



## BETTI JEFFERSON GADSON

*The Gift of Giving...*  
Broken for  
a purpose.



### *In this issue:*

*Community With A Heart*

*Exchange Cans for Candy to  
Help Interfaith Emergency Services*

*A Vision Without A Plan is a Dream*

*Betti Jefferson Gadson: A Second  
Chance ~ The Gift of Giving:  
Broken for a Purpose*

*Clearing the Air About  
Menthol Cigarettes*

*War Cry for Peace  
1st Annual Holiday Banquet*



**Estella Byrd Whitman**  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

INVITES YOU TO A  
**Community  
Town Hall Meeting!**

**Saturday, December 9th • 12-2pm**

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

**We would like to begin an open discussion  
of your needs from a Health Center  
in your Community.**

**Please join us as we want to hear your  
ideas, needs, and voice.**

*Light Refreshments and Gift Card Drawing*

**WE ALREADY HAVE EXCITING NEWS TO SHARE!**  
The Center is now open Monday-Friday with telehealth appointments available!

819 NW 7th Street Ocala, FL 34475 | 352-875-2226 | [www.EstellaWellness.com](http://www.EstellaWellness.com)

*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

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### Let's Talk

#### We want to hear from you:

Email your submissions, events,  
comments or questions to

**Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com.**

Please include contact information  
(name and phone number) on the  
submission. Deadline is the first  
Monday of each month for the  
following month's publication.

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The opinions expressed in this  
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**or Towntalkmagazine.org**

## EDITOR'S DESK



When I was a little girl, my siblings and I would make our lists and write down everything we wanted for Christmas that year and give it to our parents. Our lists included things children usually asked for like bicycles, doll houses, barbie dolls, remote control cars, a basketball, etc. Most of the time we got what we asked for, but if we didn't get something, we never complained; we were just grateful for what we got.

Life was so simple back then and things children ask for now are different. This generation expects things we had to work, save our money and buy for ourselves. We didn't ask for video game systems, name-brand clothing, \$200 shoes, a cell phone that cost more than a month's rent and definitely not a car. These days, some of our children feel entitled, expect to get whatever they ask for and get an attitude when they don't.

The holidays have become one of the most stressful times for many parents since Christmas has become so commercialized. It seems the true meaning of the day is forgotten. Don't try to keep up with the Joneses and bury yourself in debt for one day! Do what you can for your children and don't feel guilty or apologize for what you can't do. The greatest gift you can give them is love, and it's free!

If I had to make a list of what I want for Christmas today, it would look a lot different than the one I made as a child. It would include things like being **Grateful** to God for him waking me up each morning because some people didn't make it. I would wish for more peace in my life. Although it costs nothing, it's hard to have. Put yourself first and realize you can't fix everything for everybody. **Joy** would definitely be on the list. The Bible says the joy of the Lord is my strength. Despite the challenges or circumstances we may be experiencing in our lives, joy can improve our physical and mental health.

Although we just celebrated Thanksgiving, being **Thankful** would also be on my list. While I may not have everything I want, I certainly have everything I need. I'm thankful for my family, my friends and even those with whom I may not see eye to eye. Every day is truly a blessing! Tomorrow is not promised!

During this holiday season, reflect on the things that are important to you. The holidays can be hard to get through when you feel alone, recently lost a loved one or facing something that seems to have no solution. Don't give up! God can change your circumstances in the blink of an eye.

Let's Talk!

*Monica Bryant*

Monica T. Bryant, Editor

We wish you and your family a Merry Christmas  
and thank you for supporting Town Talk Magazine,  
our gift to you and our community!

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# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## COMMUNITY WITH A HEART (CWAH)

Every year, months before Community With A Heart (CWAH) is scheduled to start, individuals start calling various agencies looking for assistance to catch up on their rent, pay their electric bill or repair their car so they can get to work. For the past 37 years, the CWAH program, totally supported by donations from the community, has been a lifeline for many, and in some cases, the only option available to help families get back on their feet after experiencing a major unexpected life event.

Times are hard for a lot of families in our community right now and the holidays aren't making it any easier. So many people were focused on surviving daily and unaware that the deadline to apply for help from local agencies for assistance with food and/or toys for their children for Christmas is over and very few agencies, if any, have any funding or resources to help them out.

CWAH may be an option for some families who just need a hand up, not a hand out. To see if you qualify, applicants must provide recent documentation of the need you are seeking help with, demonstrate self-sustainability i.e. be able to pay your bills each month, and agree to a home visit, which is required, by a board member to complete and sign the application. Some requests, such as a car repair, require two estimates from a licensed mechanic or automotive shop. Requests for rent or mortgage require a current statement from the landlord or mortgage company and must include the total amount the applicant is past due and/or late fees that may apply and the date the payment is due. The program cannot pay bills in advance or pay credit cards, medical bills or make repairs to property not owned by the applicant.

The Star-Banner initially organized the annual campaign in 1986 to bring together social service and charitable agencies to assist those in need. In 2012, control of the program was passed to the agencies that served on the board.

The CWAH board meets weekly beginning in November to discuss requests for assistance and allocate funds. The holiday program runs through mid-January. Assistance is capped at \$1,200 per request, and individuals do not receive any money directly. All payments are made on their behalf, and if approved, applicants can not apply again for three years.

The CWAH program does not accept phone calls or have a direct phone number. For questions or information, call one of the agencies listed below or go to <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100075921828652> to send a message. Please allow 24 - 48 hours to receive a response.

### How to apply for assistance from CWAH:

To seek help from CWAH, individuals should contact one of the following agencies for a referral to see if they qualify for assistance from the program: Marion County Children's Alliance, Interfaith Emergency Services, Marion County School Social Services, Brother's Keeper, Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Ocala Housing Authority, Isaiah Foundation, Central Florida Community Action Agency, Marion County Community Services, Habitat for Humanity and Cleve Butler and James Jackson, Community -at-Large Members.



### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Now in its 37th season, CWAH has collected more than \$1.8 million, of which **\$30,04.61** was raised during the 2022 - 2023 campaign to help those in need in Marion County.

### HOW TO HELP:

To donate, send checks to Community With a Heart, P.O. Box 1777, Ocala, FL 34473 or donations can be made online at

<https://www.ocalafoundation.org/community-foundation-funds/community-with-a-heart/>.

Donations are tax-deductible. There are no overhead costs and every cent donated goes to help residents of Marion County.

### LIST OF ONGOING NEEDS:

**Marion County Children's Alliance:** Funds for emergency shelter in motel/ hotel for victims and survivors of domestic violence; gas cards, new, unwrapped toys or gift cards for teenagers 12 – 18 years old. Call (352) 438-5993.

**Brother's Keeper:** Gas cards, bus passes, unwrapped toys for children ages 1-12. Call (352) 622-3846.

**Interfaith Emergency Services:** Towels, coats for all ages, socks and underwear for adults, bus passes and non-perishable food items. Call (352) 629-8868.

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](mailto:Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com).

# NEED HELP THIS HOLIDAY SEASON?

Please join Kingdom Revival Church for a **FREE**

## Drive Thru Community Christmas Lunch

*with all the trimmings!*

**Saturday, December 16, 2023, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**  
**3318 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470**



For information, please call Rose at (352)361-5044

Protect Our Children Project

# HOLIDAY LUNCHEON 2023

THEME: " UNITE FOR HOPE"

Business Casual-ATTIRE  
 Venue-Mimi's Cafe, 4414 Southwest College Rd,  
 Ocala, FL 34478  
 Time: 12 Noon-2PM  
 ON December 2, 2023  
 Great food, Music, Guest Speakers  
 Special Surprise Giveaway  
 POCPP Founding Members: Tickets- 50% off

<http://www.pocpp.org>

**Tickets:**  
 \$55.00 per person, \$100.00 per couple.

**Corporate Sponsors:**  
 \$250.00 includes a full meal for up to three people  
 or \$500.00 includes a meal for up to six people.

**1ST MEGA** **HELP US HELP THEM THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!**

A dogs journey to a new home

# ADOPTION EVENT

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023**  
 Animal Adoptions | Food Trucks | Dog Dock Diving | Vendors | Etc.

**11am - 2pm**  
 Ocala Dog Ranch  
 440 SW 110th Ave, Ocala, FL 34481



1ST ANNUAL GALA

# Red Carpet Recovery

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2023  
 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM  
 MINGLE & JINGLE BEGINS AT 5:00 PM  
 DINNER, AUCTION, MUSIC, RAFFLES, SPEAKERS, & FUN  
 CIRCLE SQUARE CULTURAL CENTER  
 8395 SW 80TH STREET, OCALA, FL 34481

## Save the Date

[WWW.ZEROHOURLIFECENTER.ORG](http://WWW.ZEROHOURLIFECENTER.ORG)  
 (352)765-4943

**Zero Hour Life Center**  
 Recovery Community Organization  
 The time for change is...NOW!

# EXCHANGE CANS FOR CANDY TO HELP INTERFAITH

The first time Karla Grimsley Greenway went to the Christmas Parade, she was only six years old, but she still remembers being in awe of all the lights and the music. She said she still believed in Santa at the time, so seeing him at the end of the parade made it extra special.



Now Greenway, CEO of Interfaith Emergency Services (IES) for the past 14 years, is hoping the community will help make the holiday season extra special for families in need.

In an effort to help restock the food pantry at Interfaith for the holidays, the nonprofit organization will be participating in the Ocala Christmas Parade on Saturday, December 9, for the first time with its “Cans for Candy” Food Drive. Individuals attending the parade are asked to bring a canned or boxed food item to the parade and exchange it for a piece of candy when the Interfaith truck rolls by.

The students in the Community Paramedic’s mentoring program will be helping collect donations in the parade, but Interfaith always needs volunteers to help with various jobs from sorting clothes to filling food pantry orders.

Greenway said Jimmy Cowen, Marion County’s Property Appraiser, suggested the idea after he learned their Food 4 Kids program was struggling this year. She said their food pantry serves approximately 500 households weekly, nearly 2,000 families monthly, and their Food 4 Kids program serves 1,700 children on the weekends.

“The majority of people that come to our pantry in need are housed and work. We also help a lot of people on fixed incomes, including senior citizens and people with handicaps,” she said. “These are good people just struggling to make ends meet. We are so thankful to the Marion County community for the way they love others and help us help those in need.”

Interfaith is looking for non-perishable food items, especially canned vegetables, and they always need peanut butter and jelly, which goes fast, because they give it to their Food 4 Kids families and their pantry clients. The goal is to collect 3,000 pounds of food in the parade, which will allow IES to assist 150 families.

If you don’t plan to go to the parade, donations can also be dropped off in advance to their Food Distribution Warehouse, located at 450 N.W. 2nd St., Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Interfaith, along with Brother’s Keeper and the Salvation Army, is participating in the 12th annual Bring the Harvest Home Food Drive, which helps these local food pantries restock their shelves during the holidays to meet the needs of the community.



## Items needed:

- Dry foods and complementary goods (rice, pasta, pasta sauce, cereal, crackers, peanut butter, jelly). Plastic containers preferred.
- Canned meat (corned beef, chicken, ham, tuna)
- Canned vegetables and fruits
- Baby items (food, diapers, lotion, wipes)
- Toiletries (soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, toilet paper)

Donations can be dropped off in advance or at the conclusion of the event on Friday, December 1, from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the Downtown Square in Ocala.

## Drop-off locations:

County Administration, 601 SE 25th Ave., Ocala; Belleview City Hall; Dunnellon City Hall; Marion County Fire Stations; Marion County Public Libraries; Marion County Recycling Centers; Marion County Sheriff’s District Offices; Marion County Tax Collector’s Offices; Marion County Supervisor of Elections and Ocala Fire Rescue



Greenway said Interfaith has been involved in the holiday food drive since it started. She said the event was started by former County Commissioner Mike Amsden in 2011 after he learned that their food pantry had a critical food shortage and actually had to close one day because they ran out of food. Marion County Commissioner Kathy Bryant has spearheaded the event since its inception.

“This food drive combined with a few others held by other community partners make it possible for us to serve the 500 households each week,” Greenway said. “Without this support, we simply couldn’t meet the demand and some families would not be served.”

For more information on the holiday food drive, including addresses for the drop-off locations, go to <https://www.marionfl.org/our-county/bring-the-harvest-home>

# PICKING UP THE PIECES



## 4TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

Join us in celebrating you

FOOD, MUSIC, SANTA & A GOOD TIME

Gifts will be given to the children that have been registered so please sign up

Sunday 12/17  
1pm-4pm

9636 SE 58th Ave.  
Bellevue, FL  
D.A.VCH 85

PICKINGUPTHEPIECES2020@GMAIL.COM  
WWW.PICKINGUPTHEPIECES.US

352 816 3793

Contact us



## 4TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE

Donation Drop Offs:

Lost and Found Club

616 S. Pine Ave (OPD Plaza)

COLLECTION DATES

10/20/23-12/15/2023

Ocala Fire Dept-Admin Office

505 NW MLK Jr. Ave. Ocala, FL 34475

We need donations of new, unwrapped gifts, gift cards, raffle baskets, skateboards and bikes. Monetary donations are needed to shop for stocking stuffers and gifts.



www.pickingupthepieces.us

Oso Ocala Steel Orchestra presents

# HOLIDAY MUSIC Brunch Gala

Sunday,  
**DEC 17**

Mary Sue Rich Community Center  
at Reed Place, 1821 NW 21st Ave,  
Ocala, FL 34475  
Doors open at: 11:30am  
Serving starts at: 12:00pm

early bird

**\$35**

Dec 11th

**\$45**

per person / table of 9  
including welcome drink

- Sheba The Mississippi Queen
- Speaker - Ruth Ford Reed
- Special guest - Mary Sue Rich
- Turkey giveaways - Bravo Supermarket
- Plus more



# A VISION WITHOUT A PLAN IS A DREAM

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

As a business strategist, I have the pleasure of working with many visionaries. Visionaries being defined as an individual who possesses exceptional foresight, innovative thinking and the ability to identify and seize opportunities in the business world.

They have a unique ability to envision the future and develop groundbreaking ideas that disrupt existing industries or create entirely new ones. Visionaries go beyond conventional thinking, challenging the status quo and pushing boundaries to bring their vision to life.

While having a clear vision is essential for success, it is only the first step. Without a well-defined and strategic plan, a vision remains a mere dream, lacking the actionable steps necessary for its realization. To transform a vision into reality, the vision and plan must be aligned. The plan should reflect the core values, principles and objectives of the vision. It should break the vision into smaller, achievable goals, ensuring that each step taken contributes to overall success.

The planning process should be systematic and structured, define short and long-term goals, analyze the current state of the organization, identify opportunities and challenges, set objectives, formulate strategies and implement processes to monitor the progress of those strategies.

Conversely, the vision should inspire and guide the plan, infusing it with purpose, focus and direction. When the vision and plan are well-integrated, they create a powerful synergy that can propel individuals and organizations forward, helping them overcoming challenges and realize aspirations.

The core of your strategic plan are the vision and mission statements, which define or reaffirm your purpose and reason for your existence.

Based on the mission and vision, set specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals. These goals should align with the overall strategic direction and focus on key areas such as revenue growth, market share, customer satisfaction, innovation, operational efficiency or social impact.

Once goals are determined, action plans are created to outline the tasks, responsibilities, timelines and resources required to execute the strategies. These plans provide a roadmap for implementation and ensure that the necessary steps are taken to achieve the strategic objectives.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of the progress are crucial to determine whether the strategies are yielding the desired results. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are established to measure progress, and feedback mechanisms are implemented to identify any deviations or issues. Adjustments or refinements to the strategies may be made based on the evaluation outcomes.

A vision without a plan is merely a dream waiting to be realized. Combining a compelling vision with a well-crafted plan is the key to transforming dreams into reality. While the vision provides inspiration and direction, the plan offers a roadmap to success. Together, they form a powerful combination that motivates individuals and organizations to take deliberate actions, overcome obstacles and achieve their aspirations.

By aligning vision and plan, and executing with focus and adaptability, dreams can be transformed into tangible achievements.

*Elgin Carelock is also 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](mailto:ecarelock@re-viewyourbusiness.com) or (404) 993-7189 for questions or more information or go to [www.rbsknowledge.com](http://www.rbsknowledge.com).*



# BETTI JEFFERSON GADSON: A SECOND CHANCE!



Betti Jefferson Gadson does not look like what she's been through, although she knows from first-hand experience all about addiction, hopelessness, homelessness and rejection.

Gadson, who was addicted to drugs and alcohol for 27 years, knew her life had a purpose. She wrote about her journey to freedom in a book she published in 2021 entitled "From Crack to The Cross: Broken for Purpose."

The book's Preface states that Broken for Purpose is a true testament of the delivering power of God. It is Gadson's testimony of how God took the broken and fragmented pieces of her life and made her whole.

"Purpose was my portion before I entered the world, however, the path I chose to arrive at purpose cost me dearly," she wrote. "It's funny how life can cause you to walk down a path you never imagined your footsteps treading upon. Sin will cause you to go further than you want to go and pay more than you posses."

## **Betti Jefferson Gadson**

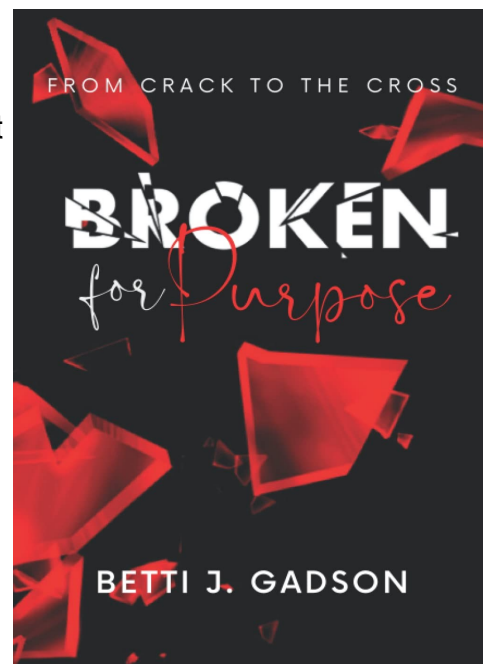
Gadson said those words truly embody the process she had to endure in order to find her way to purpose. She said some who will read her story may have family members still bound in the cycle of addiction, hurt and pain.

Now Gadson, pastor of A Chance For Hope Outreach Ministries, Inc., founded in 2017 as a street ministry that would go minister to those in the same streets she was delivered from, hopes others will identify with some of the issues that plagued her while she fought daily to break free and do the same.

"This is a ministry that not only wants to be in the four walls of a building, but a helping hand and hope to those outside of the four walls of the church," she said. "Our motto is Each One Reach One."

Gadson also founded The Change I want to See; Let It Begin In Me Movement and I Am My Sister's Keeper. She has a passion for others who are still struggling with addiction, homelessness and other life issues. Her prayer is that deliverance may come through her obedience of sharing her journey. She has been clean and sober for more than seven years, is passionate about prison ministry and serves as a mentor to many in the community and abroad.

"Unlike most who are recovering from drug addiction, I do not have any regrets or questions about why I had to endure this test," Gadson wrote in the book's Preface. "Some of the choices I made caused me much heartache and despair ... I do not blame anyone for my actions, but ultimately my choices broke me for purpose."



A Chance For Hope Outreach Ministries holds service every Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and a Food Giveaway every Wednesday around 8 a.m., but the time varies based on when the food truck arrives.

Gadson said the food ministry was started in her yard in 2019 when she lived in the Wagon Wheel Mobile Home Park. A few months later, they were blessed to be able to use a friends vacant lot on Northwest 4th Street.

"We would be out there rain or shine to make sure we helped people in need," she said.

Several months after that, the food giveaway moved to St. Marks United Methodist Church in Ocala after Michael and Jill Beck, pastors of the church, invited them to use the property to distribute the food in 2020.

Continued on page 9



# THE GIFT OF GIVING: BROKEN FOR A PURPOSE



In the beginning, Gadson said they distributed food five days a week, but now they only do it once a week. About seven or eight volunteers show up to help with the food distribution, but they can use more to help out during the week.

“There’s times it’s just a few of us ladies loading the vehicles. We need some dedicated men and thankfully we have a couple that show up when possible,” she said.

Gadson said the community can help by donating to local food banks such as His Compassion, which provides them with the food they give away. She said they also need help with donations of non-perishable food items for the No Child Left Hungry Food Drive and they can always use prayers.

“One of the challenges we face is the great need for food for families. Food banks are even struggling right now,” she said. “I get so many people

reaching out in need of food and it’s heartbreaking, so I try to refer them to other organizations because we only do food once a week.”

Since 2019, the ministry has served more than 400,000 meals to families in need in Ocala.

Gadson said one of the most touching stories she’s heard of how they helped a family was from a lady who reached out to her on Messenger because someone told her about the food giveaway and she needed food desperately to feed her four kids, including a newborn; the lady had just had surgery, was out of work and had no income. Gadson met her at the church on a Monday evening to give her food and she came back on Wednesday and got some more.

“She told me she had exhausted everything she knew to do and couldn’t get any help, but when I gave her food out of my house and purchased baby formula for her and her family to eat, it was an answer to her prayers to God, who she really didn’t even believe in, but because she witnessed God use a complete stranger to help her and her family, she accepted Christ at the food giveaway the following week and now serves God,” Gadson said. “This is something that I will never forget, and it’s exactly why we do everything we do.”

A Chance For Hope Outreach Ministries has helped several organizations with food such as Royal Queens Empowerment, Inc., which helps those staying in domestic violence shelters, and they’ve also worked with the community center at Parkside Gardens Apartments, partnered with NOW Church and community programs such as WOW Kids, I Am My Sister’s Keeper, and the ministry also provides donations to Wyomina Park Elementary School’s Backpack program.

The ministry is also seeking help to provide a complete dinner basket to bless 25 families for Christmas. They need donations of turkeys, mashed potatoes, green beans, jiffy cornbread mix, cranberry sauce, cake mix and Icing. They may still have a few spots available, but the deadline to submit a family is December 10. Only 25 baskets will be given away, and selected families must provide a copy of their lease, proof of income, ID and total number of people in the household.

For more information about A Chance For Hope Outreach Ministries, to support or donate to the organization or to volunteer, call Gadson at (352) 693-7338, email [bettijefferson50@gmail.com](mailto:bettijefferson50@gmail.com) or contact them on the ministry’s Facebook page.



**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR INCENTIVES FLORIDA NOW AVAILABLE IN MARION COUNTY**

In partnership with the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, the Early Childhood INCENTIVES Florida program is now available in Marion County. INCENTIVES rewards early childhood directors, teachers, and family child care home providers with annual stipends between \$450 and \$5,000 based on their level of education and continuous employment.

Designed to attract and retain a strong and capable workforce, INCENTIVES is an evidence-based and locally funded early childhood quality initiative. Administered through the Children’s Forum, INCENTIVES recognizes participants’ commitments to continuing education efforts across the state.

To be eligible for INCENTIVES in Marion County, applicants must work in a child care program or family child care home that is an Early Learning Coalition of Marion County School Readiness or Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) contracted site. In addition, they must earn less than \$25 per hour, be employed at the same child care program for at least six months, and work at least 20 hours per week with children birth to five years of age.

For more information about INCENTIVES, please visit [incentives-fl.org](http://incentives-fl.org).

**COLLEGE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA HOSTS OPEN HOUSE**



The College of Central Florida invites anyone interested in pursuing a college education to attend an open house at CF’s Ocala or Citrus campus on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Ocala open house will be held at the CF Ocala Campus Ewers Century Center, 3001 S.W. College Road. The Citrus open house will be held at the Wilton Simpson Citrus Campus Charles S. Dean Sr. Educational Center, 3800 S. Lecanto Highway, Lecanto.

Future students are encouraged to tour the campuses and learn about more than 170 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 8.

The \$30 application fee will be waived for anyone who completes an admissions application at the event, and applicants will be entered to win free tuition for a 3-credit-hour class.

For those unable to attend the in-person campus events, CF will also host a virtual open house on Tuesday, December 12, 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Attendees are encouraged to register at [www.CF.edu/OpenHouse](http://www.CF.edu/OpenHouse).

For more information, call (352) 873-5800.



**CHESTNUT CEMETERY VOLUNTEER CLEANUP SET FOR SATURDAY, DEC. 2**

The City of Ocala Public Works Department will host a Chestnut Cemetery volunteer cleanup day on Saturday, Dec. 2, from 8 a.m. to noon.

Volunteers will meet at Chestnut Cemetery, 698 N.W. 13th Terr. Volunteers will assist with cleaning headstones, raking leaves, picking up fallen tree limbs and cleaning up debris.

For more information, please call Tom Casey, City of Ocala Public Works Department, at (352) 351-6723.

**NAACP**

*Save the Date for our Celebration of a Historic Milestone!!*

**1923 Represents 100 Years of operating as an NAACP Branch and 80 Years as a Chartered Branch**



**WHERE:** New Covenant MBC, 606 SW Broadway Street, Ocala, FL 34475

**SPEAKER:** Rev. Stanley M. Jacobs, Sr., Pastor

**WHEN:** Sunday, December 10, 2023

**TIME:** 5:00PM

The Historical Celebration Committee is collecting as much Marion County NAACP history as possible. If you know of an event or situation about our NAACP, please write a SHORT description and email to [sarah\\_greene2008@yahoo.com](mailto:sarah_greene2008@yahoo.com). Also, please add the name of the NAACP President at the time.

**If you have a picture or newspaper article you want to share, please mail to NAACP Marion County Branch, P. O. Box 2274, Ocala, FL 34478.**

**We must have all responses as soon as possible, but no later than Nov. 24, 2023.** This date is critical for adding to the history journal and souvenir book.

*The Committee is planning an exciting program with special recognitions. Please plan to attend!*

**BISHOP JAMES D. STOCKTON, III  
BRANCH PRESIDENT**

**E.D. CROSKY CENTER CLOSED FOR MAINTENANCE**

Effective immediately, the E.D. Croskey Recreation Center, 1510 NW Fourth St., will be closed for roof maintenance. The center is expected to reopen to the public Friday, Jan. 5, 2024, noon to 8 p.m.

All programming for youth and adults is relocated to the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 NW 21st Ave. during the scheduled maintenance.

For more information, please call the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department at (352) 368-5517.



**DECEMBER 4, IS THE DEADLINE TO SUBMIT ANY APPLICATIONS OR RENEWALS THAT ARE ALREADY IN PROGRESS. SUBMIT YOUR INFORMATION EARLY!**

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## Department of Children and Families Announces Modernized MyACCESS Portal: Same Name, New Portal

The Florida Department of Children and Families (Department) Secretary Shevaun Harris announced that the new MyACCESS government assistance portal will launch on Tuesday, December 5, 2023. This transformative upgrade will enhance the user experience when applying for or renewing government programs like food assistance, temporary cash assistance, and Medicaid.

The new MyACCESS portal will be available in English, Spanish, Creole and introduces several key new features to support users applying for or renewing their benefits, including:

- an enhanced user-friendly interface,
- mobile friendly access,
- document upload capability, and
- state-of-the-art security measures to protect users' sensitive information.

**For individuals with an account in the current MyACCESS system:**

All applications or renewals that are in progress will need to be submitted before **December 4, 2023**.

Once the new MyACCESS portal is live, current government assistance recipients will need to create a new account in the new MyACCESS portal to manage or renew assistance. A valid email address is required to create a new account.

Please note: only individuals who need to submit an application or renewal, or update their case, will need to log into the system right away. Others can wait until they receive a renewal notice.

For more information about MyACCESS including “How To” and Frequently Asked Questions, please visit [myflfamilies.com/MyACCESS](https://myflfamilies.com/MyACCESS).

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## CF WEBBER GALLERY PRESENTS ANNUAL TRAINS AT THE HOLIDAYS

The College of Central Florida will present the 27th annual “Trains at the Holidays” exhibit December 16 through -29 at the CF Webber Gallery, 3001 S.W. College Road, Ocala.

The exhibit will feature model trains by the Ocala Model Railroaders' Historic Preservation Society and is a family favorite, with moving train displays featuring holiday themes and local landmarks.

The exhibition will be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, December 16, through Friday, December 29, with the exception of Christmas day, December 25, 2023. On Christmas Eve, the exhibit will be open noon to 3 p.m.

For additional information, call **(352) 854-2322**, ext. **1664**.



# XD

KUT DIFFERENT PRESENTS

# 4TH ANNUAL

# COMMUNITY FUN DAY



MAIN EVENT

# KICKBALL

BOUNCE HOUSES | 3-POINT CONTEST / SKILLS CHALLENGE  
FACE PAINTING | RAFFLES | VENDORS | FOOD TRUCKS  
FREE FOOD

TONS OF OTHER  
FUN ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER  
2ND, 2023  
11AM - 5PM



CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
3010 NE 14TH ST, OCALA, FL 34470

## Business Spotlight



**Business Name:** Bossed Up Cleaning Services

**No. of Employees:** 3

**Business Owner:** Pambela Carter

**Business Address:** Serves all of Central Florida

**Business Phone:** (352) 342-3472

**What Year Did You Start Your Business?** 2023

**Hours of Operation:** Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Products and/or Services:**

Residential and Commercial Cleaning, Event Cleaning, Post Construction and RV, Party Bus Cleaning

**Email:** bossedupcleaning@yahoo.com

**Website:** N/A

**Are you on Social Media?** Yes

**Facebook:** Bossed Up Cleaning

**Instagram:** bossed\_up\_cleanng\_services

**What or Who Inspired you to start your business?**

I love to clean and keep things intact and in order. I've always been a clean person and very organized and detailed oriented.

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

I have developed a unique and recognizable brand building relationships with clients using social media to promote my business

**What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting A Business ?**

Focus on something you have a passion for when starting a business.

*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](mailto:Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com). Completed forms can be returned via email or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.*

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

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

**Friday, December 8 through Sunday, December 24, 2023**  
available during holiday hours at the Paddock Mall  
Gift wrapping Booth will be located near Star-Bucks

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 Valerie at **(352) 438-5990** or email **Valerie@mcchildrensalliance.org**

All proceeds benefit victims and survivors of domestic violence

# MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

## A CREDIT CARD USED RESPONSIBLY CAN HELP



As much as I warn about going into debt and high interest credit cards, you would think that I would discourage you from having one but that is not the case. I think everyone should have one or two credit cards from Visa, Master Card or Discover.

The main reason is truly just to establish a credit score for yourself. If you ever go to take out a loan, to buy a car for example, no credit is as bad as bad credit. You want a credit score and one that is good.

If you are just starting out on this journey, the way to establish a credit score that will result in lower interest if you have to borrow money is to get a card, use it just once or twice a month for small purchases, say \$15 or less, then pay it in full by the due date. Do this monthly and you should be in good shape.

If your credit is currently bad and you can't qualify for a credit card search online for the best deal for a "Secured Credit Card." This usually means putting about \$100 into an account with the credit card company, getting a card with a limit of no more than what you have put down, follow the same example as above, one or two small purchases a month then pay it in full. Your credit score will increase fairly quickly so that you can then apply for a regular card. Besides getting lower interest rates when you apply for a loan it is nice to have a card in a real emergency. One other tip is if you already have a credit card you might receive a note asking you to update your income. If your income has remained about the same or has improved go ahead and do this. If you don't your credit card company may lower your credit limit or ding your credit score. Don't click on a link that asks you to do this but go online to your credit card site, sign-in and do it that way to avoid any scam that you might be receiving.

Having your house robbed or being physically assaulted in your home is an awful experience and can also end up costing you a lot of money. A friend sent me an old Facebook posting that I thought was brilliant. The suggestion was to always put your car keys by your bed at night. If you hear a noise outside your house or someone trying to break in just press the panic button on your key fob. It should work if you park on the street or in your garage but try it out to make sure. Most people who are out looking to commit a crime will get scared off by the loud noise your car alarm makes.

My final thought for December. The holiday season should be wonderful for you and your family but there is always a fire danger present. I wrote about it last December so if you still have that issue please re-read it. The short version is be very careful with candles, don't place them by curtains and make sure they are out when you go to bed. If you buy a living tree, make sure it always has water and doesn't dry out. I discourage any extension cords but if you use one do not overload it by plugging too many things into one cord and also make sure your house has at least one working smoke alarm. It is smart to have a fire extinguisher too.



Stay safe, enjoy and we will have more Money Smart tips to come in 2024.....

BARNES & NOBLE Ocala

HOLIDAY  
BOOK  
DRIVE

BENEFITING  
THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION  
OF MARION COUNTY

Now - Dec. 8, 2023  
Give the gift of reading by  
purchasing and donating a  
children's book today



BARNES & NOBLE



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION  
AND HOW THEY SERVE FAMILIES IN THIS COMMUNITY,  
PLEASE VISIT [WWW.ELC-MARION.ORG](http://WWW.ELC-MARION.ORG).

3RD  
DEC  
3PM



*Reverend Standley Gillings, Sr*  
**MODERATOR  
INSTALLATION  
SERVICE**

NEW ST JOHN MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
REVEREND DR. T.L. BROOKS, SR.- PASTOR  
2251 NW 2ND STREET  
OCALA, FL 34475



**MARY SUE RICH ~ OUR HOMETOWN HERO**

College of Central Florida alumna  
Mary Sue Rich was recently  
recognized with the LeRoy Collins  
“Hometown Hero” Distinguished  
Alumni Award at the Association of  
Florida Colleges Annual Conference  
held in Orlando. Rich received the  
award at the conference’s Presidential  
Gala Dinner on November 2, 2023.



**Mary Sue Rich**

Rich is a graduate of Central Florida Community College  
(now the College of Central Florida) and the University  
of Central Florida. Born and raised in Ocala, she was the  
first African-American woman elected to the Ocala City  
Council and she served for 24  
years.

In 2019, the “Mary Sue Rich  
Community Center at Reed  
Place” was named after Rich  
and community activist Ruth  
Reed, honoring their  
community service.

Throughout the years, Rich has  
received many honors,  
including the CF Foundation’s  
Distinguished Alumni Award  
in 2001.



**Dr. Jim Henningsen, president  
of CF and Mary Sue Rich**

**CLEARING THE AIR ABOUT MENTHOL CIGARETTES**

*By Tanya Ousley, Secretary, Tobacco Free Partnership of Marion*



TOBACCO FREE  
PARTNERSHIP OF  
**MARION**

It’s time to unite our voices to call for a change that could result in saving millions of lives in the generations to come. We can work together to craft a future without dangerous menthol additives in cigarettes, preventing people from starting to smoke and supporting people across our state who are ready to quit.

For generations, Big Tobacco has peddled addiction to our communities, conveniently masking it with additives like artificial menthol. Menthol can be great when added to things like candies or chewing gum, but when smoked in tobacco the combination can prove deadly.

Studies show flavorings like menthol make it easier to start smoking and harder to quit and make the products more appealing to children and young smokers. Menthol in cigarettes also allows the lungs to expand further and allows more of the toxic and cancer-causing chemicals to be absorbed into the body, which can lead to addiction, disease, and death.

Did you know more than one-third of all cigarettes sold today in this country are menthol? While adding menthol flavoring to cigarettes goes back 100 years, it has never before made up such a large percentage of the total number of cigarettes sold in our state and across the country. A recent study found menthol cigarettes were responsible for over 10 million new smokers across the country from 1980 to 2018, 3 million life-years lost, and 378,000 premature deaths.

Menthol is directly responsible for slowing the national decline in the smoking rate. Studies show the smoking rate could be reduced by 15% if menthol cigarettes were no longer available, and an estimated 650,000 lives could be saved. Removing menthol from cigarettes would be especially effective in improving the health of Florida’s populations that use these products at higher rates than the general public. With tobacco use being the leading preventable cause of death in Florida, action is already underway locally to make a difference. Tobacco Free Partnership of Marion is educating local leaders, health organizations, and youth groups about the health impacts of menthol tobacco products.

Let’s face it – when it comes to menthol, it’s not cool. And now is not a time to sit back and accept it. Support your community by educating yourself about menthol and finding local partnerships to help clear the air for generations to come. If you’re ready to make a difference, find out what the Tobacco Free Partnership of Marion County is doing about menthol and how you can help.

Contact us at [info@MarionTFP.com](mailto:info@MarionTFP.com) or for more information, go to [www.MarionTFP.com](http://www.MarionTFP.com).

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**P.O. Box 6212**  
**Ocala, FL 34478**

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**GIFTS**  
**FOOD**  
**FUN**

SUNDAY *17<sup>th</sup>*  
**DECEMBER 5 PM**

KLEIN CENTER  
3001 SW COLLEGE ROAD OCALA, FL 34474

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Go to <https://form.jotform.com/232623402012135>