



Meet Lugusta "Gus" Gray The First African American Inducted into the Marion County Agricultural Hall of Fame



Gus Gray pictured with his Pastor Standley Gillings Sr.

In this issue:

Bring the Harvest Home

***Lugusta Gray Inducted into
the Agricultural Hall of Fame***

***Free Family Events to
Enjoy this Holiday Season***

***Happy Birthday
Mr. William James***

***Together, We Build
Strong Families***

***Career Connections
Job Fair***



**Yes, Bell Ringers
Are Still Needed!**

Call to schedule a
time to ring the bell
this Christmas season.

The Red Kettle Campaign
continues through
December 24, 2021.



Help a child this Christmas by
providing for a local family
through our Angel Tree.

For more information, call
Elizabeth at **(352) 629-2004**

Got Some Spare Time?
Volunteers still needed to
help process toys through
December 14, Monday - Friday,
9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at
2901 N.E. 14th St., Ocala, FL.



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

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

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EDITOR'S DESK

Monica Bryant



I'm sure some of you will agree with me that this has been a very difficult year for some, but for others in our community, things have been worse than any of us could ever imagine.

I love this time of year, but I realize the holidays are not always happy for everyone due to the loss of a loved one, financial setbacks, homelessness or fleeing an abusive relationship. One of my colleagues, in recovery herself, told me that God placed it on her heart to host the event listed below. It's just what we need this holiday season, something that brings us together to celebrate **HOPE TOGETHER** and support each other on the road to recovery.

It's amazing when we can forget about our own problems and do something to help others, especially when we might be hurting too.

This holiday season, I challenge each of us to do something that makes life better for someone else. One small act of kindness can mean more than we know.

From the editors of Town Talk Magazine, We wish you a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year!

Let's Talk!

Monica

Monica T. Bryant, Editor

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TOGETHER, WE BUILD “STRONG FAMILIES”



Cynthia McNeal

A year ago, Cynthia McNeal felt lost. The single mother knew she needed to get her life back on track, but she didn't know how.

But a local program designed for families willing to commit to make changes in their lives to move forward with a stable financial future gave her the help she needed at just the right time in her life.

“Strong families referred me to Marion County Community Services for home repairs and I have been approved for rehab on my home and they will start first with a new roof. Thank you,” she said. “With the Strong Families educational classes my budget has been cut and I'm working on paying down my debt and building a bigger emergency savings so I can build up my credit to purchase a car for my future goal.”

The program may be able to help you too! Applications for Strong Families Class 12, which starts January 25, 2022, are now being accepted. The Strong Families Initiative provides Skill Building, Dual Services for Children and Success Coaching. Families

participate in the program for one year with 15 weekly skill-building classes and bi-weekly meetings with Success Coaches throughout the year long program. The deadline to register is December 15. To qualify, participants must have stable housing (long-term shelter or transitional housing is acceptable); have substance abuse and mental health issues under control; and be motivated to make positive, long-term changes to their lifestyle.

Families interested in participating in the program must complete an intake form and submit all required documents. Once the family's information is received, an interview is scheduled to further discuss the program and expectations. For more information or to get an intake form, contact Pebbles Vance at **(352) 732-9696 ext. 215** or email pvance@uwmc.org.

“We see the changes made in our families with better choices and long time goals being reached homeownership, holding job for years after the program and having a savings for the first time in there lives,” she said. “Attend one of our graduations and hear the stories of a couple of our families and where they were before Strong Families, what they have learned in Strong Families and how their financial stability has changed for the future.”

Vance, the Strong Families Director and Success Coach, said the program really makes a difference in the lives of these families. Amy Wethington and Tamika Baily are also Success Coaches. Vance said they only have a limited number of seats (40-45) available. Currently, classes are only held in Ocala.

The program was a blessing for Nateesha Harley, who was homelessness after leaving an abusive marriage. Harley said she worked with Creative Services to find transitional housing, file for her divorce and move forward in her life.

“Strong families taught me to break down large goals into small measurable steps,” said Harley, who never missed a class. “I'm now renting, gained employment at Episcopal Children's Services, and I'm striving towards home ownership and educational goals.”

The Strong families program was started in 2017 by Scot Quintel, CEO of United Way of Marion County after he saw a major need in Marion County and other areas with generational issues and families seeking the correct education and guidance to work on financial stability for this generation and future generations. Since its inception, 372 families have participated in the program, which has a 78% success rate.

“Watching our families make changes and over come obstacles to reach their financial stability ...,” Vance said is the most rewarding part of the program for her. “This also builds a strong foundation for their families and future generations.”

RIDE SUNTRAN FOR FREE IN DECEMBER AND SAVE MONEY

SunTran will offer free bus fares on **December 4, 11 and 18**. In a news release, SunTran Transportation Manager, Steven Neal, said the free fares will provide a little economic relief during the holiday season and encourage residents to experience its transportation system.



Nateesha Harley and Family



Make 2022 **your** year.

Classes start Jan. 10.

Explore more than 150 academic pathways, including 70 job-training programs.

Learn how 3 out of 4 CF graduates leave the college with no student loan debt.

Start your higher education journey at CF – a college for everyone!

Visit **CF.edu/Spring** to learn more and apply online.



352-873-5800



Basics for Babies Holiday Drive



Happening now through the holiday season!

The Early Learning Coalition of Marion County strives to ensure all Marion County children are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed when they enter school. We provide emergency essentials to families and always have a need for baby items. So, while you're shopping this holiday season, can you pick up a little something for our babies?

The following new items are needed:

- Hygiene supplies, especially diapers and wipes
- Safety equipment, especially car seats and pack 'n plays
- Children's books, especially baby board books

Items can be dropped off at our office. Visit elc-marion.org for current hours (Closed Dec. 24 in observance of Dec. 25.)

For more information call 352-369-2315.



11/05/21 I4H.ELC-NAS - Documents\All Staff\Marketing and Outreach\Flyers\2021 - Basics for Babies-Standalone



Please Pass the Peas cooking classes for individuals with disabilities to learn about nutrition, meal planning, budgeting and safe food handling. Join us in-person or online via Zoom. \$5 per class.

DECEMBER 2 | 4:15 PM
INSTANT POT SWEET POTATOES

Barbara G. Washington Center | 210 NW 12 Ave.

REGISTER AT OCALAFL.ORG/RECPARK

NEW MURAL PUBLIC ART GATHERINGS

PRESENTATION OF FINAL DESIGN

E.D. CROSKY RECREATION CENTER
1510 NW FOURTH ST.

Fourth FREE Gathering
Thursday, December 2 | 5:30 PM

Sponsored by:

*COVID-19 safety protocols will be in effect.

NEED YOUR GIFTS WRAPPED?

Don't get **Wrapped** up in the Holiday **Stress**

JOIN THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION WORKGROUP
FOR ITS ANNUAL HOLIDAY GIFT WRAPPING CAMPAIGN

Friday, December 10 through Friday, December 24, 2020
available during holiday hours at the Paddock Mall
Gift wrapping Booth will be located center court near Macy's

Bring any unwrapped gifts to the Mall and our volunteers
will wrap them for you. We provide everything needed
i.e wrapping paper, bows and gift tags. Boxes extra!

~ Volunteers Needed ~

Must be at least 18 years
or older and have gift
wrapping experience.

Pick the days and hours you want
to volunteer. Groups welcome!

For information or a volunteer form,
call **(352) 438-5990** or email
Monica@breakthesilenceonviolence.org

All proceeds benefit victims and survivors of domestic violence

Business Spotlight



Business Name: Atlanta Fashions 2

No. of Employees: 2

Business Owner: Maritza Gould

Business Address: 2068 W. Silvers Springs Blvd.
Ocala, FL 3447

Business Phone: (352) 474-8283

What Year Did You Start Your Business? 2010

Hours of Operation: Friday's Only, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Products and/or Services:

Women's clothing, shoes, accessories and handbags

Email: Atlantafashions2@yahoo.com

Website: Atlantafashions2.com

Are you on Social Media? Yes

If yes, what platforms?

Facebook: Atlanta Fashions

Tik Tok: Atlanta Fashions 2

Instagram: atlms / Atlanta Fashions 2

What or Who Inspired you to start your business?

My children. I'm a mother of four and I had to feed them
and provide for them.

What Makes Your Business Unique or What's Your Specialty? I'm a published fashion stylist. I don't just
buy and sell clothing, I actually help you to look and feel
your best.

**What Advice would you give someone starting a
business:** Work hard and be consistent.

*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, request a form
from **Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com**.
Completed forms can be returned via email
or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.*



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



During the holiday season, area food pantries start to see an increase in the number of families requesting assistance with food.

Karla Grimsley-Greenway, CEO, Interfaith Emergency Services said they typically start having 100 or more families come each week during the holidays.

"I think the need is greater this year, mostly because we don't have the ability to purchase food in bulk like we normally do when we run low," Grimsley-Greenway said.

Organizers are hoping that the 10th Annual "Bring the Harvest Home" holiday food drive on Friday, December 3, from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Ocala's Downtown Square will help meet the increased demand. The food drive helps to restock the shelves of the area's three largest food banks: Brother's Keeper, Salvation Army and Interfaith Emergency Services.

"This food drive is vital to our ability to keep up with the increased demand this time of year," Grimsley-Greenway said.

Jason Halstead, Executive Director, Brother's Keeper, said in addition to the 400 families they assist during the holidays, the food from past Bring the Harvest Home drives usually feed an additional 250 families. Without the additional donations it's possible they would have to turn families away, he said, but because they've been blessed by God and the community so far they have never had to do that.

"We try to never turn families away, but each family will get a lesser amount of food if we don't have enough," Grimsley-Greenway said. "We try to give enough for a family to eat for 4 to 5 days, that would look more like 1 to 2 days worth of food."

County Commissioner Kathy Bryant said there's always a great need to ensure our local food banks are stocked up, especially before the holiday season when some of our citizens need the most help. Bryant, who is spearheading the drive again this year, said they collected about 13,000 lbs of food in 2020, but her goal this year is 20,000 lbs. She said the three main food pantries also provide assistance to the smaller food pantries in the area.

Bryant said their community partners include Marion County Sheriff's Office, the Ocala/Marion CEP, City of Ocala, Belleview Police Department, Ocala Police Department, Ocala Fire Department, the Marion County Property Appraiser's Office, the Marion County Tax Collector's Office, the Marion County Clerk of the Court, the Marion County Supervisor of Elections, Marion County Fire Rescue, United Way of Marion County and the Marion County Board of County Commissioners.

"This event is important to me because it is a great opportunity for the community to come together to stock the area's three largest food banks, providing much needed food and hygiene products to those who need it most," Bryant said. "This event will also allow us to help those this holiday season who may have been affected by the pandemic."

The items most needed this year include: **Dry foods and complementary goods** (rice, pasta, pasta sauce, cereal, crackers, peanut butter and jelly); *Plastic containers preferred*; **Canned meats** (corned beef, corned beef hash, ham and tuna). **Canned vegetables and fruit**; **Baby items** (baby cereal, diapers, and lotion); **Toiletries** (soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste and toilet paper).

"We just hope to get as much food as possible," Grimsley-Greenway said. "With the supply shortage that the grocery stores are experiencing, we just hope people can get enough to take care of their families and help us a little too."

Donations can be dropped off in advance at locations throughout Marion County as well as during the December 3, event on Ocala's Downtown Square.

For more information and a list of drop-off locations, please visit bringtheharvesthome.com or [facebook.com/marioncountyflorida](https://www.facebook.com/marioncountyflorida).

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.



“GUS” GRAY MAKES HISTORY AGAIN!

Growing up poor, Lugusta Gray, who everyone calls Gus, never thought a little black boy from Alabama could be inducted into any Hall of Fame.

Gray, who started working with horses at Hooper Farms in Montgomery, AL., moved to Cotton Plant, Florida with his family to continue his career in the equine industry with the owner, Fred W. Hooper. Known for his special techniques at recognizing and developing legendary horses and famous for his Friday “Porch Tours” for Hooper Farms, Gray, a 2020 inductee along with Jerry Arthur, is the first African American to be inducted into the Marion County Agricultural Hall of Fame on November 18, 2021. The banquet was canceled last year due to Covid so Gray and Arthur were recognized this year along with the late Mark Shuffitt, the 2021 inductee.

“This award will always be the first in my life. It is such an honor to be inducted into the Marion County Agricultural Hall of Fame. I accept this award and know she is looking down over me,” he said, referring to Rosa, his wife of 55 years, who died earlier this year.

Since its inception in 2003, the Marion County Agricultural Hall of Fame has been recognizing individuals who have made tremendous achievements and contributions to the furtherance of agriculture in our community. Inductees are commemorated with a bronze plaque displaying their photo and short bio, according to the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service website. The plaques are placed on permanent exhibit in the foyer of the Extension Service auditorium. The annual recognition is based on three categories; major contribution to Marion County Agriculture Industry; Participation in volunteer and elected rolls that benefit the community; and Involvement in state and national agricultural organizations and honors/awards.

Whitfield Jenkins said he met Gus years ago and got to know him when he moved to Cotton Plant where he was employed with Hooper Farms. He said Gus came with a number of other guys; Tom McCall, his brother Emanuel McCall and Willie Jones, who organized Cotton Plant’s baseball team.

“I played with the baseball team Zuber Blazers. We annually played the Cotton Plant team. Lifelong friendships resulted from the baseball association,” Jenkins said. “I was privileged to know of Gus expertise in thoroughbred horses of which he is receiving this history breaking recognition for. Congratulations my guy!”

But this is not the first time Gray, who has received numerous recognitions over the last 50 years, has made history. He is the first person from Florida to win a Godolphin Award in 2017, a national thoroughbred industry employee award for lifelong dedication to the breeding of thoroughbreds. He is the only person to be awarded all of Florida’s Thoroughbred Farm Managers Club honors as a breeder, a trainer, sales and for community service. And, during the 1980s, he was the first African American to produce a day’s sales topper at the Ocala Breeders Sales Company.

Gray, a gifted storyteller, recounted his life spent with world-class thoroughbreds at Fred W. Hooper’s farm and Donald Disney’s Double Diamond Farm in his book “They Call Me Gus,” which tells the history of African American’s working within the horse industry in Florida. The book is also featured in a permanent collection at the Nelson Mandela Museum.

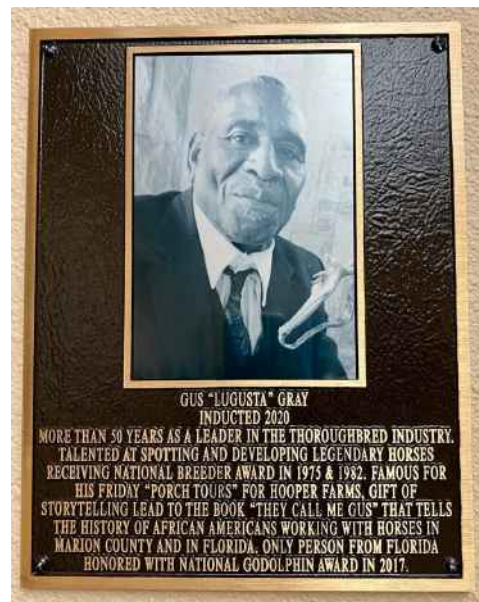
“One of my books sold for \$800, but you cannot purchase the book anymore because it’s out of print,” he said. “But, we are working on a second book.”

For the last 20 years, Gray, who’s 75, can still be found working at Double Diamond Farm in Martel, FL.



“I will be here for as long as “Mr. Disney” lets me work. I’m not ready to retire yet,” he said. “I have one goal left and that’s for one of my horses to win the Kentucky Derby.”

“This shows my children and grandchildren that I haven’t given up so they will not give up on their dreams,” he said.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

-- *The William H. Jackson Promise Scholarships were awarded to several deserving students. In addition to seven scholarships for returning students, 19 students received up to \$2,000 per academic year. Mytavia Adkins and Indicia Huffaker received full tuition and book scholarships, valued at nearly \$4,000 per academic year. Huffaker is a graduate of Forest High School and plans to pursue a Physical Therapist Assistant degree. Adkins is a 2021 graduate of Williston Middle High School and is pursuing a degree in Business Administration.*

-- *CF is expanding opportunities for local students to earn a bachelor's degree. The Academic Affairs team is exploring the possibility of offering a Human Resources specialization in its Bachelor of Applied Science in Business and Organizational Management degree. They have also launched a formal partnership with UF Online; CF students can get started at CF and finish as a Gator.*

-- *The Appleton continues to expand outreach and other opportunities to all members of the communities through free admission days alongside free online classes, games and videos as well as a free mobile app. Free admission days are December 4 and December 11.*

-- *The College of Central Florida invites anyone thinking about college to an open house on Wednesday, December 1, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the CF Ocala Campus, 3001 S.W. College Road. Future students are encouraged to tour the campus and learn about more than 150 academic pathways, including 70 job-training programs. Attendees can receive assistance with the application process, financial aid, placement testing, academic advising and registration for the spring semester, which begins January 10.*

Everyone who completes an admissions application at the event will have the \$30 admissions fee waived and will be entered to win free tuition for a 3-credit-hour class at CF's standard tuition rate.

-- *A virtual open house will also be offered on Wednesday, December 8, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., on Zoom. For more information, visit www.CF.edu/openhouse or call (352) 875-5800, ext. 1379.*

-- **Save-the-Date: The Black Male Enrichment Conference will be held February 17, 2022.**

November 16, 2021-January 9, 2022

A Dickens Christmas

The Urban Family Holiday Exhibition

Family Day
Saturday, December 11, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Enjoy free admission all day at
this annual holiday event.

Appleton Museum, Artspace and Store
Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
4333 E. Silver Springs Blvd. | AppletonMuseum.org
Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day



Free Family Fun During the Holidays

Almost all children are thrilled when school closes for Christmas/Winter break. Most parents know that after two or three days without their friends the kids are already bored and driving them crazy. Money is tight for a lot of people, especially with gas and food prices going up and holiday gift expenses. Here are some suggestions on how to keep your children happy without spending money.

SANTA ON THE SQUARE: Every Tuesday and Thursday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the Downtown Square. You are invited to use your own camera or cell phone to take pictures of your children with Santa or Mrs. Clause. This is a free event.

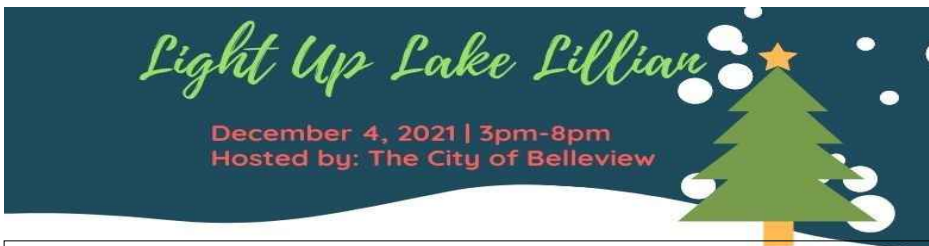
POLAR EXPRESS: A free magical reading of "Polar Express" presented under the night sky at the Jenkins Open Air Amphitheater at Tusawilla Park on Wednesday, December 8, at 6 p.m. Bring your chairs and blankets and enjoy a night of stories and music.

FREE MOVIE: "The Man Who Invented Christmas" will be shown at Tusawilla Park on Friday, December 10, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Bring a blanket, chairs and snacks or you may purchase snacks there. The movie is rated PG.

OCALA CHRISTMAS PARADE: Saturday, December 11, on Silver Springs Boulevard. Best viewing time is from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

TRAINS AT THE HOLIDAYS: Held every year at the Webber Center on the north side of the College of Central Florida campus Trains at the Holidays is open December 18 – 23 and December 26 – 30. This is fantastic display of working miniature trains that take up the entire room. Admission is free for the entire family. Call the Webber Center for hours at (352) 873-5809, but most days the center is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The above is just a sample of creative things to do at no cost during December. Just going to the Downtown area is exciting looking at all the lights and often hearing music. The library is a great place to take your children to explore books and participate in some of their activities. Many churches have special events planned around Christmas so ask your friends and check your church calendars. There really is a lot to do other than just staying home and watching Hallmark movies on TV.



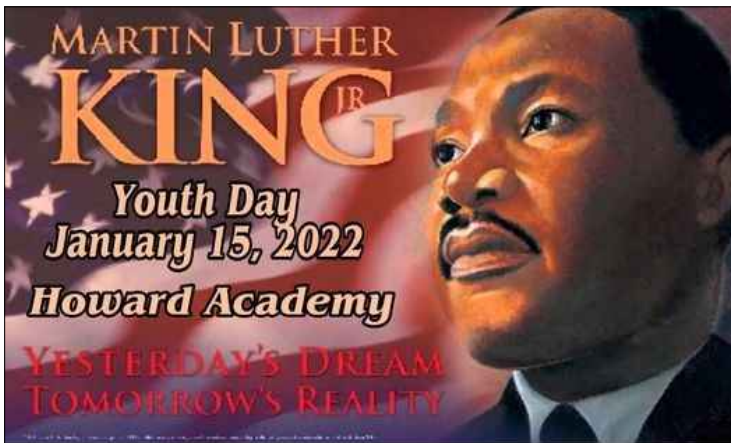
Join us for a night filled with plenty of **FREE** family fun as we light up the lake! We will have face painting by Creative Chippy Party Services, bounce house and obstacle course provided by Premier Inflatables LLC, games and crafts, vendor booths, music, miniature ponies, a visit with Santa from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., food trucks featuring Big Lee's - Serious About Barbecue, Kona Ice Ocala and Papa Pineapples!

We will also have a double feature movie showing of "Shrek the Halls & Smurfs: A Christmas Carol" from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Citizens that would like to enjoy the movies, should bring a chair or blankets for their families.

GET YOUR FAMILY AND JOIN THE FESTIVITIES



HAPPENINGS IN THE COMMUNITY



MLK Youth Day is January 15th from 1pm-3pm at Howard Academy. If you have a youth group, team of youth, or individual who would like to participate in the following, please inbox Kimberly Wilkerson or Text 352-207-0148.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| DANCE | INSTRUMENTAL SELECTION |
| MIME | RAP |
| ORATORICAL SPEAKING | SPOKEN WORD |
| SONG | BALLET |
| DRAMA | BATON |
| MAGIC TRICKS | ETC. |

Name of individual or group, contact person's name, Cell number, talent/gift being presented. If music needed, please send link for the song.

All submissions need to be in by December 10, 2021.



The 65th Annual Ocala Christmas parade will be held Saturday, December 11, 2021.

Parade starts at 5:30 p.m.

The theme for the 2021 Parade is **"A Heroes' Christmas"**
Grand Marshal: Ben Marciano

Supporting Kids Involving Parents **December 11, 2021 3pm**

Barbershop Talk

Decisions of a teen!

Sports Cuts
Barbershop
150 SW 20th Ave
Ocala, FL 34475

REAL MEN, REAL TALK

Your advice could save this youth!

A judgement free zone for teenage boys in our community to voice their concerns, experiences, and resources to become better men!

Accepting donations for a family in need.

MCPS
MARION COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
"Helping Every Student Succeed"

SCHOOL BUS

BUS DRIVER BLITZ!
Dec. 2, 2021 - 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

VISIT ONE OF OUR FOUR LOCATIONS AND APPLY TO BE A BUS DRIVER WITH MARION COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS TODAY... ON A SCHOOL BUS!

LOCATIONS INCLUDE:
BELLEVUE-SANTOS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE WEIR HIGH SCHOOL
LIBERTY MIDDLE SCHOOL
MARION TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

MUST BE 21 WITH A CLEAR DRIVING RECORD TO APPLY

- STARTING PAY: \$15.65 PER HOUR
- FREE HEALTHCARE
- PAID COL TRAINING
- FLEXIBLE HOURS / PAID TIME OFF

CAN'T MAKE IT? APPLY ONLINE OR CALL:
(352) 671-7050

marionschools.net/careers

TIPS TO KEEP MORE MONEY IN YOUR POCKET

By Scott Hackmyer

I know television commercials can be annoying but there is one insurance commercial I particularly enjoy. It tries to help you not be like your parents. This leads to my first point, are you still paying for a landline telephone? The one hanging on the wall or sitting on a counter. Up until about two years ago I faithfully paid the bill for my landline phone until I finally realized I never used it, in fact the only calls I received were annoying telemarketing calls. Unless you need it for a security system (better methods are now available than connecting that to your phone service) as long as you have a cell phone this is one bill you can easily eliminate. Cancel that old phone service today!

Grocery stores and what you eat offer more opportunities to save money. It is often written about, but grocery stores put their most expensive items at eye level on the shelves. If buy cereal for example, the most expensive brands will be right where your eyes see them first and in easy reach. Take a look at the top and bottom shelves and you just might find a top quality product that tastes just as good for a lot lower price. If you haven't tried store brands most items are made by the same major brands but just have a store brand label. It is worth trying to see if you can find a store brand costing less that you like just as much.

A sure way to save money is dedicate one or two dinners every week to an inexpensive meal. My favorite is seasoned black beans over rice with a side salad. I can buy a can of black beans for \$1 and rice is fairly cheap. Two people can eat a very filling, tasty meal for \$2 - \$3. Once a week try a good breakfast for dinner. Some scrambled eggs, grits, potatoes and toast can be really good and is very inexpensive. A couple of slices of bacon bought on sale could be a luxury treat still leaving the meal very affordable.

With gas prices so high it is important to route your trips and not just run out and go whenever you need something. I wanted to go to Rural King on NW 10th Street last week but waited until I had three places in the same area I needed to go to before making that trip. Cover everything in an area of town in one outing.

Just a few more quick suggestions. As you are reading this copy of Town Talk is your television on? Is it often on when you are not in the room or even out to the store? Make sure you turn off your TV when not listening to it and turn off lights in rooms that no one is in. Every few pennies count and they do add up. As cooler weather is coming be careful with your thermostat. Even the power companies tell you for every two degrees warmer you turn up the heat your bill will be higher. Drop that thermostat so you are comfortable with a sweater or sweatshirt on or an extra blanket on the bed. It all makes a difference!

WISHING YOU A HAPPY BIRTHDAY MR. JAMES

William H. James attributes the secret to his long life to something his parents told him, which is a familiar bible scripture, when he was growing up.

"My parents said honor thy father and thou mother that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord thou God would give you," he said.

And that's what he did.

On January 1, 2022, James will turn 101 years old. He was surprised recently with a new recliner chair with a remote and all the bells and whistles. He sat quietly at his kitchen table watching as his old recliner was moved to the side and the new chair was being set up in its place in his living room.

"I don't know nothing about it," James said when asked if it was an early birthday present.

Last year James celebrated his birthday with a drive-by party at his house and a formal celebration at Brick City Center for the Arts for family and friends. He arrived in a white stretch limousine.

"I'm not looking forward to this birthday seeing as though I've had so many birthdays until they just come as they go," he said. "I just look forward to seeing them when they come."

This year, James hasn't made any special plans for his birthday. He said he still has a lot of friends that come visit him, and they talk on the phone and go out and eat once in awhile, but on New Year's Day, he always starts doing new and different things.

James, who was born in a two-bedroom house that's still standing on his property, built another home, where he lives now, next to the original structure in the 1970s. He said when he wakes up, he prays and thanks the Lord for all his blessings.

James said he's lived a good life and has no regrets. He said he's got to do just about everything he wanted to do. He's received numerous awards and recognitions including being the first black custodial supervisor with Marion County Public Schools. He retired in 1986 after 27 years of service.

Other accomplishments include:

- The Marion County NAACP presented him with the Frank Pinkston Humanitarian Award in 2003
- The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission awarded him the Legacy Pioneer Award in 2007
- The City of Ocala dedicated the "William James Start!" walking trail on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue to him in honor of his decades of contributions to the community in 2017.
- Governor's West Ocala Neighborhood Revitalization Council selected him as an inaugural inductee of the Legacy Park Community Service Recognition Program in 2018.

James still dresses himself, rides his electric scooter out to the mailbox to get his mail and sometimes he just goes outside and sits. His cousin, Mike Hopkins, now takes care of everything that needs to be done on the property including feeding and getting hay for the cows and mowing the yard. Occasionally, he puts James in the truck and rides him around the property so he can see the cows.

Hopkins said he comes early in the morning before he goes to work to make sure James is alright and gets him something to eat. He said James still eats a variety of foods, he just doesn't eat as much anymore. Although he doesn't have a favorite, he loves hotcakes and sausage, biscuits and gravy and grits and eggs.

"I live right across the field. I'm just here for him," Hopkins said. "Me and pops sit here and laugh and talk. Sometimes I stay until 2 a.m. in the morning. I be in one chair and he be in another sleep. With him being 100 years old, I make it my business just to come over here and sit with him."

James still has his license and he said he goes wherever he wants to go, but Hopkins said they try not to let him drive at all. They made arrangements for someone to pick him up for church. The two of them always watch Family Feud with Steve Harvey because that's his favorite show. Hopkins said James also likes to go to Rural King, so he masks him up and lets him ride around the store.

"I can tell you there's no where he can go that somebody don't know him. Everybody knows him," he said. "I just love him to death."



William H. James using his new remote



Mike Hopkins showing William H. James how to use the remote on his new recliner chair

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DR. MLK EVENTS 2022

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, is delighted that the Dr. King events will take place in 2022.



January 15, 2022
Prayer Breakfast
E.D. Croskey Center
9 a.m.

Wreath Ceremony
MLK Memorial Park
11:30 a.m.

Youth Day
Howard Academy
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.



January 16, 2022
Ecumenical Service: MLK Rec. Complex
Location: Pinkney Woodbury Field
6 p.m. - Bring your own chairs if you would like to.

MLK March
Downtown to the MLK Recreation Complex
Line up off of the Square 8 a.m.
March begins 9 a.m.
A representative from your organization should have been contacted, if not please contact Ire Bethea at **(352) 208-0819**.
Transportation will be provided at the MLK Recreation Complex by the basketball courts starting at 7 a.m. on January 16.

Day in the Park
MLK Rec. Complex Web Field
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Contact: Ire Bethea for the March application
Contact: Dwanette Dilworth for Vendor application at **(352) 207-6036**
Contact: Derek Ponder for Day in the Park at **(352) 857-4118**.

CAREER CONNECTIONS JOB FAIR

Wednesday, Dec. 8 | 2 - 4 p.m.

College of Central Florida Hampton Center
1501 W. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL

EMPLOYERS

JOB SEEKERS

Register: bit.ly/ConnectEmployers

Register: bit.ly/ConnectCareers

This event is *free and open* to the public. Job opportunities include all industries and job levels even non-high school graduates. Don't forget to bring your resume and to register to attend!

Job Fair brought to you by: Florida Rep. Yvonne Hinson Hayes and Ocala City Councilman Ire Bethea, Sr.'s offices in partnership with CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion.



Need Help? Call: 800-434-5627



CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids/services are available upon request to persons with disabilities and in Spanish. Phone numbers may be reached using TTY/TDD equipment via Florida Relay at 711. For accommodations, call 800-434-5627, ext. 7978. Programs funded by CareerSource CLM as grantees of the U.S. Department of Labor as part of awards totaling \$79 million, revised annually, with no funds from non-governmental sources. A proud partner of the American Job Center network and member of CareerSource Florida.