



IT'S NOT AN ORDINARY TEA PARTY!



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- Understanding Your Audience*
- Don't Miss the Final Back 2 School Backpack Giveaways*

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Let's bring our resources together



HOT MEALS * CLOTHING * HYGIENE ITEMS

EVERY THURSDAY 2023 @ 6pm

@ OCALA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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SAVE-THE-DATE

Governor's West Ocala Neighborhood Revitalization Council will host a Town Hall meeting on Tuesday, August 22, at 6 p.m. at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 NW 21st Ave., Ocala, FL 34475.



Our mission is to record the rich history of the people, places and events in the community and share information that impacts the lives of residents in Marion County.



TOWN Talk

MAGAZINE

Sharing the good news happening in our community.

Founders

Monica Bryant & Cynthia Wilson-Graham

Editor

Monica Bryant

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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.

Policy Statement

All submissions become the sole property of Town Talk Magazine.

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Town Talk. All articles, announcements and advertisements submitted are subject to refusal and editing at the editor's discretion.

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EDITOR'S DESK



It's hard to believe summer is almost gone and in 10 days, our students will return to the classroom. We've included the Marion County Public Schools 2023-2024 Instructional Calendar and the Orientation dates and times for students in this issue. Take the opportunity to schedule doctor, dentist and eye appointments on half days so your child won't miss valuable instruction time. Plan to attend orientation at your child's school so they are prepared on the first day of school, and be sure to check your child's school's website frequently for important announcements, especially dates and times for Open House. And please, make sure contact information is UPDATED so if the school needs to reach you concerning your child, they can.

There should be no EXCUSE for any of our children not having a backpack and school supplies. There were a variety of Back 2 School events all across Marion County last weekend and there are several more scheduled this week before school starts. Take advantage of these opportunities. Don't forget, the Back to School Sales Tax Holiday ends on August 6. Save money on things you need to buy anyway.

Some students struggle more than others, and with everything that our community is dealing with, i.e. Gun Violence, Homelessness, Domestic Violence, Suicide and Mental Health issues, etc., we need to make sure our children know they are loved and supported and they don't have to be afraid to ask for help. Just because someone LOOKS like they are okay, doesn't mean that they are. Some of us are good at only letting people see what we want them to see.

Be your child's BEST cheerleader. I love the project Suzette Parker is doing with their students at Howard Middle School to engage parents and encourage them to share their hopes and dreams for their child's future. How great it would be if other school's invited parents to do the same thing for their children even if they don't mail the letters to their school's. Read more about it on page 10 and 11.

Join Kimberly Pompey Wilkerson and War Cry 4 Peace members as they cover not only our children but our entire community in prayer. The group has been holding Prayer Walks weekly and invite everyone who can to join them as they fight to take back our city. Pray with them!

And finally, as you're getting ready to celebrate Labor Day, we hope you will stop by the Ed Croskey Recreational Complex on Sunday, September 3, for a Teen Summit being hosted by the Teen Gun Violence Prevention Taskforce and MEGGA.

Let's Talk!

Monica

Monica T. Bryant, Editor

We can't afford to keep doing nothing! We're losing TOO MANY of our children to gun violence. Enough is Enough!

PRAYER Walk CALLING ALL WILLING VESSELS

Sign in Here

JULY 30	SUN.	6PM	North Road/ Ocala Place Pavilion Oaks
AUG 3	THURS.	6PM	S.S. SHORES
AUG 10	THURS.	6PM	HAPPINESS HOMES/ RICHMOND HEIGHTS
AUG 17	THURS.	6PM	REDDICK, FL
AUG 24	THURS.	6PM	MARION OAKS
AUG 31	THURS.	6PM	CITRA, FL

More information to come: Email: Warcry4peace@gmail.com
Specific Location & Route: fb: War Cry 4 PEACE

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Advertise with Us: Business card: \$35 ~ Quarter-page: \$65 Half-page: \$100.

Ads are black and white and must be submitted in Jpeg or Pdf format and sent to Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com.

Payments can be made via Cash App ([\\$Towntalkmarion](https://www.towntalkmarion.com)) or make check payable to Town Talk Magazine and mail to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT MADE FOR TEACHERS FOUNDATION

Yolanda N. Thomas was looking for a way to honor her grandmother who passed away in 2019. After attending a tea party in Dunnellon last year, she got the idea to host a party.

"A tea party is a memorable and special way to celebrate an occasion," she said. "It also represents style and class, which are attributes that come to mind when I think of my grandmother."

Now Thomas is hosting a tea party to support the Made for Teachers foundation she's establishing in honor of her grandmother, Mary F. Tindal, who was a teacher for 34 years. She taught seven years in Leesburg and 27 years in the Marion County Public School System.

"My grandmother committed her life to teaching others inside and outside of the classroom," she said. "She was the epitome of grace and generosity. She is honored for her exceptional teaching and leadership skills."



The Top Tier Tea Party will be held on Saturday, September 30, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Appleton Museum, 4333 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470. Tickets cost \$30 per person. The event includes musical entertainment, a special mission statement and an array of amazing refreshments. Attendees are encouraged to dress in their best Tea Party attire, and the person with the fanciest hat will receive a prize.



Thomas said they are in the process of becoming a non-profit foundation, which will select teachers who demonstrate an exceptional ability to form bonds of trust, rapport and love with their students, to be fully operational by January 2024. They are planning to create a fun-filled event for the community at the beginning of 2024.

"Made for Teachers is a teacher appreciation foundation that exists to celebrate and recognize teachers for their exceptional work in the classroom," she said. "The goal is to connect and collect donations from the community and businesses to support the overall mission, which is to get items for their classrooms and schools."

Thomas said her grandmother taught her key principles of servant leadership that she demonstrated daily, which included treating everyone fairly and being respectful. She said the goal of the Tea Party is to grow brand awareness, recruit volunteers and secure support from key sponsors.

"She inspired change, supported and cared for everyone. She not only taught love in the classroom, but in life in general," she said. "She knew how to build strong and positive relationships with a love filled heart."

Thomas is seeking media event sponsorships, in-kind sponsorships and promotional partners. The sponsorship package costs \$75 and includes ad placement in a booklet that will be provided to all guests, recognition in the program and on social media (logo or name), a custom gift basket, reserved seating and early dining admission. The deadline to be a sponsor is September 1. Ticket sales end on September 16. The event is open to everyone.

"Each year the Made for Teachers foundation will have a themed gala to showcase the significant investment teachers make in the lives of their students," she said.

Thomas said the community can support the foundation by participating in volunteer activities and social sharing.

Tickets can be purchased at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com): A Top Tier Party.

For more information about the foundation, look up Made for Teachers on Facebook. For sponsorship opportunities, contact Thomas at Madedforteachers@gmail.com or call (352) 405-6185.



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.

2023 - 2024 MCPS SCHOOL CALENDAR



Marion County Public Schools 2023-2024 Instructional Calendar

Board Approved 2/6/2023

July 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

August 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

September 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

October 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

November 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

December 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

January 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

February 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	

March 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

April 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

May 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

June 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

1st 9 Weeks - 44 Days
2nd 9 Weeks - 43 Days

3rd 9 Weeks - 45 Days
4th 9 Weeks - 48 Days

****Weather Make-Up Options****
Early Dismissal Days May Be Used for Weather Days
December 20, 2023 December 21, 2023
April 19, 2024

- = Professional Learning - No School for Students
- = Teacher Workday - No School for Students
- = Two Hour Early Dismissal for Professional Learning and Collaboration
- = School Holiday - No School for Students and Teachers

First Day of School

★ August 10, 2023

Last Day of School

★ May 24, 2024

End of Grading Period

- ◆ October 11, 2023 - Quarter 1
- ◆ December 19, 2023 - Quarter 2
- ◆ March 8, 2024 - Quarter 3
- ◆ May 24, 2024 - Quarter 4

Students Return from Winter Break

January 4, 2024

Teacher Work Day - No School for Students

- October 16, 2023
- January 3, 2024
- March 18, 2024
- May 28, 2024

School Holiday - No School for Students and Teachers

- September 4, 2023 - Labor Day
- November 18-26, 2023 - Thanksgiving Break
- December 20, 2023-January 2, 2024 - Winter Break
- January 15, 2024 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- February 19, 2024 - Presidents' Day
- March 9-17, 2024 - Spring Break
- April 19, 2024 - Mid Term Break
- May 27, 2024 - Memorial Day

STUDENT ORIENTATION DATES AND TIMES SET

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	ORIENTATION DATE & TIME
Anthony	Aug. 8 @ 10AM (Pre-Kindergarten & Kindergarten); 10:45AM (1 st – 5 th grades)
Bellevue	Aug. 8 @ 1PM
Bellevue-Santos	Aug. 8 @ 9:30AM
College Park	Aug. 9 @ 8:30AM (VPK-2); @ 9:15AM (3-5)
Dr. NH Jones	Aug. 9 @ 12PM
Dunnellon	Aug. 9 @ 9AM
East Marion	Aug. 8 @ 1PM
Eighth Street	Aug. 9 @ 10AM
Emerald Shores	Aug. 8 @ 1:30PM (VPK-K); Aug. 9 @ 1:30PM (1-5)
Fessenden	Aug. 9 @ 10AM
Fordham Early Learning Academy	Aug. 8 @ 10:30AM
Greenway	Aug. 9 @ 9AM (VPK-K); 10:30AM (1-5)
Hammett Bowen, Jr.	Aug. 9 @ 8:30AM
Harbour View	Aug. 9 @ 12:30PM
Legacy	Aug. 9 @ 11AM
Madison Street	Aug. 8 @ 9AM (Kindergarten); 1PM (1-5)
Maplewood	Aug. 8 @ 9AM (VPK-2); 10AM (3-5)
Marion Oaks	Aug. 9 @ 12:30PM (Sensory Friendly (ESE)); 1PM (VPK-2); 1:30PM (3-5)
Oakcrest	Aug. 9 @ 10AM
Ocala Springs	Aug. 9 @ 9:30AM (VPK-2); 10:30AM (3-5)
Reddick-Collier	Aug. 9 @ 10AM
Romeo	Aug. 8 @ 1:00PM
Saddlewood	Aug. 9 @ 9AM
Shady Hill	Aug. 8 @ 10AM
South Ocala	Aug. 8 @ 9:30AM (Kindergarten); 10AM (VPK, 1-5)
Sparr	Aug. 9 @ 10AM
Stanton-Weirsdale	Aug. 8 @ 8:30AM
Sunrise	Aug. 8 @ 9:30AM
Ward-Highlands	Aug. 8 @ 9AM (VPK-K); 9:45AM (1-2); 10:45AM (3-5)
Wyomina Park	Aug. 9 @ 1PM
COMBINATION SCHOOL	
Fort McCoy	Aug. 8 @ 10AM
MIDDLE SCHOOL	
Bellevue	Aug. 9 @ 8AM
Dunnellon	Aug. 7 @ 5PM
Fort King	Aug. 8 @ 6PM
Horizon Academy at Marion Oaks	Aug. 5 @ 9:30AM
Howard	Aug. 8 @ 2PM (6 th grade new students) (new 7 th & 8 th grade students)
Lake Weir	Aug. 8 @ 10AM
Liberty	Aug. 8 @ 2PM (6 th grade and new students)
North Marion	Aug. 8 @ 9AM (6 th grade); 10AM (7-8)
Osceola	Aug. 8 @ 9AM
HIGH SCHOOL	
Bellevue	Aug. 7 @ 3:30PM (9 th grade preview-students only); 5PM (all students & parents)
Dunnellon	Aug. 7 @ 6PM
Forest	Aug. 7 & 8 @ 9:30AM (9 th grade); Aug. 8 @ 5:30PM (Returning students)
Hillcrest School	Aug. 9 @ 10AM (New families); 11AM (Returning families)
Lake Weir	July 27 @ 8:30AM (9 th grade preview-students and new students)
Marion Technical College	Aug. 10 @ 9AM
North Marion	Aug. 8 @ 5:30PM
Vanguard	Aug. 7 @ 6PM
West Port	July 27 @ 9AM (9 th grade preview-students only); Aug. 7 @ 6PM (9 th grade and new students)



**Back to School
2023 Sales Tax
Holiday**

**ITEMS EXEMPT FROM
SALES TAX:**

- Learning aids and jigsaw puzzles selling for \$30 or less
- Most school supplies selling for \$50 or less
- Clothing, footwear and accessories selling for \$100 or less
- Computers and related accessories selling for \$1,500 or less (when purchased for non-commercial and personal use)

**July 24 - August 6, 2023
January 1 - 14, 2024**

Visit floridarevenue.com/backtoschool



MT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH
IF WE BUILD CHURCH, SOME CHURCH


**BRING OUR YOUTH BACK TO THE
CHURCH**

☆ **JOIN US AUG. 6, 2023** ☆

PROVERBS 22:6 - "TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO: EVEN WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT."

SAVING SOULS ONE BODY AT A TIME

SERVICE 11:00AM 5000 SW COLLEGE RD., OCALA, FL



**AUG 07
10AM-4PM**

**BACK TO SCHOOL
GIVE BACK**

FOR SINGLE MOMS & DADS

**FREE REGULAR HAIRCUTS | FOOD AND SNACKS
+ LIMITED SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

TO SPONSOR A CHILD CASH APP OR STOP BY SHOP

OCALA CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES ~ DISTRICT 2

Name: Ire J. Bethea Sr.

Age: 70

Occupation: Retired Recreation and Parks Professional; Current City Councilman, District 2

Education: Graduated from Ocala High School; Associate of Arts Degree, Central Florida Community College; and St. Leo University.

Family: Married to Gloria; the couple has seven children

Top 3 Priorities:

1. Public Safety
2. Affordable Housing
3. Infrastructure

Why I am the BEST Candidate:

Throughout my work career I have worked and volunteered in positions, including my current tenure as City Councilman, which has afforded me opportunities to create and establish long term relationships with residents, business owners, community and government leaders. I've worked to maintain consistent and effective communication and participation in local government. I'm involved in community improvement processes and support an inclusive environment for citizens.



CITY OF OCALA ELECTION

(Only registered voters who live within the Ocala city limits are eligible to vote in this election.)

- Voter Registration Deadline: August 21, 2023
- Mail Ballot Request Deadline: September 9, 2023 (Mail ballots must be received by the Supervisor of Elections office by 7 p.m. Election Day to be counted)
- Election Day: September 19, 2023 ~ Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.



2024 PRIMARY ELECTION

- Early Voting - TBD
- Mail Ballot Request Deadline: August 10, 2023 by 5 p.m. (Mail ballots must be received by the Supervisor of Elections office by 7 p.m. Election Day to be counted)
- Election Day: August 20, 2024 ~ Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Name: Reginald E. Landers, Jr.

Age: 53

Occupation: Educator

Education: Master's in Education and Leadership, Bachelors of Science in Political Science and Psychology.

Family: Fiance, Sandra Weaver

Top 3 Priorities:

1. Community Involvement
2. Infrastructure
3. Economic Development

Why I am the BEST Candidate:

I grew up in Ocala, finished high school at Forest High, but I have always maintained friendships with the Knights, etc. Furthermore, I am enjoying my role as Coach Reggie, a position I have held for 29 years working with our youth. I am here to serve the community of District 2. If elected, I will work on behalf of the citizens in our community to foster a beneficial and sustainable lifestyle for our family, community, children and for future generations.

PHOTO
NOT
AVAILABLE

RE-REGISTER YOUR MAIL-IN BALLOTS NOW!

FLORIDA SENATE BILL 90
ALL MAIL-IN BALLOTS EXPIRED 12/31/2022

Please provide your:

- Voter's name
- Voter's address
- Voter's date of birth
- Voter's Florida driver's license number or Florida ID card number, or last four digits of social security number
- Voter's signature (written requests only)

How to Request:

1. **Online:** Online [Vote-by-Mail Ballot Request Service](#)
2. **By phone:** 352-620-3290
3. **In person:** Marion County Election Center, 981 NE 16th Street, Ocala, FL 34470
4. **In writing:**
Email: VoteByMail@VoteMarion.Gov
Fax: 352-620-3286
Mail: PO Box 289, Ocala, FL 34478-0289

www.VoteMarion.Gov
★ 352-620-3290

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED IN OUR COMMUNITY

BECOME A BIG & MAKE AN IMPACT!

Mission

Create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth, so all youth achieve their full potential.



Community-Based

- Spend 8 hours a month in the community
- 15-month commitment

Site-Based

- Spend 1-hour a week at designated school
- 12-month commitment

BECOME A MENTOR AND MAKE A BIG IMPACT!



Mission:

To create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth, so all youth achieve their full potential.

COMMUNITY BASE Program

Spend 8 hours a month in the community with youth. 15-month commitment.

SCHOOL BASED Program

Spend one hour a week at designated school with youth. 12-month commitment.

For more information contact: BBBS Office at (352) 566-3094 or (352) 440-2558



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Scan the QR code for more information.



OSD Ocala Steel Orchestra Inc. presents

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7:00PM FREE
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Casey Jones
Sean Thomas

SEANMUSIC GLOBAL TRIO
led by SEAN THOMAS
Ft: Rafael Abdallah
Howard Wopner
Ruby Boddie

Dunnellon Historical Dept
12061 S Williams St,
Dunnellon, FL 34432

SPONSORED BY:

THE BE AND ROBERT

PICKING UP THE PIECES WORKS TO RAISE

Michelle M. Pepin never expected to lose her son the way she did. Pepin and her daughter Caitlin didn't like the young woman her son was dating at the time because she was older and a snob. Previously, his girlfriend had made a comment at Pepin's grandson's birthday party that when she gets tired of people, she can make them disappear.

"When I asked her what the hell she meant by that, she just smirked and walked away," she said. "I told Ian she was bad news, and I didn't like her. She was constantly lying to Ian."

Pepin was with her son the night before he died. They had gone to the store and they had a deep conversation about God. They went home, talked a little more and he gave her a tight squeeze and said "Thanks for loving me ma," and she replied "You make it so easy Bo," which was his nickname.

Ian Nicholas-Gunnar Nelson, 26, died the next day as a result of Fentanyl poisoning. Pepin had just taken her grandkids to lunch at a restaurant their mom worked at. When she received the call, she froze. Caitlin, who was eight months pregnant with Pepin's granddaughter Ianella, grabbed the phone from her mom. The baby, named after Ian, was born four days after his birthday.

"I miss every damn thing about my baby," Pepin said. "The hardest things are the little things - Not hearing his voice, NOT hearing his laugh, NOT looking into his big brown eyes with his long beautiful eyelashes, NOT hearing his funny jokes and NOT hearing him tell me he loves me and MOST OF ALL, his big hugs."



Ian and his sister Caitlin

Last year on August 4, her son's birthday, she got a watercolor heart with his name. It reads "Even Angels Fall," and has a halo over the letter "L."



Pepin's organization, Picking up the Pieces, Inc., which she started to honor the loss of her son, became official on January 27, 2020. The meaning of the name, she said, is when things break apart, what do we do? We "pick up the pieces" to put things back together the way we want it. She said getting involved, educating herself and asking questions helped her pick up the pieces after her son died.

For the second year, Pepin, founder of Picking Up the Pieces, is hosting an International Overdose Awareness Day on Saturday, August 31, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the Ocala Downtown Square, 101 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala. The event is part of an international initiative that raises awareness, commemorates those who died as a result of a drug overdose and acknowledges the grief of the family and friends left behind. The event can include up to 50 exhibitors. The deadline to sign up to participate is August 10.

"With this event, we hope to unite like-minded people in other organizations and communities to help eradicate the stigma in order for more people to come forward for assistance," Pepin said.

Pepin's son loved skateboarding and had an ear for music and a love of art. She said he didn't start smoking weed until he was nearly 17 years old, and then older friends introduced him to opiates, which escalated to heroin.

Continued on page 9

AWARENESS ABOUT DRUG OVERDOSE

Continued from page 8

He served time in jail and then struggled for awhile. When he passed away, he had been in recovery for 18 months, was working in construction and living with his family.

"I want people to know that my son had dreams. My son loved his nephew Jayce as if he was his father, and my son loved his sister Caitlin. They were 11 months apart and were best friends," she said.

Pepin said her son never liked to see people hurt, and although he was handsome, he had low self-esteem.

"He always thought that he wasn't enough and that breaks my heart because he was and is everything," Pepin said. "I can't wait to be with you again."

Picking Up the Pieces provides harm reduction services, peer support, street outreach, sober living contacts, art therapy, human trafficking and re-entry assistance. Their phones are on 24/7 and a teen group, which will educate on the dangers of substance use disorders and grief, will start soon.

"Anyone that needs assistance can come to us. If we cannot provide the service, we will find someone that can fulfill their needs," Pepin said.

The 501C3 Non-Profit organization participates in a lot of events. They have representatives on the planning committee for Ocala's annual Recovery Fest; they created a monthly newsletter called M.U.T.E., which stands for "Mothers United," and they plan to host a Memorial Walk in December at the MOMS Park.



Ian and Pepin's grandson Jayce

\$50 **Exhibitors Table**
Meet and interact with all event participants as an event exhibitor! Table Location to be assigned by event staff.

\$350 **Supporting Sponsor**
3 Social Media Recognition Posts during Month of August, Exhibitor Table (location assigned by Event Staff), 2 Event T-Shirts

\$650 **Gold Sponsor**
Name on Shirt, Banner, and promotional material (Flyers), 5 Social Media Recognition Posts during Month of August, Preferred Exhibitor Table Location (selected by sponsor from available preferred spaces), 4 Event T Shirts

\$1,000 **Title Sponsor**
Prime Exhibitor Table Space (selected by sponsor from available prime spaces), Logo on Banner, Name in Press Release, Logo on Shirt, Logo on all event promotional material (Flyers), 7 Social Media Recognition Posts during Month of August, 6 Event T-Shirts

To become a sponsor or exhibitor, scan the QR code to complete the required form: (Please Note: sponsor level or exhibitor space is NOT secured until payment is received)

Sponsorship or Exhibitor payments can be made via:

CashApp: \$Iansmom2021
Venmo: @Michelle-Pepin-8
PayPal: pickingupthepieces2020@gmail.com
Zelle: 352-816-3793
Checks payable to: Picking Up the Pieces

Picking Up the Pieces is a 501C3 Non-Profit Organization. All funds raised through this event are utilized to fund programs aimed at supporting addiction recovery efforts for Marion County residents.



Donations are needed to operate the organization and to keep their community outreach going. Their greatest challenge right now is replacing their outreach vehicle, which stopped running but is desperately needed so they can reach more people.

Pepin said volunteers, monetary donations, socks, hygiene products, snacks, water and little notes are always needed. She said words of hope go a long way. Additional ways the community can get involved include calling, emailing or inviting them to speak at events.

"As a mother of loss, I don't sugarcoat the results of drug use," Pepin said. "Kids are dying from trying things. How tragic!"

For more information or questions, call Pepin at (352) 816-3793 or email her at pickingupthepieces2020@gmail.com.

To learn more about the organization, go to <http://pickingupthepieces.us> or Tiktok at [Narcannom18](https://www.tiktok.com/@Narcannom18).



INVEST IN YOUR CHILD: SHARE YOUR HOPES AND

Suzette Parker wants to see Howard Middle School (HMS) back in its former glory as an "A" school. In order to make that happen, Parker, principal of HMS, knows they have to make sure they build strong relationships with families and the community.



"We have a diverse school that serves our community and the many students who choose Howard through School Choice," Parker said. "We want to ensure that we can serve ALL students as a single School Community; our school is filled with teachers who want to serve all of our students, and I want Howard to return to its former status as "THE" Middle School of Choice in Marion County. This is Howard!"

One of the ways that Parker hopes to accomplish her goal is through Dreams and Goals letters. Although it's the first time she's attempted this project, she's hoping that students will see that their families, teachers and the staff at Howard are all in this together for THEM; a united front in wishing them success at Howard.

On July 26, Parker sent out the script below via Robo call, e-mail and text to all students currently enrolled at the school. A reminder is also on the school's marquee and on the homepage of the school's website.

The script reads:

Help, this is Principal Parker from Howard Middle School. I hope you and your family are enjoying your time away from school. However, we have been feverishly preparing for the return of our students! I am calling to ask for your help. I would like you to write your student a letter telling them what your hopes and dreams are for them this school year.

During this pre-school planning time, I keep the hopes and dreams that I have for our students in the forefront of my mind. I try to think of ways that as educators, we can encourage, challenge and celebrate milestones during the school year. As a principal, I set my goals and dreams for our students, which include things like meeting academic challenges, persevering when the work gets hard and demonstrating kindness to others. I plan to share some of my hopes and dreams for our students with them during an assembly at the beginning of the year. As the mother of a middle school student myself, I recognize that my educator dreams for our students and my mom dreams for my son are different. As a mom, I want those educator things for my son too, but I also want him to choose friends that value him, and I want him to stay true to himself. I want him to be the best version of himself even when no one is looking, and I want him to find joy in learning.

This year Parker's biggest hope and dream for their students is for them to show more tolerance and support for one another. She said in middle school, too many students bring petty conflicts that began on social media to school, and many students judge others based on their physical appearance.

DREAMS FOR THEIR FUTURE WITH THEM THIS YEAR

"If we can model and insist on the "Golden Rule" - treat others as you would like to be treated, then we will be well on our way to a unified school community focused on learning. This is Howard," she said.

Parker said a reminder will go home when she sends the parking fundraiser message; orientation reminder and the Welcome Back message to students. She said they will ask students to write back to their families before Winter Break and towards the end of the year to share their progress towards their goals and to share any goals that they have set for themselves.

She said they are hoping to be able to give every child a letter on the Monday after school starts, which is August 14. You can drop your letter by the school or even mail it to the school at: 1655 NW 10th St, Ocala 34475. Please address your envelope to "Hopes and Dreams." On the back of the letter or in the return address spot, be sure to include your child's full name and grade level.

Meet Suzette Parker



Mrs. Parker grew up in Gwinnett County, Ga, where she began her teaching career as a high school science teacher.

Her grandparents retired to South Florida, and every year that they came down to visit them for Easter, they would stop in Ocala to eat at Lorito's and to see the horses.

Parker's parents always wanted to move to Ocala to be in horse country. They retired here in 1996, and in 2001, she moved to Marion County and bought a ten acre horse farm.

She got a job as a teacher at West Port High School and was Marion County Teacher of the Year in 2005. From West Port, she moved to the North Side where she was the dean at North Marion Middle, and later, the Testing Coordinator at North Marion High School. Parker's first Assistant Principal job was at Osceola Middle and in 2015, she was named Principal at the school.

This year marks Parker's 28th year in education, and her 22nd year in Marion County Public Schools.

She met her husband, Adam, on a blind date, set up by a fellow teacher at West Port. They were married in 2003. Adam has two children, Casey and Brandon, from a previous marriage, and their son AJ was born in 2009.

Adam is a thoroughbred horse trainer, and they live on a horse farm in the Howard Middle School zone. They also breed, raise and sell two or three racehorses each year, and they have a small flock of chickens that they keep on their farm.

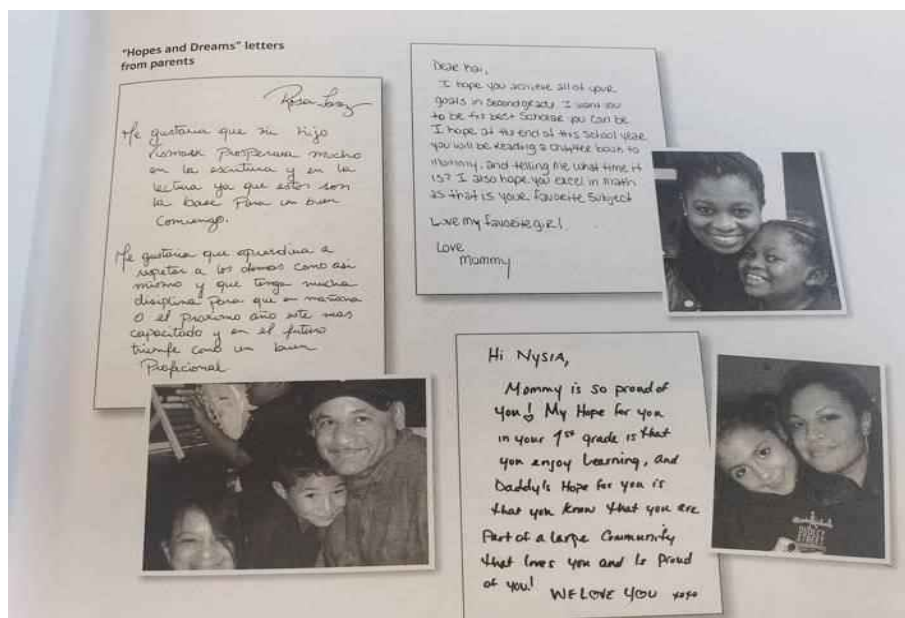
For: Last Name, First Name

Grade: (Your child's grade)

Envelope format

Hopes & Dreams Letters
Howard Middle School
1655 NW 10th Street
Ocala, FL 34475

Sample letters



~ UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE ~

By Elgin Carelock, Chairman of the Greater Ocala Community Development Corporation

Whether you are writing an article or selling a product, the ability to reach your target audience comes down to how well you understand to whom you are speaking. It's not enough to look at data insights for demographic descriptions and characteristics, you must find out what make them "tick" and how what you have to offer brings value to their lives.

As consumers, we endure a constant barrage of branding, advertising, and marketing and have become quite effective in ignoring those things that are not relevant to what we think, live or believe. The same is true for the person you are trying to reach.

Sure, we can use catchy ad phrases or click bait, but just as you feel annoyed when the product does not deliver what the tagline promised, so shall your audience quickly leave your presence and be very reluctant to trust anything else from your brand.

If you are already established, one of the best ways to understand your customer base are short surveys and polls. These can be two or five questions that take a deeper look into a specific area instead of generic questions to determine whether they like you. Instead think about their experience with your brand and ask if any aspect can be improved.

For example, here are questions related to a retail customer:

1. When you last visited our store, how easy was it to find an associate to help you?
a. Very easy b. Somewhat easy c. Never found anyone to help
2. Did they take you to what you were looking for or just give directions?
a. Took me to the item b. Gave directions c. Didn't know where it was
3. Did they smile and greet you as you approached?
a. Yes b. No c. Don't remember
4. How satisfied were you with how long it took to check out?
a. Very satisfied b. Somewhat satisfied c. Took way too long
5. What would have made your last visit better?
a. _____

As you can see, this poll used a variety of response techniques from a Likert scale to typing a response. This method will keep the customer engaged than simply grading from 1 to 5. The questions are also very specific to the process of them making a purchase, which makes it easier for the customer to recall the experience.

Once you have this data, you should not only be looking for opportunities for improving customer experiences, but a better understanding of what is important to them as individuals.

If you received 100 surveys and 85 said the associate smiled and greeted them when they approached, you can use images of smiling employees in your marketing. Give your team buttons with a smile on it and the phrase "because of you."

Combining that information with demographic characteristics will make your branding and marketing more effective as you engage your customers and potential customers on the various forms of media from texting to social media. More importantly, it gives the customers the feeling you understand who they are and what is important to them, which can lead to loyalty to your brand and long-term sustainability.

If you are a start-up or new to a market, take the time to look at your top three competitors. Go to their Google Business page and read the first twenty or so reviews. Find out what is being said in social media group and how the companies respond. Click on the name of the person leaving the review or comment and look at their posts to get a feel for who they are. If you do that for ten or twenty people, it will give you a starting point for your marketing and branding that you can adjust as you gain customers and data.

Startups can use polls as well, but I would keep it to one question geared around your specific industry and what the customers are interested in seeing change or be added. For example, we were building a restaurant concept for a client and posted the question, "What types of food would you like to see added to our city". We received over 200 suggestions and more than 1,400 people who liked the post responses. (Continued on page 14)

Business Spotlight



Business Name: Tutoring with Ms. Franklin

No. of Employees: 1

Business Owner: Elizabeth Franklin

Business Address: Marion County Public Library,
2720 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470

Business Phone: (352) 362-0187

What Year Did You Start Your Business? 2021

Hours of Operation: By Appointment Only
Monday - Thursday, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Saturdays, noon to 4 p.m.

Products and/or Services:

Provides tutoring services to students in grades K-12 in reading, math and writing

Email: elizabeth.franklin02@gmail.com

Website: N/A

Are you on Social Media? Yes

Facebook: Elizabeth Franklin

Instagram: love_is_liz

What or Who Inspired you to start your business?

As an educator in the public school system, I see multiple needs to provide students with affordable tutoring services tailored to their specific needs.

What Makes Your Business Unique or What's Your Specialty?

My business offers private tutoring that specializes in closing personal academic gaps.

What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting A Business?

Don't give up and always believe in yourself! You are exactly who you need to be and you are enough! Trust God through the process!

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.

Mom & Baby Club celebrates

World Breastfeeding Week

10 a.m.–12 p.m., Wednesday, August 2
Southeastern Livestock Pavilion Auditorium
2232 NE Jacksonville Rd., Ocala FL 34470



Learn about breastfeeding and community agencies that support breastfeeding families in Marion County. This event will feature activities and information presented by our community partners, including:

- Breastfeeding education
- Health education
- Community resources
- Activities for kids
- Door prize drawings
- and much more!




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MEET CHARLES EADY



Take a tour of the special exhibition “The Unscene South” on Saturday, August 5, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. with artist, author and educator Charles Eady.

A little-known population of Blacks lived free in the United States, long before Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery. Through Eady’s paintings, “The Unscene South” shares evidence and details of their existence, and presents opportunities to view the realities of their daily lives, seeking to eliminate many misconceptions about Blacks and the South.

Eady, a mixed-media artist, was born in South Carolina and is currently based in Ocala, FL. He graduated from Claflin University with a BA in Art Education. His art has been exhibited both nationally and internationally.

Tours will meet in the second-floor Modern and Contemporary galleries, and are free as part of Free First Saturday.

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- Limited seating
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- and *MORE* Guest Speakers to be announced!

DEMOCRATIC WOMEN: EDUCATE • LEAD • PERSIST

MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

WHEN BUYING A CAR, MAKE SURE YOU CAN AFFORD THE REPAIRS!

I was stopped at a red light two months ago and a car ran right into the back of my car. The damage was fairly minimal although the bill at the collision shop was a little over \$3,300. The man who hit me had good insurance so they paid all of the repairs plus the rental car while my car was in the shop. What some people don't know is once your car has been in an accident it has what is called Diminished Value when you go to sell or trade it. If you aren't at fault and the driver who hits you has insurance you can file a claim for this Diminished Value to their insurance company. I had to get in writing from a car dealer what the car would be worth to them if it didn't have an accident showing on Carfax and what it would be worth with the accident showing. In less than ten days after submitting my claim I had a check for \$1,250 from the insurance company. If you are ever the victim in a car accident remember to submit this claim for Diminished Value, it is a real thing.

Keeping with the theme of writing about cars. Twice this past month people were asking for help with car repairs. One was driving a Jaquar and the estimate was around \$9,000. The other was an older Mercedes and that estimate was a little over \$7,000. When buying a used car, even if something luxurious and exotic looks like a good deal, think long-term about what the repair costs will be for a luxury foreign car. Often it is a lot cheaper having to fix a Chevrolet, Ford or other more reasonably priced cars like Hyundai, Kia, Nissan, Toyota or Honda.

Last month I wrote about the importance of comparison shopping when looking for insurance. Comparison shopping is important on almost every purchase. This week I was looking to buy rubber floor mats for my car. The price at the dealer was \$150. My car is smarter than me, my phone is way smarter than me and sometimes I think even my vacuum cleaner is smarter than me, but the point is I have learned that on my phone on the Google App, there is a camera at the right side of the search bar. You can take a picture of just about anything or pull a photo of an item from your phone photo album and this app will show you what the item is worth, where you can buy it and the prices. I ended up buying my mats from a new car dealer in St. Louis for \$97 and free shipping was included.

We will get away from cars to finish this month. Did you know that 1 out of every 5 people in Florida have unclaimed property being held for them by the state? This money totals two billion dollars. In the United States there is \$70 billion dollars of unclaimed funds being held by the states. Most of this is utility and rent deposits, refunds or interest or a balance from a forgotten savings account. All you have to do is go to ftreasurehunt.gov and submit your name and see if something pops up. I have a relative who just received over \$1,700 by doing this. As I have written before, I love free money.

(Continued from page 12)

The purpose was not for our client to create one of the concepts suggested, but to understand what types of cuisines the market was missing and what items to add to his menu as a new restaurant. As he grows, he can use surveys and polls to gauge performance, customer satisfaction and their overall brand experience.

We must remember our audiences are people just like us and want to feel valued and appreciated. By taking the time to get to know them better, we can not only make more money, but grow as we provide what is important to them and they share their experiences with their friends and family, as well as on social media.



Chapter Meetings
First Thursday of the month
5:30 PM
NOMA Gallery
939 N. Magnolia Ave



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