the amount per serving or dose, and any other ingredients.

The FDA established Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) to ensure the identity, purity, strength and composition of dietary supplements. These practices can prevent adding the wrong ingredient or other contamination. The FDA periodically inspects facilities that manufacture supple-

ments.

Supplement Safety

Supplements can help with a variety of conditions, the NIH says. Calcium and vitamin D, for instance, can help keep bones strong and reduce bone loss. Omega-3 fatty acids from fish oils can help some people resist heart disease. But people who wish to start taking a supplement should discuss it with their health care professional before taking anything new. Supplements can

interact with medications you're already taking or exacerbate conditions you have. Vitamin K, for instance, can reduce the ability of some blood thinners to prevent clotting. St. John's wort can speed up the breakdown of some medicines and reduce their effectiveness. Some antioxidant supplements, such as vitamins C and E, may reduce the effectiveness of some types of cancer chemotherapy.

Also be careful of dosing. Too much of

even things such as vitamins and minerals can have adverse effects. Taking too much vitamin A, for instance, can cause headaches and liver damage. Too much iron causes nausea and vomiting.

Natural is Not Always Safe

The term natural on a label, NIH says, doesn't always mean a product is safe. Some botanical products, such as comfrey and kava, can cause liver damage. Be sure your health care professional knows what

supplements you're taking or are considering and discuss with them the safety risks, proper dosages and side effects.

Bear in mind that while the FDA oversees supplement manufacture and sale, there are different guidelines than the agency enforces for drugs. Unlike medicines, supplements do not require FDA approval before sale and the companies that make supplements are responsible for proving their products are safe.



Metoprolol prescription for palpitations exacerbates anxiety

Dear Dr. Roach: I just discontinued using metoprolol succinate extended release (ER) at a dosage of 6.25 mg. My heart rate is normally in the 70-80s, and my blood pressure is normal. My doctor prescribed it for palpitations, but it seems totally unnecessary. My issue is that I am experiencing tachycardia of over 100 beats every single night as well as dry mouth.

Could this be anxiety? And do you think an antidepressant like Zoloft or Paxil would help? I had a Holter monitor, which showed nothing wrong with my heart. The palpitations were sporadic only when I was anxious.

I stopped metoprolol

because it exacerbated my anxiety and caused me depression as well as panic attacks. My doctor prescribed me 1 mg of Ativan to take at bedtime, but I am very scared of getting addicted to it. So, I thought maybe an antidepressant would help instead. My doctor prescribed 25 mg of Zoloft, but I want another opinion. -- S.S.

Answer: Generalized anxiety disorder is a common problem and may be associated with panic attacks (sometimes depression as well). The most common and highly effective medication treatment for generalized anxiety disorder, with or without panic attacks, is an SSRI-type drug like sertraline (Zoloft). Therapy is another option, and the two together are more effective than they are separately.

Metoprolol is an effective treatment for the fast heart rate that some people get when they have anxiety, and metoprolol by itself is helpful for many people who have anxiety. (The high heart rate

can make people feel even more anxious.) However, it sounds like metoprolol did not work for you. There is a small increased risk of depression among people who take beta blockers like metoprolol.

In my opinion, lorazepam (Ativan) is not a good long-term choice for an anxiety disorder, but it can still be helpful in some people while they're waiting for another treatment to start working (such as therapy or a medicine like Zoloft). It takes six to eight weeks to reach maximum effectiveness.

Addiction is not an issue when both the patient and prescriber agree that it will be only used as a short-term treatment. For Zoloft, 25 mg is a low dose, and some people need higher doses (sometimes much higher) to control their symptoms.

Dear Dr. Roach: Why shouldn't you use antibiotics for a cold? -- T.Y.A.

Answer: There are two main reasons. The

first is that antibiotics are effective against bacteria; they're not effective against the viruses, which are the cause of colds. It is true that a person (or their doctor) cannot be 100% sure whether they have a virus, but people are generally pretty good about knowing when they have a cold.

The second is that resistance to antibiotics has become a major issue in medicine. There are now strains of bacteria that are resistant to all antibiotics, and I have seen patients die because their bacteria were resistant to all the antibiotics we have. Using antibiotics less often and for shorter durations is a major goal to reduce the rate of antibiotic resistance. (Antibiotic use in animals that are raised for food is a major issue as well.)

Patients can help by not asking for (or demanding) antibiotics for what are almost certainly viral infections.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions,

but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYour-

GoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

(c) 2025 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved

Be careful, reading Santa Rosa Press Gazette could make you become aware.

subscribe today
Santa Rosa Press Gazette
850-623-2120
or srpressgazette.com

We deliver your news your way!

SANTA ROSA'S Press Gazette

S E R V I N G N O R T H S A N T A R O S A C O U N T Y

SUBSCRIPTIONS AVAILABLE IN PRINT AND ONLINE.



ALL ACCESS

- Printed Paper Mailed Weekly
- 1 Happy Ad 2 x 2
- 2 Classified Ads 20 words or less
- 1 Garage Sale Ad
- Email Alerts With Breaking News
- Online access to daily content on srpressgazette.com
- Digital access to weekly e-edition
- Press Pass Discount Card*
- Annual Subscriber Coupons*
- Tickets to Special Events*
- Access to Online Archives*

\$138 /YR
MORE THAN \$670 VALUE

BASIC

- Printed Paper Mailed Weekly
- Press Pass Discount Card*
- Annual Subscriber Coupons*

\$48 /YR
MORE THAN \$450 VALUE

DIGITAL

- Digital access to weekly e-edition
- Online access to daily content on srpressgazette.com
- Press Pass Discount Card*
- Annual Subscriber Coupons*

\$68 /YR
NO MAILED PAPER

*coming soon

SUBSCRIBE TODAY! 850.623.2120

MEMBERSHIP CHOICE: (PLEASE CHECK ONE)

ALL ACCESS \$138
 SENIOR/MILITARY PRICE \$130

BASIC \$48
 SENIOR/MILITARY PRICE \$43

DIGITAL \$68
NO MAILED PAPER

MORE OPTIONS COMING SOON

MAILED PAPER

- 3 MONTHS\$28
- 6 MONTHS\$38
- 12 MONTHS (BASIC).....\$48

SENIOR/MILITARY DISCOUNT

If you are a senior citizen (age 65+) or military (active duty or retired), you are eligible for the discounted price. Please check one or the other. On your honor...

- MILITARY
- SENIOR CITIZEN (65+)

PAYMENT AMOUNT: _____
CARD #: _____

CHECK ENCLOSED VISA MC DISCOVER AMEX
CV CODE: _____ EXP. DATE: _____

NAME: _____ PHONE _____
ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
EMAIL: _____

MAIL TO: SANTA ROSA PRESS GAZETTE
7502 HARVEST VILLAGE CT. | NAVARRE, FL 32566