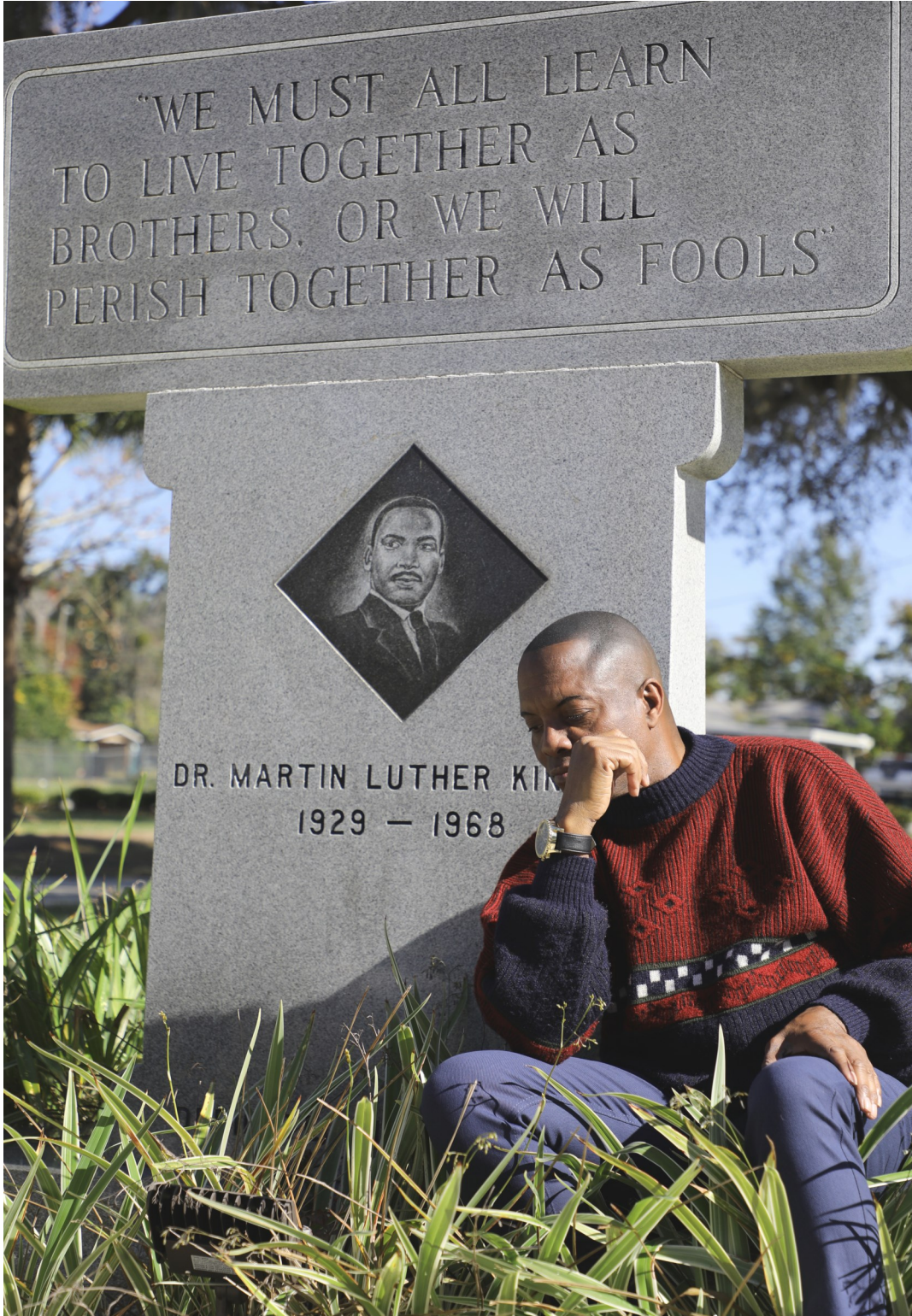




REMEMBERING A KING!



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Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Celebrates 113th Founders' Day

When She Makes More Money

Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Join the Celebration: A Day On, Not a Day Off



COMMUNITY SUPPORT MEETING

January 4 | 5:30 p.m.

OPD Headquarters Community Room
402 S Pine Ave., Ocala

The Florida Crisis Response Team has organized an informational session for everyone affected by the shooting incident that took place on December 23 at the Paddock Mall.

It is free of charge and designed to help participants understand their reactions to the tragedy, learn effective coping methods, and access local resources to help themselves and their loved ones.

For more information, please call our Victim Advocate Unit at
352-369-7139



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

Photography/Editor

Cynthia Wilson-Graham

Contributors

Scott Hackmyer

Elgin Carelock

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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EDITOR'S DESK



I've always looked forward to the holiday season. It's usually my favorite time of year, but this year, I found myself thinking this is the worst Christmas I've had in a long time.

We had five shooting incidents in a span of 48-hours. Our domestic violence homicides increased to five and the last minute calls from parents trying to get Christmas presents for their children was heartbreaking. I even imagined the disappointments on the faces of the little kids who woke up Christmas morning and had nothing under the tree - if they even had a tree - to open.

For the past 13 years, the Family Violence Prevention Workgroup has wrapped presents in the Paddock Mall to raise money for victims and survivors of domestic violence. I had just dropped off some supplies and was headed to pick up the U-Haul we needed when my sister called and told me there had been a shooting in the mall! My first thought was Stop Playing! Nothing like that is suppose to happen in the community we call home. But it did, and a young man lost his life in a very tragic way, just days after another young man was shot and killed.

In my mind, it really was the worst Christmas ever until I was reminded of the real reason for the season during a Christmas message by the Rev. Eric Cummings, who's topic was "The Greatest Gift Ever" on Christmas morning. How could it be the worse Christmas when Jesus is the Reason for the Season, and the only gift that matters. It reminded me how easy it is to dwell on everything bad that happens in our lives instead of appreciating the good things.

I saw this on a friend's timeline on Facebook. The author is unknown, but it summed up my thoughts going into the new year. Maybe it will help you too!

"I'm Not Taking Anything With Me Into 2024"

- If you owe me, don't worry about it
- If you wronged me, it's all good.
- If you're beefing with me, you won
- If we aren't speaking, it's cool. Be safe and I wish you well.
- If you're talking about me, thanks for the advertisement.
- If you don't deal with me, continue not to. Keep it that way.
- If you don't like me, I don't care
- If you left me hanging, don't pick me up.
- If you feel I've wronged you, I apologize.
- In all things I forgive you.

Life is too short for all this "extra" unnecessary drama!
No one is promised tomorrow!

Let's Talk!

Monica Bryant

Monica T. Bryant, Editor

**Thank you for Supporting Town
Talk Magazine!**

Happy New Year to All of You!

Six Tips to Start Your New Year off Right

- Do a Self-Review
- Finish Tasks
- Reach Out to a Loved One
- Clean Up
- Set New Goals
- Put YOURSELF at the top of the List

Source:

<https://connecticut.news12.com/tips-to-start-your-new-year-the-right-way>

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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

PIRATE-THEMED LITERACY PROGRAM



Keith Carson aka Captain Kidd Carson

Keith Carson, aka Captain Kidd Carson, wants to make reading fun for children and show them the adventures they can go on by reading books.

“Reading teaches and expands our minds. It enriches our lives and shapes our dreams; reading opens doors and inspires us to become who we are,” according to information on his website. “Reading to children early in their lives is very important. It’s also vital that they learn those skills themselves when it is developmentally appropriate. The early hallmarks of literacy, such as letter and word recognition, are one of the main predictors of success as children grow.”

Carson, who started dressing up as a pirate for Halloween when he was young, launched a pirate-themed literacy program in 2022. He said his daughter loved books since she was very young and he credits her reading ability to the fact that she was always a straight A student and always reading and writing at a higher level.

“I wanted to make it fun. I think children show more interest in learning when it’s fun or interesting,” he said. “Over the years, I discovered that kids love pirates, and not just boys. Having been in all five Pirates of the Caribbean movies, I thought it was a great theme to go with.”

Although he doesn’t know why, Carson always loved pirates and still does, but when he got the chance to be in the Pirates of the Caribbean movies, he said, that took it to the next level.

The Literacy program is currently funded by Carson and all the books are donated, mostly by the authors, but they plan to start some fundraising campaigns. The community can support the program, which serves children in kindergarten up to age 11, by spreading the word and inviting them to their school, library, special event or by making a donation. He said the event organizer determines the length of the program.

“We can tailor it (the program) to fit anyone’s needs,” he said. “It includes me reading Pirate tales to the children and giving away some cool Pirate swag and everyone gets a certificate making them a Bookaneer.”

Carson, a born entertainer, pitch man and emcee, doesn’t just dress up as a Pirate; he actually becomes the character, complete with Pirate vocabulary and garb. In 2020, he was elected into the esteemed Order of Leviathan and in 2021, he was inducted into the International Pirate Hall of Fame.

An ordained minister, Carson has years of on-camera and on-mic experience and can legally perform almost any type of ceremony and provide assistance with vows or any other needs requested. He has made it his mission to bring literature to life, and to bring the excitement back to reading for all ages.

For more information, to book an event or to make a donation, call Carson at (561) 770-3363 or go to <https://captainkiddcarson.com/literacy-program/>.



“Books are Treasure for the Mind”

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.

NEW FAITH COMMUNITY AND WHOLISTIC RECOVERY PROGRAM FOR WOMEN SET TO OPEN IN OCALA!

Dr. Michael Beck and his wife the Rev. Jill Beck, co-pastors at St. Marks United Methodist Church since 2020, are not convinced that Ocala needs another church, at least not how we have conventionally thought of them because many of the ones we have now sit empty throughout the week and are not well attended on Sunday.

“But we do need many new faith communities that start where Jesus started, caring for those experiencing poverty and heartache,” he said.

Dr. Beck said the surgeon general released a report earlier this year describing our social condition as an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. One facet of this is the largest overdose epidemic in US history, over 100,000 people die each year.

The Beck’s and their team are launching Compassion United Methodist Church, a diverse new faith community that includes a wholistic residential housing program for women. The first official worship service and block party will be held on Sunday, January 7, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the former Druid Hills United Methodist Church site, located at 1712 S.E. Lake Weir Ave., Ocala.

Dr. Beck said they were in an exuberant conversation about potential names for the church when Amy, one of their lay ministers, spoke up and said: “The name doesn’t matter because God is Compassion, and we need to be a community that shares God’s love with everyone.” He said Amy, a member of St. Mark’s for several decades, has Down syndrome, and when she spoke, it was as if the voice of God entered the room.

“Compassion will not be just another place to come watch a show on Sundays. It will be a hub of activity seven days a week,” he said. “We will hold a free weekly community dinner and daily recover meetings We will seek to be a real community where people can experience healing from our isolation and loneliness.

Rev. Jill Beck will be the Director of the women’s program and lead pastor of the new church. The opening block party features guest speakers Ben Marciano, Mayor of the City of Ocala, Mark Imes, Open Arms Village board chair, June Edwards, Rondo Fernandez, Kendall Lane, Betti Jefferson and other community leaders. The event is open to the public and includes a bounce house, food trucks, games, face painters and pony rides.

The new recovery program provides housing, therapy, resume preparation, job skill development, driver’s license and transportation assistance, education, family reunification, case management and recovery services.

St. Mark’s is home to Open Arms Village, a holistic residential program for men. There are two dedicated buildings for recovery meetings and an Alcoholics Anonymous and a Narcotics Anonymous clubhouse. Open Arms Village houses 24 men and Compassion will house 13 women and a house mother.

“Our ministry is built on lay empowerment,” Dr. Beck said. “We will utilize a preaching team of six folks between the two sites.”



Rev. Jill Beck

Rev. Jill Beck said they will follow the same screening process they use at Open Arms Village. Women will need to put in an application to be considered. There is no cost to participate, and they will help residents get jobs, a driver’s license and even a vehicle.

“They are able to work while residents in the program and save up their money until graduation,” she said.

But, the biggest challenge right now is raising the money for the renovations and program costs on the housing side because there are significant costs to get the building ready for the women.



Dr. Michael Beck

Worship Service Times

St. Marks UMC on Sunday:

- 9 a.m. Contemporary
- 10 a.m. Recovery Church
- 11 a.m. Traditional Service
- 6:30 p.m. Community Dinner on Wednesday’s called the Family Table where 100 folks gather. Youth and children participate in a gathering called Eat. Pray. Play. during that time.

Compassion UMC on Sunday:

- 11 a.m. Worship Service
- 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday’s, Big Hammock Community Dinner includes a shared meal, prayer and a Jesus story.
- Several new recovery meetings start soon and will meet weekly.

All events are open to the public.

Continued from page 5

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The first thing the community can do to help is pray for us, Rev. Jill Beck said. The second is to show up and give the gift of your presence especially for Sunday worship. She said if you already have a church home, you can still help out on Tuesday nights.

“We both have always dreamed of ministry like this. It is our unique calling,” the Becks said. “Although we were sent to serve other churches across north central Florida for the past 12 years, we are Ocala natives who have always maintained a home here and have a deep love for our city. We have done similar ministry like this in other places and saw many lives healed.”

For more information, call the church office at **(352) 622-4475**, visit their website at <https://compassionocala.org>, their Facebook Group is Compassion United Methodist Church or follow them on Facebook at Big Hammock Community Dinner.



Dr. Michael and Rev. Jill Beck

DEADLINE TO APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE: JANUARY 13.

The deadline to apply for the Inflation Reduction Act Assistance for Producers who experienced discrimination in USDA Farm Loan Programs is **January 13, 2024**. Applications are free and do not require a lawyer. To ensure timely processing, there will be no extensions to the deadline. The specifics depend on the application submission method:

- **U.S. or overnight mail must be postmarked by January 13, 2024**
- **E-Filing by 11:59 p.m. Pacific time January 13, 2024**
- **In person, at a regional office by 8 p.m. on January 13, 2024.**

Regional offices have been set up around the country so individuals can visit, get help and apply in-person. To find regional resources, go to <https://22007applygov/local-assistance.html>.

Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides \$2.2 billion in financial assistance for farmers, ranchers and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA's farm lending programs prior to January 1, 2021.

To be eligible, you must have experienced discrimination by USDA in USDA farm lending (programs administered by FSA, the Farm Service Agency or its predecessor the Farmers Home Administration) prior to January 1, 2021. (You may also be eligible if you currently have assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021).

The IRA specifies the assistance must be delivered to impacted producers by nongovernmental program administrators. USDA signed contracts with three vendors: Midtown group is the national administrator; the Windsor Group serves the eastern regions of the U.S., and Analytic Acquisitions serves the western region. The vendors are working together to solicit applications from eligible farmers, provide technical assistance and make decisions about each case (following rules set by USDA).

Te'Sha Jackson, Region II East Outreach Manager, has been working to get the word out to the community.

“As an exceptional agricultural leader in each state, we desire to partner to supply outreach and awareness,” Jackson said in an e-mail. “We look forward to establishing a collaboration This may include collaborating with local organizations, best methods to reach the local community events to assist farmers to complete the application and provide technical assistance to farmers, ranchers or forest landowners.

The national administrator will manage all aspects of the application process including making determinations on applications and the regional hubs will conduct outreach, technical assistance and provide recommendations on applications.

Visit www.22007apply.gov (<http://www.22007apply.gov>) for detailed information about application procedures. This online resource provides information about eligibility requirements, available assistance and application forms. Further assistance can be obtained by calling the National Call Center at **(800) 721-0970** or by emailing info@22007apply.gov.

For more information, call Jackson at **(352) 426-0861** or e-mail tesha.jackson@windsorgroupllc.net.

KAPPA ALPHA PSI FRATERNITY, INC. CELEBRATES ITS 113TH FOUNDERS' DAY

In the fall of 1975, while attending FAMU, Ire Bethea Sr., thought about pledging to a fraternity, but he knew he didn't have the time or the finances he needed because he was working his way through college. But after watching the ceremonial activities for all the fraternities, he inquired about their purpose and found out that they were all about community, unity, justice and dignity.

Bethea joined Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. in the Spring of 2004, because it stood out to him over the other fraternities.

"Achievement in every human endeavor, not only achieve, but do what you can to carry others with you, understanding that" we all are our brothers' keepers," Bethea said.

Now Bethea and the Brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. will host a family-friendly night of games and prizes on Friday, January 5, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place. On Sunday, January 7, at 11 a.m. at New St. John Missionary Baptist Church, 2251 N.W. 2nd St., the Fraternity will hold a Sunday Service to celebrate its 113th Founders' Day through worship.

Brother and Rev. Stanley Jacobs Sr., will be the guest speaker at the Founders' Day service. The event also includes a brief history of the fraternity. Each of the Divine Nine medleys will be played and candles lit. The Brothers and their silhouettes will go to dinner and fellowship with each other after the service.



Members of the Ocala, FL Alumni Association of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Bethea, who has served as Polemarch (President) of the Gainesville Alumni Chapter for nine years said in January 2023, they petitioned and were granted the status of an Association on November 21, 2023. Since its inception, Bethea has served as the current Polemarch for the Ocala, FL Alumni Association, which currently has 11 members.

The goals of the Ocala Chapter include:

- Establishing a Guide Right program for young males (middle/high school) in the near future.
- Being actively engaged in community activities.
- Becoming a member of the Divine Nine (NPHC) and working as a unit in community engagement.
- Supporting national and local efforts such as homelessness and health awareness,
- Doing quarterly road pick-ups through a partnership established with FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation).
- Being a positive aspiration for youth.



The biggest difference, Bethea said, having a chapter in Ocala makes is if something comes up and they need support from the fraternity, most of the Brothers can now get there. He said he traveled to the City of Alachua for the Gainesville Alumni for two years and spent nearly two hours on the road not counting the meeting time. In the future, the Gainesville, Ocala and Leesburg chapters will meet to discuss how they can collaboratively work together.

The Ocala meetings are currently being held at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center on the 3rd Sunday of each month at 3 p.m.



ABOUT THE KAPPA'S

- Kappa was the second Greek letter fraternity to be established. The whole organizational structure, programming, motivation, publications and its projections is in keeping with the Fraternity's Purpose of Achievement.
- Kappa gives annually to the Piney Wood School, located 25 miles southeast of Jackson, Mississippi.
- They support and partner with St. Jude Hospital and support senior health initiatives.

OCALA FLORIDA ALUMNI OFFICERS:

- Polemarch: Ire Bethea Sr.
- Vice Polemarch: Wade Martin
- Keeper of Records: Derby Bernadel
- Keeper of Exchequer: Terrell E. Davis
- Strategus: Rufus Goodwine
- Lt. Strategus: Sine Fulton
- Historian: Adon Williams

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- Ire Bethea Sr.
- Gorham L. Black III
- Anthony J. Pierce
- Adon Williams

For more information, contact Bethea at (352) 208-0819 or email ibethea2008@cox.net or call Martin at (813) 765-4328 or email wadec.martin@gmail.com.

WHEN SHE MAKES MORE MONEY

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

In many cultures the man is supposed to be the primary “bread winner,” however, from the 1960’s to 2000’s the number of women who work outside of the home grew from 37% to 61%. Even with the disparity in wages, there are still many households where the woman makes more money.

In fact, a recent article by CNBC reports, “Among those earning over \$100,000, nearly 1 in 3 millennial and Gen X women report being the primary income earner or contributing the largest share of the household finances. Only about 20% of women in previous generations carried their families financially.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic being tougher on women’s earnings and employment, about 54% of all women who can be considered high earners report earning wages that are greater than or equal to that of their spouse or partner, according to a survey fielded by Wells Fargo in January among over 2,000 women residing in households with at least \$100,000 in income or at least \$250,000 in assets.



(Photo by Christina Morillo on Pexels.com)

So, what do you do when your wife or significant other makes more money?

My wife and I met in college in the early 80’s, when the minimum wage was \$3.25. I worked on campus at the student union and in the restaurant business at night and she was a hostess in an upscale restaurant in town. We were able to afford an apartment and I purchased my first car (with help from a family member). When my wife graduated with her degree in nursing and was offered a job for \$8.30 per hour, I left school, without my degree, to follow her to a better life.

We had our first child within a year of the move, and I quickly found out the limitations on my earning potential without a college degree. With no real experience and not wanting to get back into the food business, I took a sales position. Our second child came within 18 months after the first and my wife began working for nursing agencies because of better pay and more flexible hours. During this time, she was always earning more, and I took jobs in security to be able to take care of the kids while she worked during her long shifts. We struggled tremendously for many years but decided we would always do whatever it took to give our children the best life possible. It was then at the ripe age of 28 we understood it didn’t matter who contributed what, it was about the quality of life for our children.

For the next ten years, she earned more on a regular basis because I was working commissioned sales, but there were several years where we made the same or I even made a little more. We purchased our first home, bought cars, and began to have a more normal life. I went back to school and got my bachelor’s degree in 2004 and my Masters in 2007, but she had more than 15 years’ experience and still made more. This didn’t bother me because I ran the finances in the household and as long as we could meet our responsibilities and take an occasional vacation, we were good.

Around 2009 I began to earn more and have been the larger earner since then and my wife never knew, nor did I mention it. I remember one year we were signing our tax returns and she said, “you earned that much last year?”

Fast forward to this year. My wife left the company she has worked for the last 17 years to join me in our family business. It wasn’t easy letting go of her salary and benefits, but it was time, and she trusts our ability to make it work. The point I wanted to make in this article is about the quality of your relationship. You must understand who each of you are and how money functions in your household. If your lifestyle is built around ego and gender roles, you may have a tough time resolving financial challenges.

However, If the two of you have the same goals and values, it doesn’t matter who makes the most. It’s about the quality of life and how you grow. This is especially true if you are still in the dating phase of the relationship.



Before you take the leap into marriage, have conversations about money. Discuss expectations and goals and make tough decisions now. Better to walk away than to live a life of strife and misery. Besides, she will respect you more if she can trust you and trust comes from communication, transparency and hard work.

Elgin Carelock is the CEO and Chief Strategist of re-View Business Strategies, Inc. (RBS) a growth focused, strategic planning and business development company with over 25 years of professional experience in the areas of sales, marketing, advertising, brand development and customer service. He is the founder of the Build A Better Business Series. Contact Elgin at ecarelock@re-viewyourbusiness.com or (404) 993-7189 for questions or more information or go to www.rbsknowledge.com.

REMEMBERING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



Eric Tarver

Eric Tarver never thought he would be reciting many of the famous speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Tarver, called Popsicle by those who know him, is celebrating 20 years recovery this year from drugs and alcohol. He got his nickname from his father, Eddie Tarver, who started calling him that when he was 5 years old because he used to run behind the ice cream truck begging for Popsicles. "Boy you ain't nothing but an old Popsicle," he remembers his father saying.

"I'm so proud that God gave me the opportunity to get my life back," he said. "Now I'm giving back to the community."

Tarver, 58, honors and pays tribute to Dr. King throughout the year by reciting many of his famous speeches to keep his memory alive. He was 15 the first time he participated in the historic march in Ocala. He said he was inspired by Dr. King's words of a better tomorrow and unity. Three years later, he started mimicking King on television.

"I felt like I had went back in time marching with my ancestors. I felt like I was in the presence of Dr. King," he said during his first march. "When I watched his "I Have a Dream" speech over and over, I kept watching it and I said, I want to do that. I'm going to bring that to modern-day times."

And he has.

Tarver will be among hundreds of people expected to participate in the local march that begins at 9 a.m. on the Downtown Square in Ocala on Monday, January 15. The third Monday in January is designated a federal holiday to remember the slain civil rights leader. Marion County will join other communities throughout the nation to celebrate Dr. King's 94th birthday. At 8 a.m. participants start lining up downtown. Buses will transport walkers from the MLK Complex near the racquetball courts to Downtown Ocala from 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. A complete schedule of events, including contact information for each event, is listed on the back page.



Former Governor Bob Graham signed Executive Order No. 85-24 urging Florida to have a year-long celebration to commemorate this great American for his contribution to our nation and to the world, The Marion County Commission complied with the governor's request and a committee was formed to plan and execute activities during the year that reflected the principles Dr. King fostered.

The first march, the Mass Brotherhood March was held in Ocala on January 25, 1986. It begin with a brief ceremony on the steps of the courthouse and ended at St. Paul A.M.E. Church. The next march, the Brotherhood March, was held in January 1992 and included the dedication of the monument at MLK Park. A march has been held every year in Ocala except in 2021 when it was canceled due to the pandemic.

As part of the Day in the Park festivities, Tarver, a gifted oratorical speaker, will recite Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech that King gave 60 years ago at the March on Washington, a large gathering of civil rights protestors in Washington, D.C.

"I don't try to sound like Dr. King. I just try to relieve his dream," he said. "He has a unique voice and I don't have that kind of voice. I just try to give it a modern-day twist."

The first time Tarver started reciting Dr. King's speeches was nine years ago at a Black History Month program at Queen of Peace Catholic Church. He said while he performs all year, it's mainly in January, to celebrate his birthday and in February to celebrate Black History Month.

He said his pastor, Dr. Edward Bland, Greater Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church, has been very instrumental in him continuing Dr. King's Legacy.

Continued on page 9

JOIN THE CELEBRATION! A DAY ON, NOT A DAY OFF

Continued from page 8

He also credits Florine Gabriel Reese and Ora Lee Jackson, who he said encouraged him to get up and recite poetry in front of others. Tarver said he had to learn to recite King's speeches because Reese refused to let him read from a piece of paper.

"Those two right there were very inspirational," he said.

While we've come along way, Tarver believes we still have some work to do for Dr. King's dream to come to fruition.

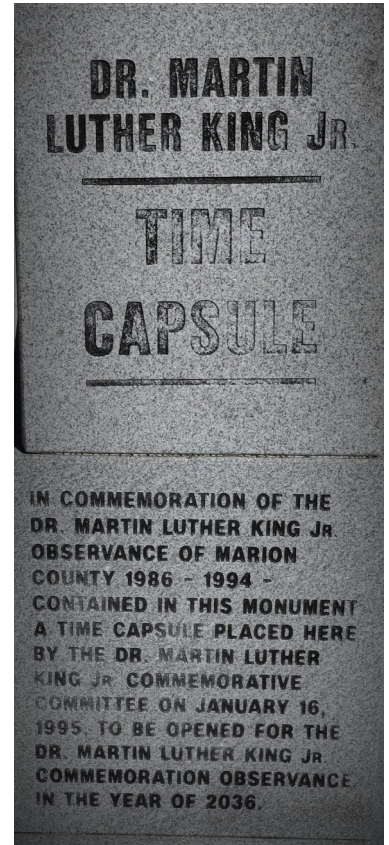
"I think that there's been a real significant change in the way we interact with one another, especially with the younger generation," he said. "They don't see racism as we did coming up in the 60's and 70's."

Tarver believes Dr. King would probably be very sad about what's going on with all the gun violence happening in our community.

"He would be out marching for gun violence and trying to get Congress to pass more effective gun legislation," he said. "Our Governor did a disservice passing the gun law."

Like Dr. King, Tarver hopes that one day people will show more love and unity towards each other in our community.

"My desire to pay tribute to Dr. King's speeches is to remind people of his struggles for unity for all Americans," he said. "He wanted no race left behind. I use to take from others in my addiction, but now I give back through my poetic ministry."



Marion County

World's Greatest Baby Shower

Friday, January 26, 2024

Mary Sue Rich Community Center
1821 NW 21st Street, Ocala 34475

Session 1 2-4 p.m.

Session 2 5-7 p.m.

Choose **ONE** Session.
Preregistration not required.



No cost

Tobacco free event

Expecting a baby? Come to our community Baby Shower!
Parents of infants up to one year old are also invited.

Exhibitors • Games • Scavenger Hunt • Prizes • Fathers Encouraged



For more information, scan the QR code
or visit bit.ly/WGBS24_Marion.

LEVITT AMP IS BACK AGAIN!

The City of Ocala Cultural Arts Division is seeking vendors for the 2024 Levitt AMP Ocala Music Series happening March 15 through May 17, 2024, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The Levitt AMP Ocala Music Series will present 10 free, family-friendly outdoor concerts to the public beginning this spring. Non-profit organizations and food truck applications are currently open, and the deadline to apply is Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024. Applications are available online at www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp. Applications must be completed, full and fees paid to be considered for an event.

To learn more about food vending or sponsorship opportunities, please contact the City of Ocala Cultural Arts at artinfo@ocalafl.gov.

For more information, please visit www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp or follow us on Facebook and Instagram @LevittAMPOcala.

Levitt AMP Music Series

The Levitt AMP Ocala Music Series is supported in part by the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation, which partners with towns and cities across America to activate underused public spaces through the power of free live music, creating welcoming, inclusive destinations. Presenting a broad array of music genres and cultural programming, Levitt venues and concert sites are community anchors where families, friends and neighbors of all ages and backgrounds come together. Learn more at www.levitt.org.

DEADLINE TO REGISTER YOUR TEAM IS JANUARY 18

The Adult Basketball League is great for any team that's ready to play. The league will be 5 vs 5 (10 man maximum) full court. The season includes 10 regular season games followed by a single elimination playoff. Register your team by January 18th.

Men's Adult Basketball League

Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place | 1821 NW 21st Ave.

MONDAYS & WEDNESDAYS, STARTING JANUARY 22



Ages 18+ | \$400 per team | 10 player teams

For more information or to register:
352.401.6980 | OcalaFL.gov/RecParks



Monarch Center for Hope & Healing Winter 2024 Program Schedule

Adults

Grief Connection

Jan. 4, Feb. 1, March 7, April 4 | 10:30 am
Elliott Center

Grief 101

Jan 16, 18; Feb. 15, 20; March 19, 21;
April 16, 18 | 3:00 pm
The Monarch Center and Elliott Center

Memorial Services

April 25 | 6:00 pm, April 26 | 10:00 am
Elliott Center

Six Week Friends in Grief Support Group

Jan. 3 | 10:30 am, Feb. 13 | 1:30 pm,
April 3 | 1:30 pm
The Monarch Center
and Cates House

Children

Teen Tuesdays

Jan. 16, Feb. 20, March 19,
April 16 | 5:30 pm
The Monarch Center

Heart Stitches

Jan. 18, Feb. 22, March 21,
April 18 | 3:30 pm
The Monarch Center

Camp Mariposa

April 13 | 8:00 am
Elliott Center

RSVP Required. Please call
(352) 873-7456

All Ages and Family Focused

Steps of Remembrance

Feb. 3 | 10:00 am
Elliott Center

The Gathering

Feb. 15 | 5:30 pm
Elliott Center



CALL FOR VENDORS

- Food and beverage trucks
- Non-profit organizations
- Sponsors



ocalafl.gov/levittamp | 352-629-8447 | artinfo@ocalafl.gov

INAUGURAL BRICK CITY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department is excited to announce the inaugural Brick City Bluegrass Festival happening January 20, 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Citizens' Circle, 151 S.E. Osceola Ave.

This all-ages, outdoor music festival will feature both nationally known and local bluegrass bands, including headliner Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers. Named Entertainers of the Year by the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) in 2019, Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers have consistently delivered chart-topping radio hits and energetic performances for nearly 15 years.

In addition to live music and entertainment, the event will feature a variety of food trucks. Beer and wine will also be available for purchase. Guests are encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs and blankets. Coolers will not be permitted inside the event area.

Advanced tickets available through Friday, Jan. 19 for \$20 per person. Tickets will be available the day of the event and can be purchased at the gate for \$25 per person. Gate tickets will be on a first-come, first-served basis until the event sells out. Children eight and under and veterans are free.

For ticket information, visit www.ocalafl.gov/brickcitybluegrass. Sponsorship opportunities are available for this event. Interested parties should reach out to Brooke Perry at bperry@ocalafl.gov.

For more information, contact the City of Ocala Recreation and Park Department at (352) 368-5517.



HAPPENINGS AT SANKOFA PUBLIC LIBRARY ~ 1821 N.W. 21st Ave., Ocala, FL 34475 ~ (352) 438-2550

GAMES & CRAFTS FOR ALL AGES

Games on a Table: Mondays, 4 p.m. Jan. 8-29. Play classic and contemporary tabletop games with friends and family.

Crochet Corner: Thursdays, 4:30 p.m. Jan. 11 and 25 It's a stitch! All skill levels welcome.

BOOK CLUB ESPECIALLY FOR ADULTS

Second Story Readers: Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m. Share some great books with friends!

Jan. 16 "**Murder at the Vicarage**" by Agatha Christie

CLUBS ESPECIALLY FOR TEENS

MANGAlicious Teen Club: Tuesdays, 4:30 p.m. Jan. 9 Do you relish books written and illustrated in koma using manpu, fukidashi and gitaigo? Then, this is the club for you! Anime and manga fans, unite!

YALLA! Wednesdays, 4:30 p.m. Jan. 17. Earn volunteer hours for service as you shape the future.

STORYTIMES FOR FAMILIES

Happy Feet Fitness and Stories: Thursdays, 10 a.m., Jan 4-25; For ages 3-5 with caregivers. Reading + exercise = fun.

Family Story Time: Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m., Jan. 3-31 Stories, songs and activities for children and caregivers. Let's have some fun with literature!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL EVENTS

Florida Humanities and The Friends of the Ocala Library Present

MAGDALENA LAMARRE [PHOTO]

"Southern Road to Freedom: Florida's Underground Railroad"
Saturday, Feb. 3, 11 a.m.

Established in the late 17th century in central Florida, the nation's first Underground Railroad was a beacon of freedom for runaway slaves. Discover Florida's early history as a Spanish territory, the escape routes used by runaway slaves and the black communities they established before the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Funding for this program was sponsored in part by Florida Humanities with funds from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of Florida Humanities or the aforementioned entities.



AFRICAN AMERICAN READ-IN

Monday, Feb. 19, 2 p.m.

Come one and all! Celebrate a rich heritage in literature, film, music and art with your friends and neighbors. Contact the Sankofa Public Library for more information, reading suggestions and to schedule your performance. Readers, performers and listeners of all ages welcome!

LUNCH WITH THE ARCHAEOLOGIST



Bring a lawn chair, pack a lunch and join us for Lunch with the Archaeologist! We will be talking about Fort King and the artifacts that have been found on site as well as Q&A time with the archaeologists.



Thursday, Jan. 11
11 AM - 1 PM | Ages 13+
Free to Attend



FORT KING NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
3925 E FORT KING ST.

Follow us on social media
@ocalaculturalarts!

OTRAK Chalk WALK

SATURDAY, JAN. 27 | 10 A.M. - 6 P.M.
TUSCAWILLA ART PARK, 213 NE FIFTH ST.

Enjoy chalk art, food trucks, local vendors, live music, and more at this free, fun event!

Visit www.ocalafl.gov/artpark for more information or call 352-629-8447.



TUSCAWILLA
ART PARK SERIES

Business Spotlight

Caring Hands

Private Care Nursing Services LLC.

Business Name: Caring Hands Private Care Nursing Services

No. of Employees: 1

Business Owner: Fashun Ivery

Business Address: Mobile

Business Phone: (352) 512-7539

What Year Did You Start Your Business? 2023

Hours of Operation: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Hours vary)

Products and/or Services:

Private care nursing services; Home health services; CPR Classes; Foot care nurse for the senior community.

Email: N/A

Website: N/A

Are you on Social Media? Yes

Facebook: Caring Hands Private Care Nursing Services LLC

What or Who Inspired you to start your business?

I aspired to eventually work for myself, establish my own hours and personal goals for my family and friends, my husband and my beautiful children. I also wanted freedom, and I found something that I am passionate about.

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

My business provides top of the line personal, one on one, individual care. My specialty is Geriatrics.

What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting A Business ?

Find something that you are passionate about. Write a business plan and do your research. Provide the best customer service possible and never stop learning and growing.

Caring Hands Private Care Nursing Services LLC

Services

- Caring hands private care nursing services LLC
- CPR instructor
- Physician prescribed medication/ IV administration
- Fall prevention set up
- Home healthcare or hospice coordination
- Insulin syringe filling
- Driving and customer care
- Wound care, skin management, all medical treatments
- Oral care/ suctioning and tube feeding
- Dressing care
- Care training for family members
- General health assessments and care coordination
- Patient Nursing Care
- Assist with Activities Daily Living (ADL)
- Private duty home care
- Private duty nursing care
- Alzheimer's/ Dementia care
- Pre-op and Post-op care
- Long term and temporary care
- Companion care
- Hourly care on weekends and holidays
- Hospice care
- Respite Care
- Transferring from hospital to rehab to home.
- Grocery shopping
- Meal prep
- Errands
- Light Housekeeping
- Laundry



Mission
Trusted to deliver exceptional compassionate care, close to home

Values
Quality & safety, Teamwork, Respect, Accountability, Communication

Vision
To be the regional health system of choice.

Fashun Ivery RN, CEO
Caring Hands Private Care Nursing Services LLC
352-512-7539
caringhandsprivatecare@gmail.com

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.

EXHIBITION TALK COMING SOON

Save the date for our next Free First Saturday and Charles Eady's upcoming talk on Saturday, January 6, at 11 a.m. in the Appleton auditorium. Eady will give a new talk on the work in his solo exhibition, "The Unscene South."

This free event is part of Free First Saturday; Reservations not required. for more information, go to <https://fb.me/e/6HwwfJw3w>.

Free First Saturdays are sponsored in part by Marion Cultural Alliance, National Endowment for the Arts and CAMPUS USA Credit Union.



CALL TO ARTISTS: 'COMMUNITY' STUDENT AND EMERGING ARTIST

The City of Ocala invites artists, with up to six years of experience, to submit entries for 'Community,' a Student and Emerging Artist Competition, which will take place Tuesday, April 9 through Monday, Oct. 14, 2024, at City Hall, 110 S.E. Watula Ave.

Artists will compete in three divisions according to their respective years of experience including: high school students, one to three years of active experience, and four to six years of active experience. All entries must have been completed within the last two years. A juror will award winners in each division, as well as Best of Show. Awards will be presented at a reception Tuesday, April 23 taking place at City Hall.

Prizes for this competition include scholarships to the College of Central Florida (high school division), a feature in The Ocala Gazette (Best of Show), a professional art framing at Cartigliano Arts (Best of Show), a free class at Picasso's Palette (Best of Show), annual memberships to the Appleton Museum of Art and Marion Cultural Alliance (all winners), and a registration fee waiver for the 2024-25 season of First Friday Art Walk (all winners).

Entry Procedures:

Each artist may submit one piece for the exhibition and jurying. All entries must include the entry form, an artist statement, and photographs of the artwork (in a .jpg format with a resolution of at least 1900 pixels in the widest dimension). Artists can email photos, mail printed photos, or submit a CD or USB with digital images. Entries must be submitted no later than Sunday, March 17, 2024 at 11:59 p.m.

Entries can be submitted online at www.ocalafl.gov/StudentAndEmergingArtistExhibit, via email to artinfo@ocalafl.gov or mailed to City of Ocala Cultural Arts, 201 SE Third Street, second floor, Ocala, FL 34471. Mailed items will not be returned.

Calendar of Events:

- Sunday, March 17, 11:59 p.m. – Deadline for entry submissions
- Monday, April 8, 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. – Artwork drop off at City Hall
- Tuesday, April 9 – Show opens
- Tuesday, April 23, - 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. – Opening reception & Awards ceremony
- Monday, October 14 – Show closes
- Monday, October 14, 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. – Artwork pickup

This event is sponsored by the City of Ocala, Appleton Museum of Art, Cartigliano Arts, College of Central Florida, Marion Cultural Alliance, The Ocala Gazette and Picasso's Palette. For more information, or to view the complete call to artists, please contact Ocala Cultural Arts Office at (352) 629-8447 or visit www.ocalafl.gov/culturalarts.

MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

TIPS TO START YOUR NEW YEAR OFF RIGHT



Happy New Year! My wishes for all the readers of Town Talk are for good health, happiness and prosperity. For my first piece of advice for the new year, I am just going to ask you to trust me without going into details as to why you should do this. If you are a single mother or father raising one or more children and are eligible for Earned Income Tax Credit when you file your Federal Income Taxes, I urge you to file as close to the first day that the government takes

Income Tax Returns as possible. Currently the government has a goal of starting to accept returns on January 18. Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is basically for low to moderate income individuals and families and is usually a fairly large amount of money that is sent to you. You do have to be able to prove that you were employed for at least one day during 2023 as this program is for working individuals and families. You do not have to have children to be eligible. Last year only about 75% of the people eligible for this money claimed it on their return. If you find out you were eligible but did not claim it for the last few years you can file an amended return and still get your money.

My suggestion to everyone on a tight budget is to ask VITA to help you prepare your taxes which they will do at no cost. To get more information, visit the United Way's website at UWMC.ORG and look for the VITA program. You will find the list of all the information you need to bring to your appointment. To get an appointment call 211. Appointments are held at the Marion County Literacy Council at 120 S.W. 5th Street and you may also go there for information.

The College of Central Florida and the Marion County School System have a new program that can save you money a few years from now if you have a child in middle school. The CF Collegiate Academy will open in 2024 and is a dual enrollment program that allows 11th and 12th grade students to take classes full time to earn a degree or certificate at CF before graduating high school, and at no cost to the student. Think of the tuition money your family can save. Students interested in enrolling should express interest by the end of their eighth grade year. For information go to CF.edu/CollegiateAcademy or call **(352) 873-5800** and ask for the Collegiate Academy.

My advice is usually for those of you who are struggling just to pay your bills, but this is for those fortunate enough to have some savings. Too many people have their savings in traditional savings or checking accounts at banks. Once you have enough in those accounts to avoid paying a monthly fee you should explore other options that will keep your money safe but pay a much higher interest rate than traditional bank accounts. A high-yield saving account usually requires a very low opening balance and currently pays around 4.5% interest. Go online and search for various financial institutions that offer these such as American Express, Discover, Capital One and others. A money market account will pay just a fraction less but usually will allow you to write checks. Certificates of Deposit pay even more, as I write this about 5.5% but you have to commit to keeping that money in the CD for a minimum amount of time or you will pay a penalty if you withdraw your money early. The term can be as short as three months and places like Edward Jones **(352) 629-2165** is one of their offices) charge no fees and allow you to start with a minimum of \$1,000. Compare this to my bank checking account which pays 0.1%. It is very easy and fast to transfer money back and forth online to your bank account.

When you have money, you want that money to work for you bringing you even more money.

IF YOU NEED HELP, JUST ASK!

Spread the love and joy of the season by showing your support for those on their recovery journey. No one in recovery should feel alone -- especially during the holiday season. Please visit samhsa.gov/find-help for support and resources.



You're not alone. Help is available.

samhsa.gov/find-help

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

988 or 988Lifeline.org

- Español (opreme 2)
- LGBTQI+ Youth (press 3)

Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 988 (press 1)

FindSupport.gov

SAMHSA's

National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Disaster Distress

Helpline

1-800-985-5990

FindTreatment.gov



**Does the New Year
have you thinking
about your future?**

Turn those resolutions into reality at the College of Central Florida.

At CF, you'll find the programs and support to help you advance your career or explore new passions. From career-focused degree programs to flexible schedules that fit your busy life, we're here to help you succeed.

This is your year, and CF is your catalyst for change.

Classes start six times a year. Apply today.



MARION · CITRUS · LEVY · ONLINE
CF.edu/Spring
352-873-5800

Second Bethlehem Baptist Association
BLUNT'S BENEVOLENT

Community Service Project

1205 NW 4th Street Ocala, Florida 34475
 Every Thursday at 5:30/6pm



Food, Clothing, Hygiene
 Prayer, Service



IN HONOR OF
**MODERATOR
 KEITH E. BLUNT**

Website: www.secondbethlehem.org/ Email: [secondbethlehemassociation@gmail.com/](mailto:secondbethlehemassociation@gmail.com) Facebook: SBBA BETHLEHEM



City Of Ocala Hold Swearing -In Ceremony



Councilmember Ire Bethea Jr. (right)



Mayor Ben Marciano (left)



Councilmember Kristen Dreyer (left)

Town Talk Magazine
P.O. Box 6212
Ocala, FL 34478

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Annual Food Drive

Saturday, January 6, 2024 - 9:00 a.m.
2nd Bethlehem Association
N.W. 4th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34475

Contact: Ire Bethea, (352) 208-0819 or Eric Cummings, (352) 804-6871

Prayer Breakfast

Saturday, January 13, 2024 - 9:00 a.m.
Mary Sue Rich Center at Reed Place
1812 NW 21st Ave. - Ocala, FL 34475

Contact:
Loretta Jenkins - (352) 351-0824

MLK Youth Day

Saturday, January 13, 2024 - 1:00 p.m.
Mary Sue Rich Center at Reed Place
1812 NW 21st Ave. - Ocala, FL 34475

Contact:
Dwanette Dilworth - (352) 207-6036

Wreath Ceremony

Saturday, January 13, 2024 - 12:00 p.m.
Martin L. King Jr. Park
500 SW MLK Jr. Ave. - Ocala, FL 34471

Contact:
Cassandra Boston - (352) 209-2973

Ecumenical Services

Sunday, January 14, 2024 - 5:00 p.m.
Ft. King Presbyterian Church
13 N.E. 36th Avenue - Ocala, FL 34470

Contact:
Shirley Wright - (352) 732-0097

The Historic March

Monday, January 15, 2024

8:00 a.m. (line-up downtown) - 9:00 a.m. (the march begins)

Contact: Ire Bethea, (352) 208-0819

Transportation available at 7:00am - 8:00am, MLK Raquetball court

Contact: Kelvin B. Richardson, (352) 207-9558

Day in the Park

Monday, January 15, 2024 - 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

(Activities & Vendors)

Contact:

Dr. Dwanette Dilworth, (352) 207-6036

(Performance Space)

Derek Ponder - (352) 857-4118
Te'Sha Jackson - (352) 426-0861



For performance applications for the Day in the Park, please email Tesha Jackson at entconsultantbyteshaj@gmail.com.