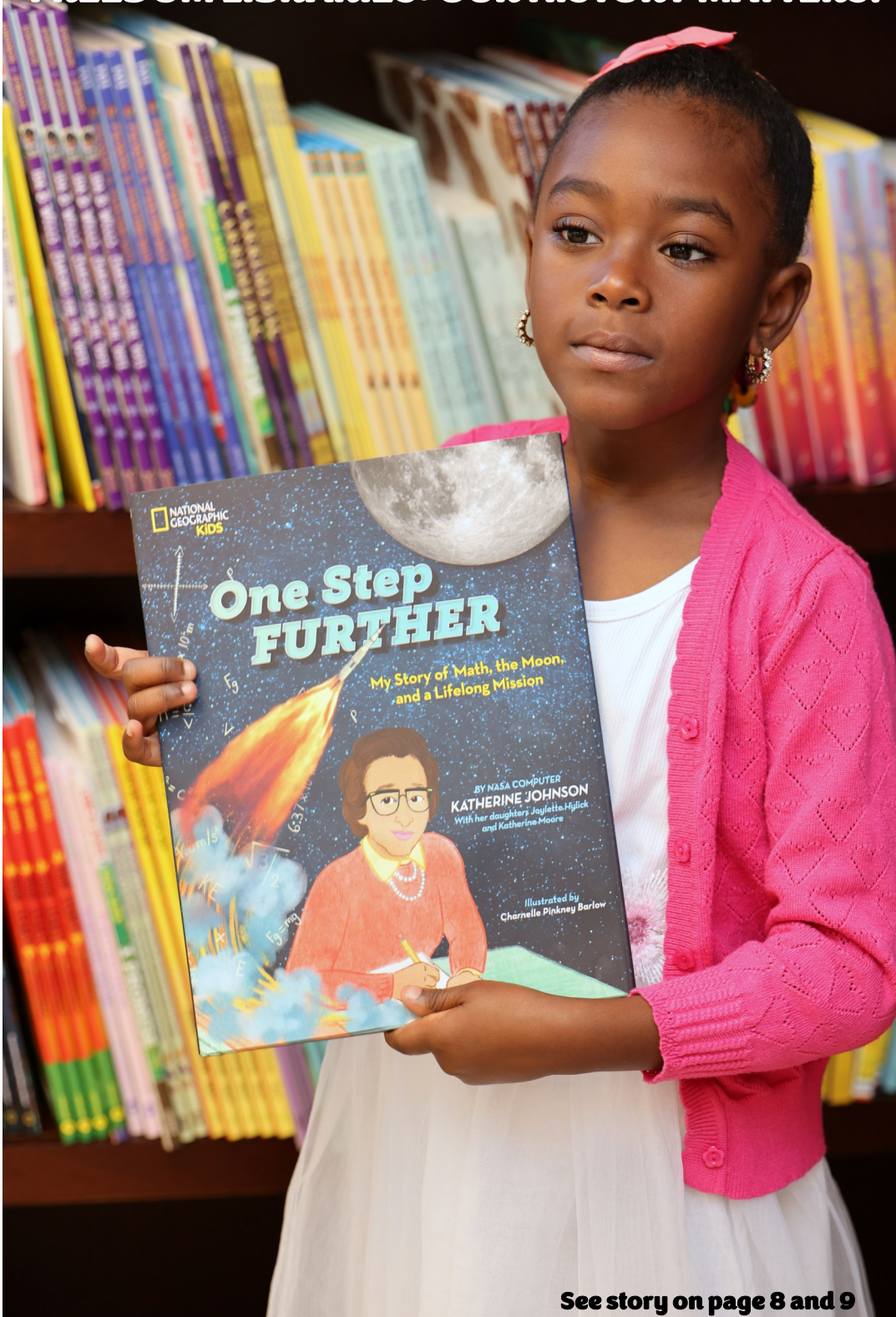




FREEDOM LIBRARIES: OUR HISTORY MATTERS!



See story on page 8 and 9

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Community Room Named to Honor Dr. Lorenzo S. Edwards

Patches' Pet Pain & Grief Counseling

Florida Industrial School for Girls Unveils New Marker

Freedom Libraries: Our History Matters!

Money Smart Tips: Don't Be Scammed! Know the Warning Signs

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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.

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EDITOR'S DESK



I wish we had a different answer for people desperately looking for housing who call the Marion County Children's Alliance office thinking we can help them find a place to live because a friend told them we could. To be clear, we don't provide that service because we don't know anything about their background, rental history or if they had any evictions. And now, some landlords want to check their credit history, length of employment and require applicants to make three times the rent, which is impossible for most families. That's why the person looking for a place to stay must do that part themselves because the landlord is leasing to them, not to us.

What organizations like the Children's Alliance and a few others can do is help with some of the costs required to move in, but the problem is limited funding that's available on a first come, first served basis, and the amount most families need is usually more than what organizations can pay. Application fees are non-refundable and the amount a family needs to move in can range from \$3,000 up to \$9,000 depending on the monthly rent. How many of you reading this can afford that?

There is definitely a shortage of "affordable" housing in Marion County. Many families have resorted to living in motels, but that's expensive too since most charge \$500 or more per week.

Habitat for Humanity of Marion County is building six homes in partnership with the Marion County Community Services Purchase Assistance Program.

With very few rental options available, this is an excellent opportunity for the right person who wants to own their own home, and they are affordable!

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Let's Talk!

Monica Bryant

Monica T. Bryant, Editor



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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

COMMUNITY ROOM NAMED TO HONOR DR. LORENZO EDWARDS

The smile on the Rev. Dr. Lorenzo S. Edwards' face as he sat in front of more than 75 people gathered at the College of Central Florida Hampton Center to celebrate his contributions to the College said it all.

On June 20, the Community Room at the College was named in honor of Edwards during the dedication ceremony. It was something Edwards, a longtime community advocate, did not expect.

"The naming of the Community Room at the Hampton Center is a fitting tribute to Dr. Edwards legacy," said Dr. James Henningsen, president of the College of Central Florida. "This room will serve as a constant reminder of his contributions and a lasting impact he had on our institution and our great city."

Edwards began his journey at the College of Central Florida as a student, earning his Associate in Arts in 1971. In 1989, he started as the Coordinator of Project Success in Minority Recruitment. A year later, he served for eight years as the Dean of Minority Affairs and Handicap Services before becoming the founding director of the Hampton Center where he continued to influence and shape the community until he retired in June 2003.

Edwards was born in 1938 in Ocala, FL. He served as pastor of Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church for 50 years; was president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and served on the Ocala City Council, representing District 2, for 10 years.



Rev. Dr. Lorenzo S. Edwards.



Brian Edwards, Richard Edwards, Lorenzo "Stanley" Edwards and the Rev. Dr. Lorenzo S. Edwards.

Ocala City Councilman, Ire Bethea, who now represents District 2, presented Edwards with a Proclamation from the City of Ocala to summarize his accomplishments. He said the community is very, very lucky to have a gentleman of Edwards stature to do the things and accomplish the things he did and not just on the City Council.

Bethea said Edwards pushed the City Council to do quite a few things in West Ocala. He initiated the conversation, which resulted in the concrete wall that used to surround the baseball field at Webb Field, that had become a nuisance, to be taken down. Prior to him leaving the City Council, Bethea said there was a discussion about the artwork on the wall at Webb Field, and Edwards initiated that conversation although his predecessor, Dr. Beverly Robinson, helped bring the project to fruition. And, when funds originally designated for a project at Tuscawilla Park were no longer needed, Edwards asked that the money be used to update the ballpark at Webb Field.

"You don't always lead from the front, sometimes you lead from wherever you are," Bethea said. "You get that conversation going and sometimes someone else has to take it through."

Ocala City Manager Pete Lee also presented Edwards with a plaque from the City honoring him for his dedication and contributions to Ocala/Marion County and thanked him for everything he's done.

"Thank you for being a trailblazer, sometimes blazing the trail when there wasn't one. You've done so many things to get us to the point that we are," Lee said. "There's a lot of others in this room that are trailblazers and people who followed you hopefully in the direction you've set us on when you were a City Councilman"

Henningsen said Edwards has left a very strong legacy at CF and in our community, and his tenure was marked by his unwavering commitment to minority recruitment and student services. He said he played a vital role in enhancing the college's support systems for minority and handicapped students ensuring they had the resources needed to succeed.

"His leadership, vision and community outreach helped create a more supportive learning environment for all of our students at CF," he said.

During the closing, Edwards, who was surprised he remembered it, recited a portion of "A Psalm of Life" by Henry Longfellow.

"Ocala is full of a lot of not just good people, but great people and I had a chance to work or manipulate some of you, Frank Washington being one of them," Edwards said. "I want you to know that I'm proud to have been a citizen of Ocala."



(L to R) Pete Lee, Jim Hilty, Ire Bethea, James Henningsen, Rev. Dr. Lorenzo Edwards

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.

REMEMBERING PATCHES: MY KEEPSAKE,



Patches

Dr. Darrell Tolbert will never forget his time on the road with Patches. The Boston Terrier became a member of their family in 2007 when they placed an ad on Facebook looking for a replacement for their dog Mona and a woman responded.

At the time, Tolbert was driving semi-trucks for SUNCO Carriers and Patches was his trucking buddy. He said the two of them went through so much together including the Depression in 2008 - 2009, when a lot of people were losing stuff and going broke. Tolbert said he remembers being in the semi one day crying because he was going broke along with everyone else. He said people were killing themselves, the Stock Market was hitting bottom and everybody was feeling it.

"I remember sitting in the truck just crying, crying and she'd come out of her box and jump in my lap licking me, trying to tell me "Daddy" it's going to be alright," he said. "We're going to get through this."

And they did! The two spent five years riding up and down the road together.

But one day Tolbert came home off the road and noticed his dog was acting differently. Her stomach was swelling up and getting hard. His wife, Kathy, told him Patches had been acting strangely. He was going in the bathroom and pulling some of Tolbert's dirty clothes out and sleeping on them.

"I think she knew that something was wrong with her," he said. "She was longing for her dad, which was me, to come home."

Tolbert went back on the road, but told his wife to take the dog to the vet. He was in Kentucky when she called him screaming and hollering that the tube the doctor put down her throat was full of blood. Patches had ripped a pulmonary heart valve and they needed his permission to put her down. Kathy told him they could do surgery, but it would be very expensive. He asked how expensive, and she told him it would cost \$7,000.

But Tolbert, who wasn't ready to let go of his buddy, told his wife to ask the doctor if he could guarantee that Patches would live after she had the surgery, and if so, he would write the check to save her life. But due to her age and other factors, the doctor couldn't make any guarantees.

Tolbert wanted to see his fur baby alive one last time so he told his wife he'd be home in three days to get Patches and take her home. She told him the doctor said it would be cruel to keep her alive that long because she was probably in a lot of pain, so he told her to get their daughter L'Jireh, because Patches was her dog, so she could say her good-byes, and then they could put her down.



L'Jireh and Patches

After hanging up the phone, Tolbert started crying, screaming and hollering. He called his mother who told him to pull the truck over before he killed himself. He did and got in the bed of the truck. His son Durrell called him when he heard Patches had died because he knew his dad would be hurt really bad because, he said, his dad loved that dog more than he loved him.

When Durrell moved in with his dad, he told him that the dog had to go because he didn't like dogs. But his dad told him: "Before that dog go, you're going to go; believe that!"

"That's how much I loved that dog, but I was serious in what I told him. When I put her down, I remember going through grief. I was sick, messed up because this dog ... we traveled together, we slept together, years over the road just going, sharing food together, buddy, buddy, pals," Tolbert said. "That was my keepsake, so when she died I went through a moment of depression."



Years later, he said, somebody gave him a pamphlet on pet grief counseling. After reading it, he said it was definitely needed so he took a course and became a certified grief counselor.

In memory of Patches, Tolbert wrote "*The Pain and Grief From Losing a Pet*," and he founded Patches' Pet Pain & Grief Counseling in July 2022 to help others process the pain that's experienced when going through the loss of a pet.

Continued on page 5

FAITHFUL AND LOVING TRUCKING BUDDY

Continued from page 4



"It's amazing that sometimes the pain you go through, you end up working in that area to try to help relieve somebody else of the same pain," he said.

Patches' Pet Pain & Grief Counseling provides assistance in the following areas: People and Animals; The Stages of Grief, How Your Clients Feel, Immediate Help, Healing with Therapy, Therapy Tools, and Grief Disorders. The business serves the entire Central Florida area and services can be offered via Zoom although Tolbert prefers being in-person so that he can personally bond with his clients. There is a cost-effective fee for the grief sessions.

Since he knows first-hand the deep pain from losing a pet, Tolbert wants to help others. He's been driving to different pet hospitals in Ocala, Dunnellon, Crystal River and the Villages for two years trying

to get opportunities to introduce his pet grievance business to anyone who needs help. About a month ago, he attended a pet event in the Villages and got invited to speak at a Cat Club in the same area. He said the people embraced him with open arms and he hopes others will too.

"It's needed. It's hurting people out there. If you don't love animals the way I love animals, the way other people love animals then of course this won't mean anything to you, but some of us love our pets the same way we love family members," Tolbert said. "We love our pets more than we love family members."

Tolbert promised his daughter, who was 3-years-old when her dog died, that they would do their best to find some of Patches' offspring and buy one. They purchased Zeus, another Boston Terrier, and told her he was Patches' grandson.



Darrell and L'Jireh

In addition to Zeus, they eventually added more fur babies to their family: Spotsy, a 3-year-old Chihuahua and Nimbus, a 6 month old Tomcat. But in the span of three months, Spotsy died of old age and three months later, Nimbus had stage 4 kidney failure and had to be euthanized.

"I was devastated and went through a bout of depression for three months," Tolbert said. "I was led to go to the Human Society, where I met and fell in love with Apollo, so we made him a part of our family."

Tolbert said his family had many dogs and cats but he never had a special pet growing up.

"My love for animals, I believe, was something God placed in me from the beginning," he said.

During a recent episode on his Illumination Show with the Doctor podcast, Tolbert deviated from his topic on Unforgiveness to talk about Pets and the Five Signs Your Pet Loves You for the pet lovers and fur baby lovers. Those signs include: Tail Wagging; Rough House Playing; Desire to Sleep With You; Jumping on You; and Following you Around.

Tolbert usually records a segment each week. If you want to listen to the show, you can find him on all major podcast platforms such as Spotify, Amazon Music, Podcast Index, Podchaser, Pocket Casts, Deezer, Listen Notes and Player FM & RSS Feed.

For questions or more information, call (352) 361-8473, email ljireh@aol.com or like and follow him on his Facebook page - Patches Pet Pain & Grief Counseling.



**Dr. Darrell Tolbert,
Owner, Patches' Pet Pain
& Grief Counseling**

FLORIDA INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS UNVEILS MARKER

The historical marker for the Florida Industrial School for Girls was unveiled on June 20, on the front lawn of the Marion County Museum of History and Archaeology (formally the East Hall of the former school) at the McPherson Governmental Campus.

The school was established as the first separate detention facility/reform school for girls in Florida by the State Legislature in 1915. It opened the same year at a temporary location at what is now the Cascades office complex on Silver Springs Blvd. Two years later, the school, which started with one building and 40 students, moved to its permanent campus at the site of a former prison farm. It grew to have more than a dozen buildings and between 100 to nearly 300 students. The school expanded to a second campus for African-American girls near Lowell.

The name changed to the Florida School for Girls when a greater emphasis on education was implemented. When Alyce McPherson, the long-serving superintendent, retired the name changed again to the McPherson School for Girls, and when it went co-educational, it became the McPherson School. In 1984, the school closed and Marion County purchased the property two years later to serve as a government complex. East Hall, the former isolation building, is the second oldest building on the campus and is the home of the Marion County Museum of History and Archaeology.



Descendants of the House Mothers of the school, Mary Crews Johnson and George Albright III, unveiled the marker.

Johnson represented her mother, Marguerite Cooper Crews, who was employed at the school from 1969 until 1977 when she retired. Crews was born in Gilchrist County in 1910 and was a sixth-generation Floridan. She married Jim Crews and moved to Ocala in 1939. She worked at McCrory's on the downtown square for 13 years prior to becoming a housemother at the McPherson School for Girls.

Albright represented his great grandmother, Mary Evelyn Martin affectionally known as "Miss Molly" by her grandson Buddy Martin and Albright. Martin was born in 1873 and was a lifelong resident of Marion County. She served as a housemother at the school during the 1930s.

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CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, Community Home Project, and the Marion County Hospital District have teamed up for a summer job fair.

This job fair is ideal for anyone looking for employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time positions.

This event is free and open to the public. For more information, contact: 800-434-5627.

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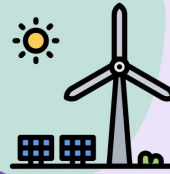
July 18th & 19th @ 8:00AM

[Click here to register](#)

(DAY 1) MARY SUE RICH COMMUNITY CENTER @ REED PLACE - 1821 NW 21ST AVE., OCALA, FL 34475
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MIKLE GORDON @ 813.525.6569, MIKLE.GORDON@DUKE-ENERGY.COM
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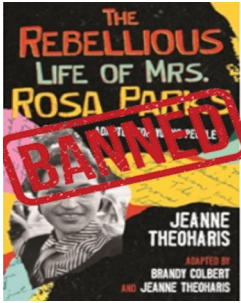
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FREEDOM LIBRARIES ENSURE THIS GENERATION IS EXPOSED



When Colin Mitchell called on Governor DeSantis to remove the policies leading to banned books and books that had been removed for review from school districts during a press conference in Orlando last year, he had no idea it would become a national issue. Mitchell serves as Second Vice President of the NAACP Marion County Youth Council and president of the NAACP Florida Youth and College Division, the group who launched the Freedom Libraries initiative to bring attention to the issue.

Mitchell asked the American Federation of Teachers and local teacher unions to join the fight, which began with the distribution of 10,000 banned books or books on African American history or culture to be housed in Freedom Libraries across Florida. Colin's big brother Brendien Mitchell, the Associate Director of the Human Rights Division for the American Federation of Teachers, oversees the initiative and facilitates the AFT's Reading Opens the World program.

They took the fight to Boston last year and participated in a book giveaway highlighting the ongoing issues in the South related to Book Bans, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Censorship of Curriculum. More than 1,000 books were distributed during that event.

"We have already seen an about face by the Governor. They have reformed the book ban and challenge process and made it more difficult to challenge a book," said Yvette Gibbs Mitchell, NAACP Florida State Conference Secretary. "However, the goal is to end the process altogether. We should not be banning books, censoring curriculum, manipulating history and removing works that conflict with one's personal ideology."

Gibbs Mitchell, the mother of Colin and Brendien and Co-advisor for the NAACP Marion County Youth Council, said the freedom to read has always been a fundamental principle of Americanism, but she never thought book banning would happen during her lifetime.

"Book bans were used by the Nazis and other dictators to try to diminish diverse cultures and diverse thoughts," she said. "It is important that the contributions of all people remain a part of our education system."

The term Freedom Libraries, which were opened during the Freedom Summer of 1963 when young activists toured the South registering voters, is not new. Back then, Blacks were not permitted into certain sections of the library, and many of the works of black poets and authors were not found in libraries.



Mt. Canaan Missionary Baptist Church



Powerhouse of Jesus

"To level the playing ground and introduce youth and adults to works written by black authors and to read works from others, churches across the South opened Freedom Libraries; so it made sense to call it what it has been called from the beginning - A Freedom Library," she said.

The first library opened in April 2023 at Beulah Baptist Institutional Church in Tampa. So far, two libraries have opened in Marion County and one is in Bushnell. Mt. Canaan Missionary Baptist Church and Powerhouse of Jesus opened in October 2023. New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church held a grand opening on June 10, and will be open to the public on Wednesday, July 10, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Covenant's library has about 450 books and is dedicated in memory of Rudelle Campbell Berry, who died right before the grand opening. Kecia Matthews, youth leader, said Berry was all about education and was inspirational and encouraging to everybody. Every first Sunday, she read a meditation to the congregation. She also started a bookstore in her home church before moving to Ocala. The library is open on second Sundays from 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. and fourth Sundays from 8:45 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. and 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

Covenant was chosen because of the church's rich history and its involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. It incorporates Black History all year long with presentations by youth and young adults on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. On June 23, Jeffrey Cooper's presentation was on Paradise Park, the segregated section of Silver Springs. Azariyah Coleman and others were spending time in the library, which includes age-appropriate books for elementary, middle and high school students and adults.

TO DIVERSE CULTURES, THOUGHTS AND HISTORIES

Continued from page 8

"I hope the kids realize the importance of being able to read books written by people who look like them, and when they come down and they start reading the books and checking out the books that something in their minds click and they say Wow, I can do this too," said Donna Wilkerson, the church librarian.

A fourth library, scheduled to be the largest, opens on Saturday, August 3, at Greater New Hope Church in Silver Springs Shores. It will include more than 750 books, some in Spanish and books about other cultures, a reference and research section and will feature Abigail's Book Club.

The Club was named by Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers for Abigail Rose, a Marion County student who shared her experience of being forced to return a book to her school library because the book was being pulled because it was being challenged.

"We've heard about books being banned in other countries, but never in a million years did I think that it would happen here in this country," Wilkerson said.

Gibbs Mitchell admits that their footprint has been low; however, to open a library, a church must be committed to making it available to the community and that requires dollars and additional volunteers. She said they are continuing to work on the framework, but their goal is to have all libraries who've had soft openings to fully open this year.

So far, the 10,000 books have been used to open 39 libraries and host book giveaways in Florida. More than 1,700 have been disseminated in Marion County by the NAACP Youth Council. Another 5,000 books will be distributed to youth councils and college chapters at the NAACP Florida State Conference Annual Convention September 12-15, 2024. Marion County will receive another set of books in September and the goal is to open another library, possibly in the Dunnellon area.

Locally, the initiative is being led by the NAACP Marion County Youth Council, NAACP Marion County Branch, Marion Education Association, Marion Education Support Personnel Union, local churches and volunteers. It is also being championed and supported by the teachers' unions, which are under attack. Gibbs Mitchell said this is a good example of how union dollars support our communities and we need to stand by and support them before they also become a thing of the past.

"Our unions are one of the gatekeepers of diversity, equity and inclusion. That is why they are under attack," she said. "We need them if we want to ensure that every student is exposed to diverse cultures, thoughts and histories."

Mitchell said the libraries need volunteers to ensure they are open frequently to serve our communities and they need more books, which will be reviewed to determine age-appropriateness. The campaign is also being used to train youth on the components of library science.

The success of the program in Florida has led states like Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, Louisiana, South Carolina, Massachusetts, New York and Texas to follow the Florida model.

"Our history, our culture and our works are under attack. Book challenges and bans have centered on the works of authors from our communities," Gibbs Mitchell said. "It was no need to reinvent the wheel. It was time to put the wheel back on. Freedom Libraries ensure this generation has the freedom to read works about diverse cultures, diverse thoughts and diverse history."

Contact Beverly Rose, NAACP Marion County Advisor, at (352) 254-1903, if you are interested in getting your student involved in the initiative or volunteer opportunities.

Contact each church directly for hours open, to donate books or to volunteer:

Mount Canaan Missionary Baptist Church, 848 S.E. 58th Ave., Ocala, FL (352) 694-7680

Powerhouse of Jesus, 83 E C 476a, Bushnell, FL 33513 (352) 793-1100

New Covenant M.B. Church, 606 S.W. Broadway St., Ocala, FL 34475 (352) 622-7877

Greater New Hope Church, 484 Emerald Rd., Ocala, FL 34472 (352) 687-1130



New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church



ESTELLA BYRD-WHITMAN HOLDS OPEN HOUSE FOR THE COMMUNITY

More than 100 people attended the Open House for the Estella Byrd Whitman Community Health Center on Saturday, June 29, 2024.

The free event included an opportunity to meet the staff, tours of the facility, music and refreshments.



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- PREGNANCY TESTING
- SPECIALTY REFERRALS

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POLICE • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

August 6

5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Lillian Bryant Park

Join us for an evening filled with excitement!

This **FREE** event will have games, bounce houses, dancing, arts and crafts, emergency vehicle displays and more!

For more info, call [352-369-7182](tel:352-369-7182)



MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

DON'T BE SCAMMED! KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS!

I wrote last month about Scams and right after that I saw it happen right in front of me. I was checking out at a local drug store on State Road 200 and the manager was on the phone with who he thought was SunPass. They insisted they had a license plate photo of his car not paying a toll. He told them he had never even been on that road, but under threat of fines and late charges he gave them his credit card number even as I was telling him he was being scammed. I bet it took less than ten minutes for the scammers to order things up to his maximum credit card limit. According to Edward Jones Financial, Americans lost \$8.8 Billion to scams in 2022 and this has been going up greatly ever since. Older adults are taken advantage of the most. Edward Jones has six warning flags to help protect you. When a company or government agency calls you saying you owe money, even if the caller ID says it is who they say they are, do not give them any payment information. They have ways to fake caller ID. Hang up or don't respond to their email and contact the company directly to find out if you in fact owe any money. If you are contacted and told you have to act immediately that is a red flag, as are threats that you will be arrested or be ruined financially if you don't act right now.

Another common scam is telling you that you won a lottery or sweepstakes but you must pay a fee in advance to collect it or they need your account number to send you the money. Too good to be true is almost always too good to be true. Don't ever share your personal information with these people; bank account numbers, social security number, date of birth and passwords all make it easier for them to steal your identity. Another huge red flag is if they want payment in an unusual way such as wiring money or sending gift cards. Be careful about romance scams too. These scammers will spend months building a relationship with you over the phone or internet to where you think you are in a loving relationship and then they ask for money for an emergency situation, such as a medical need or even to buy a plane ticket to come see you. If you have never seen the person or verified with people you trust as to who they are do not send them money. Once you do, if you ever hear from them again it will only be if they are asking you for more money.

Even legitimate companies seem to want to take advantage. I use a well know company for virus protection for my computer. When I renewed last year they told me they would not automatically renew my coverage without giving me a 20 day notice to decide. Last month I had a charge on my credit card company for \$139 from this company. When I called them they told me they automatically bill you two months in advance of renewal at full price for a service that you can buy for \$54. After a few minutes on the phone they agreed to refund the \$85 difference between what they charged me and what I could have paid for this item. This experience highlighted another reason why you need to check your credit card statements every month. If I hadn't looked, I would have never caught this overcharge.

Getting children ready to go back to school can be very expensive. Many churches and agencies help ease the burden by having free Back to School Bashes. On Saturday, July 27, the Marion County Children's Alliance, Community Legal Services and the City of Ocala will hold its 21st Annual Bash at Friends Recycling at 2350 N.W. 27th Avenue. This is a Drive Thru event only and held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and your children must be in the car with you. Your children will receive a backpack full of school supplies and all the adults and children in the car will get a free meal.

Also on the same day, (Saturday, July 27) the Back to School Community Giveback Event, an effort by the Community Foundation, AdventHealth Ocala and Marion County Public Schools, will host in-person events and give away backpacks and school supplies from 10 a.m. to noon. The main host location will be at AdventHealth Ocala Auxiliary Center with satellite locations at Lake Weir High School, The Forest Community Center, North Marion High School, Dunnellon Middle School, Liberty Middle School and Belleview High School. For more information, go to www.ocalafoundation.org.

I would suggest as you drive around town watch for signs in front of churches too as many of them also have Back to School events.

Business Spotlight



Business Name: Gaskin Gallery

No. of Employees: 1

Business Owner: Demier Gaskin

Business Address: 5360 N.W. 16th St.,
Ocala, FL 34482

Business Phone: (352) 426-1197

What Year Did You Start Your Business? 2020

Hours of Operation: By Appointment Only

Products and/or Services: Photography

Email: gaskin.gallery@gmail.com

Website: N/A

Are you on Social Media? Yes

Facebook: Gaskin.Gallery

Instagram: gaskingallery

TikTok: gaskingallery

What or Who Inspired you to start your business? My friend Andre Myers inspired me because of his vast knowledge in photography and how he effortlessly takes the most breathtaking photos.

What Makes Your Business Unique or What's Your Specialty? My business is unique because I immortalize Pictures Through Memories. I believe that the world is always changing, adapting and growing like an infant, it's good nor bad but throughout time it grows and learns.

What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting a Business? Never second guess yourself. Stay consistent and don't fear failure.

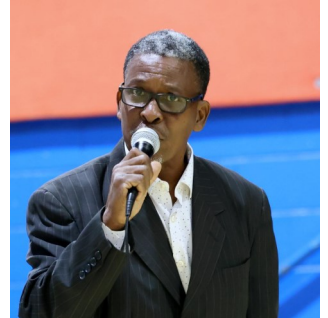
The Small Business Profile is FREE and open to small businesses located in Marion County with less than 25 employees or solo entrepreneurs.

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.

MEN WORKING TO BETTER THE COMMUNITY HOLDS SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS CEREMONY

Men Working to Better the Community held its 2024 Scholarship Awards Ceremony on Saturday, June 29, at the Ed Croskey Recreation Center. More than 40 people attended the free event, which included dinner, music, a prayer for the graduates and two \$500 Scholarships were awarded to 2024 Vanguard High School graduates Kadrian Morrison and Terrance Farmer Jr.

Johnnie Mae Jones received a long-time service award for always supporting and helping the organization, and Latoya Garrett received an award in honor of her father, Wayne Rush, who passed away recently. Rev. Martin Smith, Progressive Union M.B.A. was the guest speaker.



Rev. Martin Smith

Club Officers and Members

President ~ Chris Hagins
Vice President ~ Ron James
Treasurer ~ Marshall Jennings

Members

George Brown
Gregory Finch
James Wilson
Kerry Mobley
Sam Jackson
William Mozell

P.O. Box 0312,
Ocala, FL 34478

Email:
betterthecommunity2000@gmail.com

Cashapp: \$mwbtbc



Terrance Farmer Jr. is a Spring 2024 graduate of VHS. He achieved a 3.9 GPA while taking challenging courses. He participated in extra-curricular activities to include four years of Football, four years of Weightlifting and two years of Track and Field. He plans to attend Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) to pursue a degree in Mechanical Engineering. His career objective is to work for Lockheed Martin.

Kadrian Morrison is a Spring 2024 graduate of VHS. He achieved a 3.3 weighted GPA while taking Dual Enrollment and AICE courses. His extra-curricular activities include four years in Marching and Concert Bands, two years Track and Field and he was an active participant in Vanguard's Video Production Program earning his Premier Pro Certification. He plans to attend Tallahassee Community College in the Fall of 2024. After completing two years at TCC, he will transfer to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) and complete his degree in Computer Science. His career objective is to work in the field of cybersecurity.

Men Working to Better the Community, a non-profit, tax exempt (501c3) charitable organization, began in 1997 with a mission to provide scholarship assistance to graduating high school seniors, help the elderly, assist less fortunate families in the community and strive to serve as positive role models in the community through their actions.

Revenue to support their initiatives emanate from club dues, fundraising proceeds and the generosity of donors. All donations received are invested back into the community 100%.

INAUGURAL DRONE LIGHT SHOW WILL LIGHT UP THE SKY

The City of Ocala, in partnership with the Marion County Board of County Commissioners and the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau, will host 'Patriotic Skies: A Fourth of July Drone Experience' on Thursday, July 4, from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Tuscahill Park, 800 N.E. Sanchez Ave.

This inaugural event replaces the traditional fireworks with a stunning drone light show led by Sky Elements (recently seen on the current season of NBC's America's Got Talent), creating a unique and memorable celebration. Attendees will be captivated by the drones forming patriotic images in the night sky against the beautiful backdrop of Tuscahill Park.

The event is open to the public and free of charge, thanks to the generous support of our sponsors: The College of Central Florida, Elite Medical, Florida Blue, Fun 4 Ocala Kids, The Martial Arts Center, Ocala's Classic Hits 104.7 - WITG, Ocala Electric Utility, R+L Global Logistics, Sunbelt Rentals, and TJM Promotions.

Event Schedule:

- **5 p.m.** Event Starts
- **5:10 – 5:20 p.m.** – Presentation of the Colors by the Ocala Police Department Honor Guard
- **5:30 – 6:30 p.m.** – Performance by Noah Hunton
- **7:00 – 8:30 p.m.** – Performance by Chris McNeil
- **8:45 – 9:45 p.m.** – Performance by the Ocala Symphony Orchestra
- **9:30 – 9:45 p.m.** – Drone show by Sky Elements accompanied by music from the Ocala Symphony Orchestra

All performances will be simulcast through Ocala's Classic Hits – WITG Radio on 104.7 FM. Listeners can also download the WITG application at the following links:
Apple Users: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/witg-radio/id1660016885>
Android Users: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.radiofx.witg&pli=1>

The event also features various entertainment options:

- **All-American Kids' Zone:** Free activities such as bouncy houses, a rock wall, and a mechanical alligator. Face painting will also be available for a fee.
- **Cool Zone:** Designated area to enjoy cooling mist to help regulate body temperatures.
- **Photo Opportunities**
- **Food Trucks:** A variety of food options, including Country Boyz BBQ, The Krafty Kettle, Best Food Ever, Junkie Fries, Brick & Ember, Royal Hibachi, Dancing Empanada and Kona Ice.

Parking and Shuttle Information:

Free shuttle rides will be available at four parking lots from 4 to 11 p.m.:

- **E.D. Croskey Recreation Center** (1510 N.W. Fourth St.): The shuttle drops off at the Ocala Skate Park (517 N.E. Ninth St.) and runs every 20 minutes.
- **Marion County Parking Facility** (346 N.W. 2nd St.): The shuttle drops off at the Ocala Skate Park (517 NE Ninth St.) and runs every 15 minutes.
- **Marion Technical Institute** (1614 SE Fort King St.): The shuttle drops off at the intersection of NE Eighth Ave. and NE Fourth St. and runs every 40 minutes.
- **Ocala City Hall** (110 SE Watula Ave.): The shuttle drops off at the intersection of NE Eighth Ave. and NE Fourth St. and runs every 15 minutes.

Shuttles from Marion Technical Institute and E.D. Croskey Recreation Center will be Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessible. Additional ADA parking will be available at the Reilly Arts Center (500 NE Ninth St), first-come, first-served.

Guests are encouraged to bring their own chairs and blankets. Seating will not be provided. Please note: personal drones, tents, and alcohol are strictly prohibited at this event.

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



SUMMER KIDS FILM SERIES HAPPENING NOW

The Marion Theatre is currently hosting a Summer Kids Film Series every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Showtimes are 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 1:30 p.m. daily. Film showings are in addition to the Marion Theatre's normal film schedule. The series is supported in part by Ocala Electric Utility, Pediatric Associates of Ocala, and The Truluck Team at Sellstate Next Generation Realty.

Tickets are \$5 for adults and children. A summer snack pack is included for children 12 and under which includes a small popcorn, gummy snacks and a Capri Sun. The summer series ends on Aug. 2, 2024.

Movies:

- Puss in Boots: The Last Wish
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem
- Kung Fu Panda
- Moana
- Rio
- Ice Age
- Cars
- Wreck-it Ralph
- Secret Life of Pets



View the showtimes and purchase tickets online at: <https://www.reillyartscenter.com/summer-kids-film-series/>. Large groups are highly encouraged to purchase tickets in advance and arrive early to ensure enough seats are available for their party. Guests can also purchase tickets at the Marion Theatre box office 30 minutes prior to the film by visiting us in person or by calling (352) 820-3049. Follow Ocala's Marion Theatre on Facebook and Instagram to stay up-to-date on all films and events. The Marion Theatre is located at 50 S. Magnolia Ave. Ocala, FL 34471.

DONATIONS NEEDED FOR FOOD PANTRY

MARION SENIOR SERVICES

FOOD DRIVE

LET'S FEED OUR SENIORS



WHAT WE NEED?

UNEXPIRED & NON PERISHABLE FOOD ONLY

DROP OFF

1101 SW 20th Ct Ocala Florida 34471

FOR MORE INFO:
(352) 620-3501
marionseniorservices.org



With hurricane season upon us, Marion Senior Services is asking for pantry donations! Many of their vulnerable clients are home-bound and isolated, putting them at an elevated risk during a hurricane.

We need non-perishable (non-expired) pantry items for our clients to ensure their pantries are stocked in anticipation of Hurricane Season. Please drop off donations to Marion Senior Services: 1101 S.W. 20th Court, Ocala, FL 34471 through July 11th.

If you are interested in other ways to get involved and support our elderly population during hurricane season, call Natasha Dobkowski at (352) 620-3501 or ndobkowski@marionseniorservices.org.



Howard Academy Community Center

Graduation Cotillion

for

*Dare 2 B Great
Girls Mentoring Program*

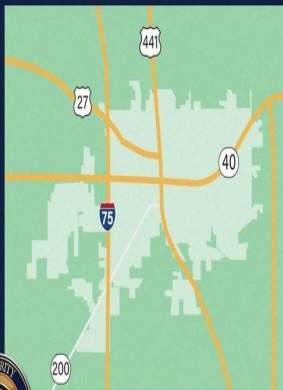
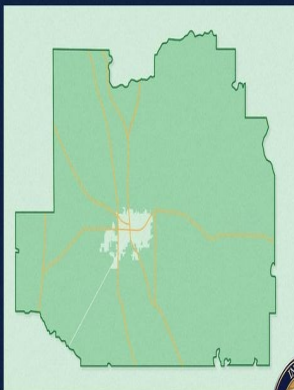
Saturday, July 20, 2024
6:00 p.m.

College of Central Florida
Webber Center
3001 S.W. College Road
Ocala, FL 34474

Attire: Dressy Casual



NON-EMERGENCY LINES



MARION COUNTY
352-732-9111



CITY OF OCALA
352-369-7070

SAVE IN YOUR CONTACTS!

When you need to request non-emergency assistance, there are different numbers you need to call depending on your location.

If you're within the city limits of Ocala, call the Ocala Police Department.

If you're outside Ocala city limits, but in Marion County, call the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

Keep both numbers on your phone. You never know where you will be if you need help.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

MARION COUNTY RAIDERS

SEASON STARTS AUGUST 1, 2024

- Skills & ball techniques
- Footwork exercises
- Strategy & teamwork exercises
- Fun games & trial matches

FOOTBALL AGES: 5-14 DIV: 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U	CHEER & DANCE AGES: 3-18 GAMES & COMPETITIONS
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SCAN TO REGISTER FOLLOW ON FB CALL FOR INFO

ORIE BULLARD JR. 352-353-8036 (FOOTBALL COMMISSIONER)
APRIL ROSE-MCOY 352-547-7122 (CHEER & DANCE COMMISSIONER)

Town Talk Magazine

P.O. Box 6212

Ocala, FL 34478

**21ST
ANNUAL**

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

FREE BACKPACK AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES

SATURDAY, JULY 27, 2024

DRIVE THRU ONLY EVENT

10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Friends Recycling Center
2350 N.W. 27th Ave., Ocala**

**For more information, to donate supplies
or sponsorship opportunities,
call (352) 438-5990 or (352) 509-9279**



Children **MUST BE** in the car to receive Backpack

No Exceptions!

Registration
NOT Required!

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

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