



RC WEAVER: A FATHER DETERMINED TO SUCCEED



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The Joy of Being a Father and a Dad!

Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) Looking for New Members

Money Smart Tips: There's too Much to do to be Bored this Summer!



Happy Father's Day

"The quality of a father can be seen in the goals, dreams, and aspirations he sets not only for himself, but for his family." - Reed Markham

The City of Ocala's Growth Management Department, in collaboration with Marion County Building Industry Association, will host a roundtable for members of the building community on Thursday, June 6, 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. at Ocala Elks Lodge, 702 NE 25th Ave.

This meeting will focus on maintaining open lines of communication and collaboration between the City of Ocala, Marion County, and professionals in the industry.

This free event is an opportunity for contractors, engineers, architects, and other building industry professionals to connect with city officials to learn more about city grant programs, processes, and resources, share feedback, and collaborate on opportunities for refinement. A complimentary breakfast will be served.

For more information, please contact Growth Management at (352) 629-8287 or email gmd@ocalafl.gov.



TOWN Talk MAGAZINE

Sharing the good news happening
in our community.

Founders

Monica Bryant & Cynthia Wilson-Graham

Editor

Monica Bryant

Photography/Editor

Cynthia Wilson-Graham

Contributors

Scott Hackmyer

Gabriella Franklin

Let's Talk

We want to hear from you:

Email your submissions, events, comments or questions to Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com. Please include contact information (name and phone number) on the submission. Deadline is the first Monday of each month for the following month's publication.

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Contact Us:

Town Talk Magazine
P.O. Box 6212
Ocala, FL 34478
(352) 897-1817

Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com
or Towntalkmagazine.org.

EDITOR'S DESK



Last month was rough! First eight people were killed when a bus carrying about 53 farmworkers was side-swiped by a truck and overturned on West Highway 40 by a man who was allegedly impaired.

Next, what should have been a joyous occasion for families attending an end-of-the-year awards ceremony at North Marion Middle School turned deadly when a father of three children was shot and killed in the parking lot over what appears to be a custody dispute. He was there because one of his children was receiving an award at the event.

Both incidents are incredibly heartbreaking and should have NEVER happened! Our bad choices and impulsive decisions can and often do affect the lives of others. Please keep the families of these men in prayer. Some of them were fathers too.

As Father's Day approaches, this will be a difficult day for them to get through and for all of us who have lost our fathers, regardless of how long they've been gone. If you are fortunate enough to still have your father or your dad, cherish every moment you have with them. Tomorrow is not promised!

There's a lot of great things happening in our community this month. There's several Juneteenth events and celebrations included in this issue you can support. June is also Black Music Month, an annual celebration of African-American music in the United States. Billy C. Writz, who is working on a pilot about the Chitlin Circuit, is looking for information about Club Bali. Did you go there? I did! It was a popular spot for us before it burned down many years ago. Do you have any pictures, posters or memories you can share with him?

Summer is here and school is out! It's easy to give your child(ren) things, but it's better to give them experiences. Memories last longer. Make time to do things with them and don't let gaming systems or social media be their babysitter. When making plans to enjoy the Summer, it's important to protect your skin and overall health if you're going to be spending a lot of time outdoors in the sun.

I found five great tips from Magicjack.com to keep you safe while enjoying the Florida sun:
-- **Apply Sunscreen:** Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30. Apply it generously to all exposed skin 15-30 minutes before going outside and reapply every two hours or more often if swimming or sweating.

-- **Seek Shade:** When the sun's rays are strongest, typically between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., try to stay in the shade. Use umbrellas, trees or other shelters to protect yourself from direct sunlight.

-- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Opt for long-sleeved shirts, long pants and wide-brimmed hats to cover your skin. Choose clothing made from tightly woven fabrics that offer better protection against UV rays. Consider clothing with built-in UV protection.

-- **Use Sunglasses:** Protect your eyes from harmful UV rays by wearing sunglasses that block 100% of UVA and UVB rays. This can help prevent cataracts and other eye damage.

-- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated. The sun and heat can cause dehydration quickly, so keep a water bottle with you and drink regularly, even if you don't feel thirsty.

Let's Talk!

Monica Bryant

Monica T. Bryant, Editor

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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

MONICA MONIQUE JACOBS ~ AUTHOR OF "MY NEW CHURCH"

Monica Monique Jacobs always wanted to be an author and a teacher just like her dad. She started writing books when she was in first grade, but, she said, none of them had a plot.

"It wasn't until recently that I started making good books," said Jacobs, who has about eight more books in the editing and illustration process.

On Friday, June 21, at 6:30 p.m. Jacobs is hosting a book signing to launch her first book "My New Church." The invitation-only event includes a Meet and Greet, a book reading, time for discussions and questions and a light snack. Guests must be 18 years or older to attend the private party. Seating is limited. Email Jacobs at Jacobsmonica628@gmail.com to reserve a seat. The deadline to RSVP is June 20.

"I wrote this book two Decembers ago while reflecting on how difficult it was to leave my first church and how much I love my current church," she said. "The concept of "My New Church" is not based on any one church. It is a mixture of all the churches that I have been a member of."

Jacobs, a teacher at College Park Elementary School for the past 10 years, said her thoughts and feelings just flowed so it only took her about three hours to write the book, nearly two months to edit it and a year-and-a-half to get it published. The illustration was done by Benji Seyler, who owns Sylr Illustration Studio, LLC and Michelle Schacht edited the book. Books will be sold at the event or can be ordered on her website at AuthorMonicaMJacobs.com (square). The cost is \$12.99 plus tax and shipping and handling.

"This book was created to help young people who experienced the same thing that I had to go through ... moving to a new church, school or place to overcome the fear of transition," she said. "Most of the book talks about my new church. My focus is on the new church because that's where Monique's fear resides."

Jacobs said her family helped her through her transition, and it's nice to have family to lean on when she's having problems. She said her mom was like her therapist because she could tell her anything without fear of judgment or getting into trouble, and she talked to her about her feelings and they prayed together.

In the book, the protagonist Monique, named after Jacobs, had to leave the church she grew up in and loves because her father was called to pastor another church, and she is afraid that the new people may not like her at the new church. She considers the book to be realistic fiction since the book is based on an event that actually happened to her although the people and parts of the story were made up.



Monica M. Jacobs



Her favorite part is when Monique's mother does her hair pretty and makes Monique put on her best dress and new shoes. She likes that part because she said it's so representative of who she was when she was about Monique's age.

"I would always ask my mom to make my hair pretty, and there was this purple dress that I loved when I was in kindergarten. I wore it to both church and school because I loved it so much," she said. "I would like for children to learn from this story that they do not have to be afraid when they transition from one place to another. God is with them wherever they go."

For more information, email her at Jacobsmonica628@gmail.com, call Jacobs at (352) 209-7080 or follow her on Facebook (Monique Jacobs) <https://www.facebook.com/monica.jacobs.790256> or <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1164122174558434>.

The **Community Spotlight** highlights a person, place or event in our community. Tell us what's happening around town so we can share your **Good News** with others. Email submissions to Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com.

BILLY C. WIRTZ, WRITER, MUSICIAN AND HISTORIAN



Billy C. Wirtz

When Billy C. Wirtz was 12 years old, his life changed when his mother took him to a concert to see Muddy Waters at the Smithsonian. At the event, he got to see American blues musician Otis Spann play the piano shortly before his death. Wirtz described the experience as if someone had flipped a switch, likening it to a portal to another world. Up until then, Wirtz had always wanted to be a park ranger, but after Waters walked out on the stage with his hair processed eight inches off his head, wearing a blue sharkskin suit and razor-toe blue shoes, he knew immediately that he wanted to be a musician too.

Two years ago, he wrote an article titled "Traveling Down the Chitlin Circuit" for Forum: The Magazine of Florida Humanities and won an award in Florida for Best Nonfiction Magazine Article. At the awards dinner that night, everyone was sitting around congratulating each other when the head of the Florida Humanities Council said this would make a great documentary. Wirtz agreed. One thing led to another, and they got funding to do a pilot on the history of the Golden Era Florida Chitlin Circuit, a collection of performance venues in the south and eastern U.S. that

offered opportunities for African American musicians during the era of racial segregation.

"I had a rough childhood and music was the one thing that was my place of comfort," he said. "Elvis was the first guy that I got turned on to. I was about 11. Very shortly thereafter, I bought my first blues record."

Wirtz said they found out from James Brown's manager that Florida was the No. 1 state in the Southeast for the Chitlin Circuit from the 1930s to about the early '70s. He said the golden years were really big in Florida from about 1947 when WLAC radio first started broadcasting music for the discerning negro listener. Two things were happening during that time, the radio station itself and the first introduction of new technology called the transistor radio.

"You had kids, both black and little white kids like myself, that were not suppose to be listening to that music but would listen to it under our pillows," he said.

Now Wirtz, a writer, historian and musician, is working on a documentary about the Chitlin Circuit through the Florida Humanities Council. He is looking for information on the former Club Bali, a popular nightclub for young people in Ocala that was owned by Dr. Ernest Emerson Lamb. The club drew big-name entertainment like The Ike and Tina Turner Review, Ray Charles, James Brown and His Band of Renown, B.B. King and Aretha Franklin and others.

"It had quite the reputation," he said. "There's a legacy, definite history there."

For Wirtz, who hosts a weekly radio show called "The Rhythm Revival on KPIG, that often features lesser-known roots music, this is his first foray into the film side of things. In January, they started working on the pilot, which is about 30 minutes long. Most of the interviews are finished, and his goal is to have everything done by the first of 2025 or sooner.

The pilot, which focuses on Florida, is divided into four parts: Urban Locations; Stops Along the Highway; Women on the Circuit; and What's Being Done to Preserve the Legacy?

He said Club Bali was called a Wednesday night club by traveling groups on the circuit, and he wants to know more about it from people who went there. If anyone has memorabilia, pictures, posters or first hand accounts of what it was like, who you might have seen and any touring acts they can share, contact him at revbilly88@aol.com.

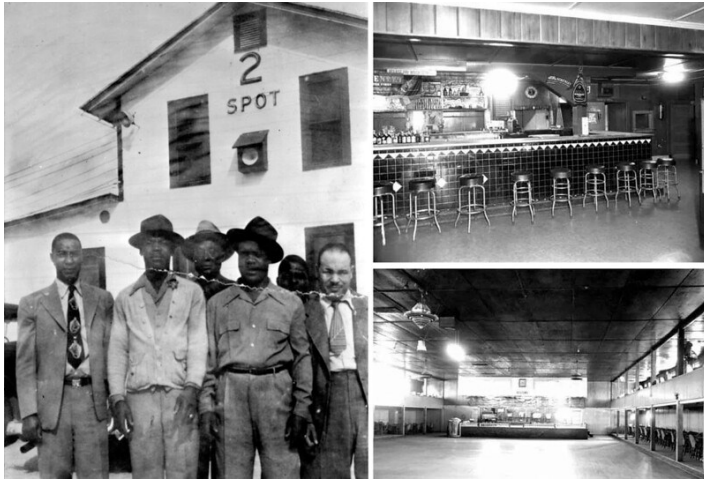
Wirtz, who has lived and worked with a lot of the old blues singers like Bobby Rush, known as the King of the Chitlin Circuit, said a lot of times there are some versions of the story they never felt got told quite correctly. To him, the Chitlin Circuit was the place where you have black music coming together ... everything from these little tiny hole-in-the-wall clubs to places like the *Two Spot* in Jacksonville.



The Ike & Tina Turner Revue performing onstage in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1964

DOCUMENTS THE GOLDEN ERA OF THE CHITLIN CIRCUIT

Continued from page 4



The Two Spot, Jacksonville, Florida

After World War II, he said, the *Two Spot* was the first public place African Americans could get together, congregate and listen to this absolutely incredible music with these big bands and celebrate being who they were and that they had survived World War II and could now meet and celebrate things getting just a little bit better.

The Chitlin Circuit, primarily by, for and about black people provided commercial and cultural acceptance for African-American musicians, comedians and other entertainers following the era of venues run by the “white-owned-and-operated Theatre Owners Booking Association (TOBA) formed in 1921, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. It sustained black musicians and dancers during the era of racial segregation in the U.S. from the 1930s to the 1960s.

The name comes from the soul food dish chitterlings (boiled pig intestines). A staple of Black foodways since the era of slavery, chitlins have long been considered a delicacy by African Americans. Many performance venues on the Chitlin Circuit served chitlins and other soul food dishes and performers were sometimes compensated with a meal in lieu of cash.

The clubs on the Chitlin Circuit put on a variety of acts that included music, dancing and comedy and played a critical role in popularizing blues, jazz, rhythm and blue (R&B) and rock and roll. After the heyday of the Chitlin Circuit, a contemporary network of Black clubs and theaters continued to operate and showcase both established and new talent.

Writz said B.B. King once told his drummer, who was also a friend of his, who was dissing some of the cotton patch places they were playing in: “When you make fun of this son, and you make fun of these people, you’re making fun of me. This is where I came from. For a poor boy from Mississippi like me, Blues and this music is our greatest contribution to American society. This is ours. This is what we brought to the table!”

Writz said the Chitlin circuit itself kind of died out as a result of integration and the overall cohesiveness of the community was not helped by integration which is why we must continue to celebrate Black Music Month. It’s so much more than the music, he said.

The month of June, which honors the history and rich African traditions that gave birth to different styles of music such as rap, hip-hop, jazz and rhythm and blues, is set aside to appreciate the contributions of African-American musicians, composers, singers and songwriters in American culture.



Bluesman Bobby Rush performing in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 2000.

“Not only does it need to be celebrated, but it needs to be researched. It needs to be studied and it needs to be archived,” he said. We have to have Black Music Month. We’re already so close to some of the very building blocks ... and it’s not just music. Black music is black culture. It is the culture!”

Although he doesn’t remember who it was, he said somebody along the way looked at him and said, “Don’t let them forget us, please!”

Writz is trying to make sure that doesn’t happen. He’s hoping the pilot will generate enough interest to get funding to have an entire hour dedicated to the documentary.

For more information about the pilot or if you have information about Club Bali, contact Writz at revbilly88@aol.com.



First Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
11840 N. Williams Street, Dunnellon, Florida 34432



Rev. Allen Brooks, Jr.

10th Pastor's ANNIVERSARY Celebration

23 JUNE 2024

TIME: 11:00AM & 3:00PM

THEME: "SHEPHERDS AFTER GOD'S OWN
HEART" (JEREMIAH 3:15)

Anniversary Colors:
Navy Blue, Tan and
Ivory

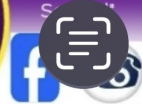


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Nehemiah Worship Center
Charlotte, NC



Pastor Richard Howard, Sr
New St. Mary Missionary
Baptist Church
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AIHOM Artist Practitioner

WHAT IS PAINTING, PLANTING SOWING SEEDS?

Participants will explore and discuss different ways of planting seeds. Flower seeds and seeds of good deeds throughout life. This is a three-part class.

WHEN? Tuesdays, June 4, 11, & 18 from 4:00-5:30PM

WHERE? Howard Academy Community Center, 306 NW 7th Ave Building 3, Ocala, FL 34475 **Workshop in Room 10**

WHO? Young people 10 - 16 years old


COST? FREE ~ All materials provided

REGISTRATION: Email Shayna@mchdt.org or call 352-671-4186 | **Limited to 20 participants**





May the 4th Be With You: A Fundraiser For Ora Clubhouse

Florida HEALTH
Marion County




Hands-Only CPR Class

1-3 p.m. on Wednesday, June 5
Florida Department of Health in Marion County
1801 SE 32nd Ave., Ocala, FL 34471

The Florida Department of Health in Marion County invites the public to learn hands-only CPR. The class is **free** and open to all Marion County residents. Ocala Fire Rescue will provide the instruction. No registration is required.

For more information, contact Community Health Director Christy Jergens at Christy.Jergens@FLHealth.gov or at **352-644-2677**.

Summer Nights Lecture Series




David Schlenker
Writer & Journalist

The Way It Was:
Stories that Shaped our Community

Thursday | July 18
6 - 8 PM | FREE

Join us for an enthralling lecture by Dave Schlenker on the local book 'The Way It Was' by David Cook. Experience a nostalgic journey through Central Florida's past and immerse yourself in the rich history and captivating stories that have shaped our community. Don't miss this opportunity to uncover the treasures of our heritage.

Fort King National Historic Landmark
3925 E Fort King St. | FortKingOcala.com | 352.368.5533



MY JOURNEY HASN'T BEEN EASY, BUT ITS WORTH IT!

RC Weaver could have easily decided to move back to Cocoa, FL., especially since things were not going well for the father of six children, five girls and one boy, but he stayed.

“Life was fast for me there. I was in the streets. I needed a change of pace and I didn’t want my daughters to call anyone else daddy but me,” he said. “Because of my love for my children, who lived in Ocala, I sacrificed.”

Weaver moved to Ocala in 2008 to attend a golf course management program at the College of Central Florida that was recommended to him by his pastor Rev. Judy Mills. But after mismanaging his finances, he was evicted from his apartment. At the time, two of his daughters were living with him and his son was playing Pop Warner football and he didn’t know how to tell them no.

“I used to say I would be better off sleeping under a bridge. Then I ended up in my truck,” he said. “So be careful of the things you speak over your life.”

For the fourth time in his life, he was homeless again. He told himself that this was the last time. He slept in his truck for four months while working full-time and two part-time jobs to save enough money to get his own place again.

It was the last time! His life changed when his mom asked him to take a budgeting class. He dialed 211, a free information and referral helpline that links people in need to highly trained operators, and learned about United Way’s Strong Families Program.

“Strong Families is a program focused on helping families and stopping generational poverty by developing financial stability through education, skill development, career development and partnerships in our community,” said Pebbles Vance, Strong Families Director/Success Coach. “This initiative connects 80 to 90 adults and children to personal Success Coaches each year. The goal is to provide each family with guidance needed to reach their personal financial goals. “Strong Families will build a stronger community”.

Weaver said while working hard to save money, the Strong Families classes played a significant role in building his confidence. A speech by Mayor Ben Marciano, during one of the classes, gave him so much hope and courage that he knew he was going to be OK. He said Marciano gave three points he will always remember: 1). Be early or ready for every meeting. 2). Work hard. Give 110% in all you do, and 3). Be a man of your word. Follow through. Weaver never missed a class and maintained perfect attendance.

Despite his situation, he persevered.

“On April 24, 2024, I received the keys to my apartment. The first thing I did was get my bed out of storage so that I could lay down for the first time since December 2023 in a bed,” he said. “I felt grateful. Besides providing me with information about community resources, attending Strong Families helped me start focusing more on my finances. I also opened a bank account at a local bank. I learned how to budget, which helped me learn how to save money in ways I never had imagined.”

The Strong Families program may be able to change your life too! Applications for Strong Families Class 17, which starts August 1, 2024, are now being accepted. The Strong Families Initiative provides Skill Building, Dual Services for Children and Success Coaching. Families participate in the program for one year with 15 weekly skill-building classes and bi-weekly meetings with Success Coaches throughout the year long program. The deadline to register is July 1, 2024.

To qualify, participants must have stable housing (long-term shelter or transitional housing is acceptable); have substance abuse and mental health issues under control; and be motivated to make positive, long-term changes to their lifestyle. Families interested in participating in the program must complete an intake form and submit all required documents. Once the family’s information is received, an interview is scheduled to discuss the program and expectations.



RC WEAVER



**STRONG
FAMILIES**

STRONG FAMILIES BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES

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The Strong families program was started in 2016 by Scot Quintel, former CEO of United Way of Marion County after he saw a major need in Marion County and other areas with generational issues and families seeking the correct education and guidance to work on financial stability for this generation and future generations. Since its inception, 542 families have participated in the program with the following success rates: 90% of the participants moved from temporary to permanent housing; 84% reduced household debts; 65% increased their household income; and 55% began taking steps towards advancing their education.

“My journey hasn’t been easy, but it’s been worth it. My success coach, Chrissy Vickers, provided me with the resources to help put me on the right path,” he said. “I ran into a roadblock, but God provided an answer through her, the entire Strong Families team, Greater New Bethel Church and Jason Halstead, the Executive Director of Brother’s Keeper.”

Vickers, a Strong Families Success Coach, said she knew Weaver was going to be an awesome client to work with from their first in-person session. She said he came in her office and took a seat in the chair. The very first thing he said to her was ...can we pray before we get started?

“He wanted me to pray for him and I did just that,” she said. “He is a driven individual who stays determined to succeed. As a woman of faith, watching his humbleness and faith in God through all he was going through while living in his vehicle and working three jobs, gave me faith and courage to never give up no matter the circumstances.”

Weaver said God put his mom, best friend and Vickers around him to keep him motivated, but just wanting to be a major part of his kids life always keeps him motivated. Right now he is in competition to be the next Favorite Chef and is asking everyone to go to favchef.com/2024/rc-weaver-jr and vote for him. The winner appears on the cover of Taste of Home, cooks with celebrity chef Carla Hall and wins \$25,000.

Weaver attended his oldest daughter’s graduation from Lake Weir High School on May 24. He said he honestly doesn’t know where he would be without the Strong Families program.



Chrissy Vickers, RC Weaver and Pebbles Vance



“I just felt it was ordained by God and everything happens for a reason and he will use my story to help someone else for His glory,” Weaver said. “I want my kids to know that I love them and I would do anything in my power for them to be great and for them to learn from my mistakes so they will never have to go through what I went through.”

“Strong Families has been a lifesaver for me,” he said. “Most importantly, it taught me to never give up no matter how hard the circumstances.”

For more information or to get an intake form, contact Pebbles Vance at **(352) 732-9696 ext. 215** or email pvance@uwmc.org.

Help RC Weaver Jr become the next Favorite Chef with a tax-deductible donation.

“I have a real passion for cooking and I never give up. I recently was homeless but I didn’t stop working or perfecting my craft
-- RC Weaver Jr.

Please vote **BEFORE** the first cut on Thursday, May 30, at 7 p.m.
Go to favchef.com/2024/rc-weaver-jr.

THE JOY OF BEING A FATHER AND A DAD!

For a long time, James D. Stockton III never believed he would ever be a father since his wife, who had Lupus and is now deceased, suffered four miscarriages before their fifth attempt resulted in a daughter, who he calls their little miracle.

But more miracles were on the way. In addition to his daughter, Stockton adopted some boys and took in others he said just showed up. The biological family of one of his sons asked him to take him in and, the state foster care agency felt his home would be a great place for his youngest son, who was getting older and had been continuously overlooked by other families. Now he's is a father and a dad to five children after losing his oldest son a few years ago.



Stockton and his oldest son



Stockton with several of his sons

"I always wanted to have a large family of at least four. My father is the oldest son of a family of eight," he said. "My mother was the oldest of four, but part of a clan of family members that had four or more children."

Stockton said he's surprised by how much he loves being a father and a dad, and he definitely believes there's a difference between the two. He said, a father is one that has a part in the birth of a child, but a dad is one that is involved in the raising and rearing of a child.

"I would have never thought as a young man that being a father would change my entire way of life, and I do not say that in the superficial way that some might think," he said. "But, it truly changed my life from being the father of a daughter to being the dad of sons. I love being able to see and say how proud I am of them, the them that I had a hand in."

Father's Day, recognized nationally in June, is a way for children to show appreciation for the contributions and sacrifices fathers and dads have made to their families. The day raises awareness of the importance of fatherhood in society and provides an opportunity to recognize the role fathers and dads, like Stockton, play in their lives.

"My father took me fishing and I thought it was the best time I ever had. There was teaching involved, mentorship, encouragement and celebration," he said. "I loved every moment until the sun got to hot, the snacks ran out and I saw a water moccasin. Then it was time to go home."

Stockton said he's had breakfast with his dad, whether they cooked it at home or went out to eat, for as long as he can remember. It's a tradition he's doing his best to pass along, as best he can, to his children. The best lesson, he said, his dad taught him was that life is a game. You either play it or get played by it.

"There is nothing that you should not do to help support your family, and to the boys it is always our responsibility to keep a roof over the heads of your family," his dad told him. "Then he would jokingly add: you can't get put out of what you pay for."

Stockton agrees that it's much harder to raise children now due to the breakdown of our communities and the rise of social media. Before starting a family, he said, sit down and count up the cost, include your partner and your extended family because, like never before, it is going to take a tribe.

Although he has no regrets, he wishes he had been more focused on the future, developing generational wealth and multiple streams of income and creating more opportunities to discover more of what the world has to offer them.

His greatest fear is that the light in the eyes of his children, when it comes to him would become dim or in their minds they would think that he would do or allow anything to hurt them or hold them back from being all they can be. More than anything else, he wants them to remember that he loves God and that he loves them more than his own life.

"Being a father is not easy whether like me, you had a father, two grandfathers and a host of uncles and cousins, or if you're doing it all on your own, it's never going to be easy. But, know that it is possible because God placed you here and in their lives for you to have an opportunity to fine tune your ability to Love, Lead and Laugh," Stockton said. "As long as you are able to do those three things to the best of your ability, you will always be someone's superhero, and that is the best feeling in the world."



Stockton and his daughter

HAPPENINGS AT SANKOFA PUBLIC LIBRARY

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TOME TREKKER (See Program Spotlight for more information).
Connie Mann - "The Crown Conspiracy"

Tuesday, June 11, 2 p.m.

Adventure and a dash of romance! Will master forger and art thief Sophie Williams unravel a decades old mystery?

ADVENTURE SEEKERS (See Program Spotlight for more information).
Forest Adventures With Smokey Bear

Thursday, June 6, 11:30 a.m. Only you can prevent wildfires! Celebrate safety in nature with Smokey Bear. Sponsored by Florida Forest Service, Florida Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

Improv Adventures! Saturday, June 15, 2 p.m.
Imagine the possibilities! Presented by Community Stages.

StarLab Planetarium: Thursday, June 27, 11:30 a.m.
Registration recommended. Experience the wonder of the night sky, the solar system and even the galaxy! Co-sponsored by the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department.

The Good, the Bad, the Slithery: Florida Amphibians and Reptiles: Thursday, July 11, 11:30 a.m.

Meet creepy crawlies, slinkers and hop-arounds with David Blackburn, Ph.D., the Curator of Amphibians & Reptiles at the Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida.

ADULTS

Tech Help: Thursdays, 2 to 4 p.m., June 6 - July 25
Have a technology question?

Book Club: Check out the library system's website for more information about more book clubs. Attend one or all!

Second Story Readers: Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.
June 18 "The Fates and Furies" by Lauren Groff
July 16 "The Omega Factor" by Steve Berry
Aug. 20 "The Long Fall" by Walter Mosley

TEENS

YALLA! Teen Club: Tuesdays, 4:30 p.m.
Young Adults Lead Library Awareness! Be a part of a talented teen team and make the library a better experience for all. Guide, participate and design innovative library programs while enjoying snacks and making friends as you earn volunteer hours for service.

MANGAlicious! June 4 and **ConFAB** June 18

FAMILIES

Happy Feet Fitness: Thursdays, 10:30 a.m., June 6 - 27
For ages 3-5 with caregivers. Reading + exercise = fun.
Co-sponsored by City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department.

The Adventure Begins!

Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. Enjoy a variety of stories, crafts and games!
June 6 Forest Adventures With Smokey Bear
June 13 Spy Academy;
June 20 Community Helpers
June 27 StarLab Planetarium

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Games on a Table: Mondays, 4 p.m., June 3 - 24
Play classic and contemporary tabletop games!

Crochet Corner

Thursdays, 4:30 p.m., June 13 and 27
Relax and crochet. All skill levels welcome.



21ST ANNUAL

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

FREE BACKPACK AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES

SATURDAY, JULY 27, 2024

DRIVE THRU ONLY EVENT
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Friends Recycling Center
2350 N.W. 27th Ave., Ocala

Children **MUST BE** in the car to receive Backpack
No Exceptions!

Registration **NOT Required!**

Free Meal for Adults and Children, SWAG Bags with Community Resources for Adults while supplies last!

Sponsored by Marion County Children's Alliance, Community Legal Services and the City of Ocala, in partnership with the County-wide Back to School Community Giveback.



MONSTA FAMILY PRESENTS 2ND

FATHER'S DAY RIDEOUT

EVERYONE IS INVITED

June 15 2024
8390 SW 150TH ST DUNNELLON
FLORIDA 34432

12PM

D. HARM ON THE GRILL

MONSTA FAMILY

MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

THERE'S TOO MUCH TO DO TO BE BORED THIS SUMMER

I am going to start with this as there is a deadline of **JUNE 5** to apply. You may be eligible for a refund from Walmart, but you do have to submit a claim by June 5.

Walmart settled a class action lawsuit for charging too much on certain meat department and produce items. The stated weight on these items wasn't accurate and you ended up paying too much. If you bought meat, chicken, fish or certain bagged produce items like oranges at Walmart between October 19, 2018 and January 19, 2024 you may be eligible for a refund. If you have receipts you can get up to \$500, but without receipts you can still get between \$10 and \$25. Google search Walmart Refund Settlement or go to **WalmartWeightedGroceriesSettlement.com** to submit your claim online.

Having the children home during summer vacation can be expensive but there are many ways to have a fabulous summer without spending a lot of money. Because I have to write this article a few weeks before it is printed, I cannot give you exact dates and times on some things, but they will be easy for you to check on your own. Any child 18 or under can eat a free breakfast and lunch at any school in the county that is open for summer school. This year the closest schools to West Ocala are Eighth Street Elementary and College Park, both of which will serve meals Monday through Thursday. The E.D. Croskey Center will also serve free breakfast and lunch Monday through Fridays.

The Mary Sue Ritch Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 N.W. 21st Ave., is an amazing place. Free to city residents, there are many activities going on throughout the summer and the entire year. Pick up a free copy of "Come Out & Play" Activity Guide at any city park center and learn about all the activities, many of which are free. From Rec It Fridays, Outdoor movies, Reading with the Rangers, the Splash Pad at Lillian Bryant Park and activities at the E.D. Croskey Center there are so many things to do. Adults can have their fun too with activities like Adult Game Night on the first Friday of the Month from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Mary Sue Rich Center to Pop, Lock & Dance on Wednesdays and Fridays from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. also held at the community center.

While you're at the Mary Sue Rich Center you must visit the Sankofa Public Library branch on the second floor. They have many special programs including YALLA! Teen Club, story times, one of a kind shows and even book clubs for adults. *The Adventure Begins!* will be held on Thursday mornings at 11:30 a.m. and includes a variety of stories, crafts and games for the whole family. This library branch has been a great addition to West Ocala. If you like movies, Regal Theatres is offering their regular movies as early as 10 a.m. in the morning and before noon on Saturdays and Sundays all summer with ticket prices between \$5 and \$8. Ask the theatre if they are going to have a summer movie promotion for children this year.

The Appleton Museum offers free admission on the first Saturday of the month. It's a great way to beat the summer heat and let your children see some terrific art.

I have written before about how people want to steal your money. Scamming seems to be at an all time high. Email offers for a year's membership for \$2 to a streaming service are common and all they want to do is get your credit card number. You might get an official looking notice from SunPass that you didn't pay a toll and have to make an immediate payment to avoid a penalty, again this isn't real and they just want your credit card number. If you get a phone call and someone asks "Can you hear me?" just hang up. They just want you to say "Yes" so they can record that and make believe you have authorized an order. If the caller asks "is this (your name) don't say yes, instead say "Who is calling please?" Almost always they will just hang up as they just want the recording of you saying Yes.

Business Spotlight

Kantrell's Posh

A LUXURY HANDBAG BRAND

Business Name: Kantrell's Posh Handbags

No. of Employees: 3

Business Owner: Santosha Dennison

Business Address: Online Boutique (Ocala, Florida)

Business Phone: (352) 454-8664

What Year Did You Start Your Business? 2013

Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Products and/or Services: Handbags

Email: kantrellsposh@gmail.com

Website: www.kantrellsposh.com

Are you on Social Media? Yes

Facebook: Kantrells Posh

Instagram: SantoshaDennison @KantrellsPosh

What or Who Inspired you to start your business?

I started my business after shopping in a department store with my pastor, Pastor Ford. The handbags were quite expensive. I said to my pastor, "I'm going to get my name on a handbag so I can sell it for less for people who can't afford the expensive handbags." I prayed about my vision, and my pastor confirmed that God would allow me to bring it to fruition. Then, God started opening doors for my business.

What Makes Your Business Unique or What's Your Specialty? We specialize in luxury handbags

What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting a Business? Make sure you do the foundational work first. Go through the process of making your business a legal entity. Make sure your vision and mission are clear. Have a business plan strategy for your company. Be sure you invest in your business first financially and with your time. Even when things get hard, never give up!

The Small Business Profile is FREE and open to small businesses located in Marion County with less than 25 employees or solo entrepreneurs.

To have your business featured in an upcoming edition, please request a form by emailing Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com. Completed forms can be returned via email or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.



Howard Middle School Jazz Band in Concert at the Mary Sue Rich Center at Reed Place



PARENTING THE GENERATION OF TODAY

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Free Webinar

TIME

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

DATE

June 14, 2024

- Communication
- Parenting How To's
- Boundaries
- Mutual Respect
- Parenting Roles



HOSTED BY...

Consuella Shaw, LMHC
LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH
COUNSELOR

REGISTER @



www.assuagecc.com

SWAT LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN THEM

Students Working Against Tobacco Gives Florida Youth the Tools They Need To Help Reduce the Tobacco Industry's Influence and Advocate for Change.

Submitted by Gabriella Franklin, President, Marion County SWAT Club

The need for youth to speak up and make their voices heard about the issues they care about is as important as ever, which is why one student-led organization in Florida is leading the way in the fight against the tobacco industry and the addictive products that target youth.

Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) is a statewide youth organization focused on educating, empowering and mobilizing Florida youth to revolt against and de-glamorize Big Tobacco. As a Marion County SWAT chapter member, I believe SWAT is an important cause more youth should get involved in. In Marion County, 1 in 6 (16%) youth, ages 11-17, vape or use another toxic tobacco product, and two-thirds (61%) are exposed to secondhand smoke. Despite significant progress over the years, tobacco and e-cigarette use is still prevalent, and the tobacco industry's antics must be stopped. SWAT is working to change the social norms associated with tobacco, including e-cigarettes.

SWAT has been educating and empowering youth and communities since 1998. SWAT has had several successful initiatives throughout the years. 'Not a Replacement' was a statewide campaign where thousands of youth reminded tobacco companies that they are unique individuals with the potential to positively impact their community. 'Not a Lab Rat' is the current statewide campaign that focuses on the truth behind e-cigarettes and how youth can stop the spread of misinformation. Through such initiatives, SWAT continues to work toward changing the way people think about tobacco, making it less desirable, less acceptable, and less accessible.

My reason for joining SWAT was clear. I joined SWAT to educate and inform my peers and the community about the negative health effects of tobacco consumption. Joining SWAT has helped me gain public speaking skills and increase my knowledge about tobacco. I'm so glad to be a part of SWAT, and I am excited to see what SWAT has in store for me in the future.

In our community, the Marion County SWAT chapter helped make a difference by recruiting youth to join SWAT, attending local events to promote the dangers of youth e-cigarette use, organizing community cleanups, and meeting with our state government representatives to voice support for anti-tobacco and anti-e-cigarette legislation.

There is still work to be done to protect our generation and future generations from the tobacco industry. By working with peers, students can create change that will keep tobacco products out of Marion County and improve the health of our family, friends and community. SWAT is open to all Florida youth in 6th - 12th grade. There is a SWAT chapter in every county in Florida, and some counties also have clubs in schools and community organizations. In Marion County, a community club meets quarterly in Ocala at various locations.

If you are interested in learning more about SWAT and how youth can get involved, contact us at info@mariontfc.com or visit www.SWATFlorida.com. I hope that in writing this, more youth are inspired to stand up and speak out against the tobacco industry by joining SWAT.



AQUATIC FUN CENTERS OPEN FOR THE SUMMER



The City of Ocala's Aquatic Fun Centers are open to the public. The Jervey Gantt Aquatic Fun Center is located at 2390 S.E. 36th Ave. and the Hampton Aquatic Fun Center is located at 255 N.W. Martin Luther King,

Jr. Blvd.

Both facilities will be open seven days a week during the season. Sundays and Mondays will have afternoon sessions only, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.; Tuesdays through Saturdays will offer two sessions, a morning session from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and an afternoon session from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Admission for a single session is \$2 for children ages 17 and under and \$3.50 for adults ages 18 and up.

Holiday hours are available this year on the following days and will offer both morning and afternoon swim sessions:

- Memorial Day: Monday, May 27
- Independence Day: Thursday, July 4.

Upgrades to both facilities include new slides featuring double flumes and a sunshade at the top of the slide entry. Each aquatic center has spray features, a waterfall and waterslides. Each pool has zero-inch depth entry for easy access with a maximum depth of five and a half feet and are ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. Outside coolers, drinks or food are not permitted at either Aquatic Fun Center. Concessions are available.



The City of Ocala, in partnership with the Marion County Board of County Commissioners and the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and

Convention Bureau, will host 'Patriotic Skies: A Fourth of July Drone Experience' on Thursday, July 4, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Tusawilla Park, 800 N.E. Sanchez Ave. The drone show starts at 9:30 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public.

This inaugural event features a one-of-a-kind drone display, replacing traditional fireworks during the celebration. Citizens will be treated to a light show displaying patriotic images across the sky, with Tusawilla Park serving as the backdrop. In addition to the drone show, guests will enjoy live entertainment, food trucks and a kids' zone.

Drone light shows offer a more environmentally friendly alternative to traditional fireworks. Utilizing drones for light displays reduces noise, light pollution, and fire hazards associated with traditional fireworks, allowing for a more inclusive and sustainable approach to enjoy festivities.

Sponsorship opportunities available. For more information, contact the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department at (352) 368-5517 or visit www.ocalafl.gov/julyfourth.



KEEP FLORIDA BEACHES & PARKS ~~~~~ TOBACCO FREE

Cities and counties can keep our beaches and parks safe, healthy, and clean of debris, including cigarette butts and vape cartridges, by implementing local tobacco free parks and beaches policies, thanks to a recent update to the Florida Clean Air Act.

Communities can protect public health and be part of a cleaner Florida.

For more information on how to get involved, visit
TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/get-involved.



