

## The Impact a Father has on their Children's Lives



Photo by  
Wayne Hopkins  
Pictured L to R:  
Dwan Jr, Dwan Sr., Drake, Meia and Ladarrion Thomas  
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in West Ocala**

**A Father's Love: Today,  
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**Summer Feeding Sites**



**2021 Levitt Amp  
Ocala Music Series  
Free Friday Night Concerts  
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.  
Webb Field at Martin Luther  
King Recreation Complex,  
1510 N.W. 4th St., Ocala.**

**June 4**  
JP Soars' Gypsy Blue Revue with  
Anne Harris supported by  
Pam Taylor and the Flyin' V's

**June 11**  
Ruby Velle and the Soulphonics  
supported by Becky Sinn

**June 18**  
Dean! supported by Kristopher James

**June 25**  
Thomas McClary's Commodore  
Experience supported by Fareeza  
and special performance by  
Solomon Jaye

*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

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### 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  
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following month's publication.

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## EDITOR'S DESK

### Monica Bryant



It's been a busy month! Thank you for the great feedback on last month's Inaugural edition of Town Talk Magazine. We hope you enjoy the June edition just as much.

Most of us have heard the phrase: *Information is Power, Share it.* That's the goal of Town Talk Magazine.

We want to tell stories that matter to you. We want to share the good things happening in your lives and our community. We want to help spread the word about your events, promote small businesses and provide information on resources and services available in the community.

**But we need your support.** If you have a unique story or have story ideas for future issues, **share it with us.** Planning a community event or celebrating a milestone? **Send us the details.** If you see something and you want to find out more information about it, **tell us.** If you can write and want to volunteer with us, **we definitely want to hear from you.** Or, if you just want to support our efforts, send us a word of encouragement or just go to **Towntalkmagazine.org** and click the Donate button. This monthly publication is our way of giving back to our community. Together, we can and will do great things!

Let's Talk!

*Monica*

Monica T. Bryant  
Editor

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# BROOKS LOOKING FOR HELP TO REVITALIZE WEST OCALA

Barbara Brooks wishes she had received more information about her family history. She said oral history, family documents and family pictures are an important family legacy. The oldest in her family, Brooks said she has questions that were never asked and now she has no answers.

"It's my role in the family to speak, write and share pictures for all who have and will come behind me," she said. Brooks, who started writing during the last two years, got serious about writing a book during the Covid-19 shut down. The research, she said, is a culmination of her 72 years of experience living in West Ocala.

A business owner, community leader and staunch advocate for revitalization, Brooks recently self-published her second book, "One House, Block, Street, Community: Revitalization of West Ocala Historic District."

"The significance is my family history, growing up in an extended family household," she said about the book's title. "The block represents the people who were my closest neighbors. The people who lived on my street. We all lived in the Ocala community. It's a call to revitalize the West Ocala Historic District."

Brooks said her passion for revitalization began when she took a close look at the neglect, dilapidated houses and overgrowth on properties. She said many of the people remaining in West Ocala, who she has known all her life, were elderly with health problems and unable to advocate for services.

"I write about the difficulty of getting a city façade grant for my Aunt Sallie, who was 89 in 2004," Brooks said. "I saw the disparities and inequity for services and recognition of the needs for the area, which by the way continues in 2021."

After reading the book, she said, people would be surprised to learn about the human side of some of the people whose names are on community buildings like Thelma Parker and Lillian F. Bryant, both were her cousins and neighbors and Herbert S. Coleman. She also wants to make people aware of the rich history of the people who contributed to Ocala's history. She hopes after she reveals the history, people will be inspired to help in the revitalization of the West Ocala Historic District.

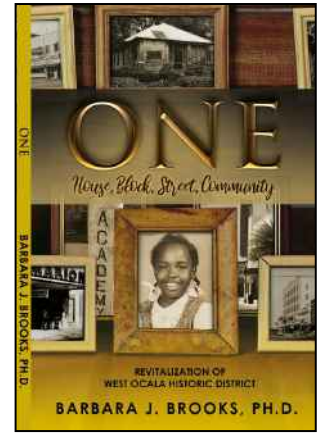
Brooks said the District is where she was born, raised, educated, nurtured and continues to maintain a home and properties. She said the location of it is significant and the West Ocala Historic District has the potential to be a mixed neighborhood of homeowners for teachers, police officers, medical professionals and less renters than the 70 percent that exist today.

"Home ownership creates a stable neighborhood," she said. "I know what the West Ocala Historic District was in my youth. I see what it is now. I have a vision for what could be."

In her book, there is a "Call to Action" section where she outlines areas of concern and recommendations. She said, as in the past and currently, more people need to be engaged in the community.

"Each one of us has power. Collectively we are a force to make this community what we believe it should be," said Brooks, who is also the CEO of R.A.M.A.L. Educational and Social Services, Inc. "Show up. Speak up. Take Action."

To obtain a copy of the book, go to [www.ramalservices.org](http://www.ramalservices.org) and make a donation of \$20 or more. Donations help the nonprofit organization be able to help the most vulnerable people in our community. See details about R.A.M.A.L.'s Juneteenth Fundraiser on page 10.



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## ADAMS FULFILLS HUSBAND'S DREAM OF BRINGING A CLINIC TO WEST OCALA



Pictured L to R: Patrick Gilman, Pamela Lewin and Carolyn Adams

It's been a 12 year fight to get to this point, but Carolyn Adams never thought about giving up on fulfilling her husband's dream of bringing a clinic to West Ocala. Even though being diagnosed with Breast Cancer in 2011 and her husband Arthur R. Adams passing away in 2013 slowed her down, quitting was never an option.

Adams, the CEO of the Estella Byrd Whitman Wellness and Community Resources Center, said an old friend and supervisor always sent her inspirational words and money to help support the journey and with her husband watching from above, support from her energetic 93-year-old mother, a good friend, Margaret Thomas, and her loving family, it gave her the strength to keep going.

"My husband Art was the major voice for getting us started," Adams said. "I have known for years that the Tucker Hill community has been neglected. When you are overlooked for so many years, you view your surroundings as a norm."

Adams' perseverance has finally paid off. The City of Ocala designated the Center a neighborhood clinic in February 2020 right before Covid-19 hit. They closed during the pandemic, but now they have reopened and is ready to serve residents. Recently, she met with her partners and they decided the name was too long and shortened it to the Estella Byrd Whitman Center.

"We are trying hard for immediate discovery so that we can plant ourselves in other small areas like Tucker Hill," said Adams, who wants to retire when she finds someone younger to carry on the vision.

"I will retire," she said. "That was my plan when we moved back to Ocala in 2008."

Dr. Pamela Lewin said the Center is necessary because although there are many other centers in Ocala where people can access healthcare, they had not been doing so. Lewin said when they checked to find out what was going on, they found transportation was the biggest problem.

"Being able to walk and not have a short bicycle ride or car ride to the area is very, very important," said Lewin, who helped co-found the center with Adams and her husband.

Lewin, who serves as the medical director for the center, had a private solo family practice for 21 years and has always been engaged in healthcare since moving to Ocala in 1981. She said she anticipates that one day there will be medical staff at the center.

See Lewin on page 4

# Do You Have A Plan?

## Atlantic Hurricane Season: Are you Prepared?

By: Ashley Lopez, Public Information Officer, Ocala Fire Rescue

Let's face it; when it comes to hurricanes, a Floridian's idea of preparing is nowhere near what experts suggest. This fact is evident in Marion county, where our inland location has conditioned many to believe that they are "safe" from a hurricane's devastating effects. With a hurricane season lasting six months (June 1 - Nov. 30), the likelihood of us avoiding storms, torrential downpours and floods is slim to none.

Preparing for a natural disaster does not have to be a dreaded chore. Ocala Fire Rescue believes that preparing can be as simple as completing three tasks: determining your risk, gathering supplies, and developing a plan.

### Determine your risk

While inland locations may be immune to storm surges - abnormal rise in water generated by strong winds - they are still at the mercy of torrential rains, high winds and tornadoes. To determine your risk, ask yourself this:

#### Is my home a safe location?

*Modular home vs. traditional construction*

#### Is my home in a flood zone?

*Not sure? Check your risk by visiting the FEMA flood zone map at [ocalafl.org](http://ocalafl.org)*

#### Does my yard have decorative furniture or debris that could become projectiles with high winds or tornadoes?

### Gather supplies

Supplies can vary widely between households, from non-perishable foods to water and medications. Here's a brief list of things you may need.

**Basics:** food (three days' worth), water (1 gallon/ person/ day), battery-powered radio, flashlight, batteries and external power sources for phones and other appliances, etc.

**Essential items:** documents (i.e., birth certificates, passports, IDs, insurance documents), medications and prescribed tools/systems (i.e., glasses, contact lenses, oxygen tanks)

**Others:** first-aid kit, moist towelettes, feminine products, infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, etc.

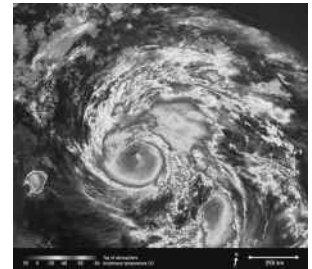
Supplies don't need to be gathered all at once, but if you can buy everything at once making your purchases during the Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday (May 28 - June 6) may be advantageous. For a list of qualifying items, visit [floridarevenue.com/disasterprep](http://floridarevenue.com/disasterprep).

### Develop a plan

Disaster preparedness is nothing without a plan. Outlining what you and your family members will do in an emergency and practicing these actions beforehand is essential to being prepared.

### Make sure your plan includes:

- Emergency contacts (in and out of state)
- A meeting place
- Actions you'll take depending on the gravity of the hurricane effects.
- For these and other details on how to prepare for a hurricane, visit [ready.gov](http://ready.gov).
- For weather alerts affecting Marion county, enroll in Alert Marion at [alertmarion.com](http://alertmarion.com).



### Lewin



Dr. Pamela Lewin

The center is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and operates with two paid employees and three volunteers. All major health insurances are accepted as well as Medicare and Medicaid. The uninsured are seen on a sliding scale. "We want the community to know that we don't turn anyone away," Adams said. "Appointments are required, however, walk-ins are accepted."

The Center provides the Covid vaccine and the rapid test for Covid as well as school physicals. They offer free 6-week diabetes classes with a free A1C and mini physical examination. A post graduation from diabetes class tracks clients for a year and tracking includes all life style changes. Residents can also apply for food stamps, Medicaid and short-term loans.

But they still need help.

The greatest need, Adams said, is that they don't have an operating budget. Additionally, they need doctor's, nurses and social workers. They also need help with their website, [estellawell.com](http://estellawell.com), which they are trying to rebuild.

"The Center is funded by donations," she said. "The community can help by supporting a Go Fund Me and spreading the word to others that we have a neighborhood clinic in West Ocala."

## **BRAVO! WEST OCALA MAY FINALLY GET A SUPERMARKET**

Fredric Washington knows all too well what its like to grow up in a community without a major grocery store.

Washington, the youngest of four children, grew up in the intercity in Detroit, MI., where the nearest grocery store was eight miles from his family's home. He said the family had to buy groceries from a small market nearby that was limited in healthy produce similar to Big Apple Grocery, which also doesn't carry any.

"It meant driving further and buying more food, he said about not having a major grocery store nearby. "The result was more frozen food and a lot less fresh produce."

Residents in West Ocala can relate to Washington's experience because the area also lacks a large grocery store in the community.

But if everything works out the way Southern Accommodations, LLC hopes it will, that could soon change. The management group has signed a lease and plans to open a Bravo Supermarket in West Ocala. The area is designated a food desert because access to affordable healthy food options like fresh fruits and vegetables are limited or non-existent because grocery stores are too far away.

"West Ocala has needed fresh produce, meat and a carton of milk that doesn't cost \$7, Washington said during a recent presentation to Governor's West Ocala Neighborhood Revitalization Council. "Bravo carries everything fresh, produce, meats, seafood and it's known for its great cafeteria meals which are not only delicious but nutritious."

Although its taken seven years to get to this point, Washington, a managing partner of Southern Accommodations, never thought about giving up. He said he's passionate about seeing a grocery store in that community because of the commonalities between black communities in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Youngstown and West Ocala.

If the project clears the final hurdles, Bravo, previously located on SR 200, will be the anchor store in the Paradise Park Plaza, that will be located at 2004 W. Silver Springs Blvd., just east of Quality Discount Meats. The 81,100 sq. ft facility includes 18 spaces including outparcels. Fifteen of the spaces will be available for rental, and Bravo will occupy 15,496 sq. ft. The supermarket is estimated to provide 23 of the 56 to 72 jobs expected to be created for the entire plaza, which will take nine to 12 months to build once the lender closes on the loan.

Washington said Bravo has some major surprises they will reveal later, but the plaza will feature a medical clinic, pharmacy and hopefully banking services. He said several local leaders, Scott Hackmyer, Henry DeGeneste, Bobby James, Howard Gunn and Steve Allen, the general contractor for the plaza, have been involved in the project from the beginning. He said Ocala City manager Sandra Wilson and City of Ocala Councilman Ire Bethea have both expressed the importance of using West Ocala talent to help build, own businesses and work at Paradise Park Plaza.

"It's taken so long for this plaza to happen, few believe," Washington said. "But I'm claiming it."

For more information or businesses interested in renting a space, contact Washington at **(352) 266-0157** or Beau Brooker at **(352) 361-2746**.



## **Business Spotlight**

### **Ice Ice Dreyton**

**Business Name:**

Ice Ice Dreyton

**No. of Employees:** 3

(Dreyton, Dominic and Kiera)

**Business Owner:**

Dreyton McDonald  
(11 years old)

**Business Address:**

Ocala: Mobile business depending on the day

**Business Phone:** (352) 274-1260

**What Year Did You Start Your Business?** 2019

**Hours of Operation:** 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Products and/or Services:** Shaved ice, cold drinks, snacks and candy

**Email:** dominicmcdonald5@yahoo.com

**Website:** N/A

**Are you on Social Media?** Yes

**If yes, what platforms?**

**Instagram:** Ice Ice Dreyton

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

A single father with two girls. He had no job and was on child support. He was forced to make something happen for him and his daughters! That inspired me to do something for my son.

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

Awesome customer service; homemade simple syrups and snacks! (Try our homemade pickled eggs and sausages or mystery shaved ice).

**What Advice would you give someone starting a business?**

Keep great product. Don't give up at the first sign of adversity. Have an awesome presentation and great customer service.

**Any additional comments:**

Yes. Thank you for supporting my son's 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, request a form from [Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com](mailto:Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com).*

*Completed forms can be returned via email or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.*



## The Impact a Father has on their Children's Lives

Dwan Thomas will never forget the two weeks he spent with his dad on a military base in Fayetteville, N.C., because it's his favorite memory of the two of them.

Thomas said his dad was getting ready to retire from the United States Army and he stayed behind while his mom and two younger brothers headed to Ocala where they were moving to.

"In those two weeks, he taught me how to drive a car and we rode bikes together everyday, Thomas said. "He cooked homemade fresh fries and hamburgers and we just had a wonderful time together."

Thomas said he's raising his own children like his father raised him. He also wants to make sure his children have fond memories of him like he has of his dad. He said he makes it his business to attend all their special events, doctor appointments and he always shows all four of his children, Dwan Jr., Drake, Ladarrion and Meia, his only daughter, the same level of support.

"I want my children to remember the love I showed them and also that I left a legacy for them to pass down to their children's children," he said.

On Father's Day, Thomas and many others, will take time to recognize their father or father figure for the contributions they have made to the lives of their children.

Thomas and his brothers always purchase a great gift for their dad because he loves nice gifts and spending time with his children and grandchildren. He said sometimes they barbecue, take their dad out to dinner and pay for his meal or the women cook dinner for all the father's.

"I have passed those traditions down to my children through my wife because she usually buys me a nice gift on behalf of her and the children," he said. "I know soon that my children will cook for me or take me to a nice restaurant."

Thomas said they just started a new tradition of having a golf day since his father and his sons all love the game of golf.



Dreyton McDonald will spend Father's Day working his mobile business Ice Ice Dreyton with his dad, Dominic McDonald, who was inspired to start the business for his son after seeing another single father struggling to take care of his two girls.

"He's a hustler," the 11-year old said about why he admires his dad. "He has plenty of jobs to make money!"

Dreyton's favorite thing to do with his dad is exchange some good laughs. He said they joke about everything, but the best lesson his dad taught him, is to be patient and have patience when working hard for a goal.

The advice Thomas's father gave to him, he's teaching to his children. His father told him to always stay focused on what your goals are, never put all your eggs in one basket, and treat people how you want to be treated. While he believes there are many secrets to being a good father, he said patience is the

most important because every child is going to make mistakes in life.

"You need to be there not to judge every mistake, but have patience, understanding and pick them up when they fall, he said.

Thomas also believes it's harder for father's to raise children in this era because they have access to anything they want through technology. He said he tries to relate to his children and make sure he's in the know when it comes to social media and what they're watching on YouTube or online.

"As a parent you have to be careful who your children are around because everyone doesn't need access to your children ...," Thomas said. "My greatest fear is not being able to save them from a dangerous world we live in."

Thomas encourages the next generation of father's to cherish each moment and love on their children because we never know when it's the last time. He said they should be mindful of what they do and say around their children because they watch every move you make even when you think they aren't watching.

Thomas says he's blessed to have his wife in his life because she keeps him grounded and lets him know when he needs to re-focus and spend more time with his children.

"I plan out my week to make sure I incorporate my family in everything I do," he said. "I want my children to be involved in helping their community and also see their father in action which I hope will drive them to do the same for their community."

## Do You Know if You Qualify for the Third Economic Impact Payment (EIP)?



The IRS is currently issuing a third EIP to every eligible American. EIPs, also known as stimulus payments, are different from most other tax benefits; people can get the payments even

if they have little or no income and even if they do not usually file a tax return. This is true as long as they have a Social Security number and are not being supported by someone else who can claim them as a dependent.

### Help Needed

We need to reach individuals who do not normally file a tax return because they do not have enough income requiring them to file; people experiencing homelessness; and those who are unbanked. They will need to provide information to the IRS to get the third payment. These payments are made automatically to most people, but the IRS cannot issue a payment to eligible Americans when information about them is not available in the tax agency's systems.

People who did not receive the first two EIP payments can still qualify for those payments when they file their 2020 return by claiming the Recovery Rebate Credit.

There is a special section on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) that can help: [Claiming the 2020 Recovery Rebate Credit if you are not required to file a tax return.](#)

More people qualify for the third EIP than earlier payments. Here's what's different:

- **Payment amounts:** Most families will get \$1,400 per person, including all eligible dependents claimed on their tax return.
- **Qualifying dependents.** Not restricted to children under 17. Eligible individuals will get a payment based on all their qualifying dependents claimed on their return.
- **Taxpayers who file using an ITIN may be eligible to receive a third payment for their qualifying dependent.** Up to \$1,400 per qualified dependent who has a valid SSN can be received if the taxpayer does not have a valid SSN but meets all the other eligibility and income requirements.

### Getting the payment

- The IRS will use available information to determine eligibility and issue the third payment to eligible people who:
- Filed a 2020 tax return
- Filed a 2019 tax return if the 2020 tax return has not been submitted or processed yet.
- Did not file a 2020 or 2019 tax return but registered for the first EIP payment with the Non-Filers tool in 2020
- Are federal benefit recipients who do not usually file a tax return.

**NOTE: If none of the above applies, the individual will need to file a 2020 federal tax return.**

The former IRS non-filer tool is **no longer available**. Individuals who do not normally file a return will need to file a 2020 tax return to receive this third EIP.

# CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE: CELEBRATING OUR HISTORY

The late Rev. James Moore passed away 21 years ago, but the impact he left on Marvin Newmones life still remains. Moore was a gospel artist with Malaco Records out of Jackson, MS., also home to the Mississippi Mass Choir. Newmones, who has been singing and playing since he was 4 years old, recorded two projects with the choir and was featured on several others.

“He’s still in a category of his own when it comes to vocals. His music was church oriented. His songs were good songs with a message to them,” Newmones said about Moore. “You could sing them on Sunday mornings. They were funky, but they were traditional.”

Newmones, a gifted artist, has been in the music industry for more than 20 years. He plays traditional music with a contemporary twist. One of his favorite songs the group recorded is called Simply Blessed.

“My music is unique in its sound. It does not fit into any category,” he said. “God has blessed me with a gift to use for him. I am simply blessed.”



Since 1979, the month of June, formally known as Black Music Month, has been set aside to appreciate the musical contributions of artists like Newmones. The month-long celebration was initiated by former President Jimmy Carter on June 7. Former President Barack Obama renamed the national observance African-American Music Appreciation Month, which recognizes and celebrates the historical influence African-Americans have had on the music industry. Due to the pandemic, no activities are planned for this year.

Alonzo Braddon, who was the first band director for Vanguard High School and the first black band director in Marion County after segregation, believes it’s important to celebrate the month.

“Children do not know too much about the black musicians that came along,” said Braddon, who credits his high school band director, Samuel Berry, for inspiring him to start playing music. “I want them to know that a black band director can do what a white band director does.”

Braddon worked at Vanguard for nearly 32 years creating a safe atmosphere for students to learn and play music in, but he constantly had to prove himself as a respectable band director. At the time, he said, black directors would only receive excellent ratings at band competitions but never a superior rating. It took eight years for him to achieve that rating.



“When I got my first superior, one of my students who was bigger than I was and taller than I was came and picked me up because he was so happy about it. I said, boy put me down!”

Braddon started playing the piano at an early age but said he always sung because he had a decent voice. He said he really found his voice while singing at Hampton Junior College. When he left Hampton, he went to Bethune Cookman College and tried to form a group but it didn’t turn out the greatest. While at Vanguard, he started singing with the Marion Civic Choral and has sung with them for more than 30 years.

“The best thing was when we had the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall,” Braddon said. “That was one of the greatest trips that I have ever taken. People were there from all over the world.”

Since it opened in 1891, Carnegie Hall set the standard internationally for musical excellence as the aspirational destination for the world’s finest artists.

Newmones, Pastor Dennis Hagins Jr. and James Brown Jr. had better luck organizing a group. They started the Ocala Community Gospel Choir in 1991 because there really wasn’t anything positive going on for their age group during that time. The group continued for about eight years. Newmones eventually changed the name to “The Kingdom Singers” after they started recording.

“It’s another level,” Newmones said. “Not just singing, but ministering through music.”

The Kingdom Singers, which his wife Stacie and their three children are members of, does not perform often simply because they don’t just accept any engagement. If its not purpose filled, they won’t accept it. He said they’ve completed two projects and currently working on a third with hopes of releasing a song next month.

“They play a huge part in my music career,” Newmones said about his family, who has written and helped him arrange some of the music he plays. “Artists must be willing to work with others even if they are not on the same level.”

Join Ocala Main Street, S.K.I.P (Supporting Kids Involving Parents) and Community Council Against Substance Abuse for **Ties & Tiaras on Friday, June 11, 7 p.m. @ the Marion Theatre**  
The **FREE** event, Date Night Downtown, is a special movie night for Fathers (or Father Figures) and Daughters. Includes free popcorn, free soft drinks, photo booth fun, special treats and the beloved film Annie!  
Registration is **REQUIRED!** To register, go to <https://www.reillyartscenter.com/events/ties-tiaras/>

**Job Fair at Paddock Mall**  
June 5, 10 am to 1 pm  
Looking for a new job?  
Bring copies of your resume to this event.  
For more information, visit [Paddockmall.com](http://Paddockmall.com)

# Happenings in the Community

## NOMINATE SOMEONE FOR THE COMMUNITY SERVICE RECOGNITION AWARD

Nominations are now being accepted for the Legacy Park Community Service Recognition Award, which recognizes and honors community leaders and special individuals who have made outstanding, unique, lasting and extraordinary contributions to West Ocala.

**Eligibility Criteria:** Nominees must have been a resident of Ocala/Marion County for a minimum of 10 years and still currently reside in the community.



The nominee must have shown a high regard for community service, leadership and commitment to the advancement of West Ocala by having demonstrated one or more of the following:

- A commitment to the spirit of community involvement
- Leadership through positive contributions in West Ocala
- A supportive role resolving challenges and promoting positive change

Nomination forms available at **Towntalkmagazine.org**

Click on **What's Happening Now**. Deadline is July 1, 2021.

## Marion County Historical Commission Advisory Meeting

Monday, June 14, 2021 at 6 p.m.

First Responders Campus, 515 S.W. MLK Ave., Ocala



The College of Central Florida is helping high school seniors jump start their college education this summer with free classes. CF has received funds to support summer enrollment for 2020 and 2021 high school graduates impacted by COVID-19.

The Fast Track Enroll Now Scholarship Program is available through July 15. The scholarships of up to \$500 can be applied to Summer B courses and will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. The program is supported by the Florida Student Success Center, the Florida College System Foundation and the Helios Education Foundation.

The Fast Track Enroll Now Scholarships are limited to first-time-in-college high school completers who enroll full time or part time in the Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree programs. To qualify, students must have graduated from an accredited high school program during the 2020 or 2021 academic year without attending a higher education institution. Current dual enrollment students who graduate in May 2021 qualify.

The scholarship application must be filled out on the CF student portal by July 15 after the student applies to CF. The admissions application can be found online at **CF.edu/Apply**. The last day to apply for Summer B is June 18. Summer B registration runs through June 25. Classes run June 28 - August 9.

For additional information, call the CF Financial Aid office at **(352) 873-5801** or email **askfinancialaid@CF.edu**.

Join the **Marion County Community Clean Up**

the first Saturday of each month at various locations around the county.

For more information, call **(352) 895-5366** or go to **www.facebook.com/KeepMarionBeautiful**.



The Cancer Alliance of Marion County presents:

Honoring the Cancer Journey: Living with and beyond a cancer diagnosis, as a patient, loved one and survivor. Health professionals who wish to further learn and support others in the cancer journey are also invited.

Friday, June 18, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 am

Attend online via Zoom or In-person, distanced, with masks at 405 SE Osceola Ave, Ocala, FL 34471

Must Register to attend. Email **Aroberts@rboi.com** or call **(352) 732-0277**.

## CF Sets Summer Hours

The College of Central Florida has implemented summer operating hours.

The college is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and closed on Fridays through July 30.

The college will be closed Monday, May 31, for Memorial Day and Monday, July 5, in observance of Independence Day.

For more information, call the Ocala Campus at **(352) 873-5800**, Citrus Campus at **(352) 746-6721** or Levy Campus at **(352) 658-4077**.

## Summer CAREER EXPO

JUNE 3, 2021 9AM -2PM

LOCATED ON THE MCPHERSON GOVERNMENTAL COMPLEX AT:  
319 SE 26TH TERRACE  
OCALA, FL 34471

Opportunities range from entry level and trades to technical, administrative and management.

On-the-spot interviews available.

Benefits include:

- FRS Retirement
- Paid vacation
- Paid sick
- Health, Dental and Vision

On-site Employee Wellness Center and more!

**Marion County Board of County Commissioners**

Apply today at **www.marionfl.org/careers** or call **(352) 438-2345** for more details.





# Education Corner

## Fun Fact!

Did you know that tortoises and turtles blink? Unlike humans, whose eyelids go down and then back up, these animals blink in the opposite direction than humans. [This photo](#) by their eyelids go up to the top of their eye and then back down. Want to see it in person?



Consider a day trip to the Discovery Center - <https://www.mydiscoverycenter.org/>

## Bubble Fun

There is joy and wonder in the simple things and what could be more joyous than running around the yard making/blowing bubbles! Use the recipe below to make your own bubble solution and see the creative suggestions for common items around the house you can use for the bubble wand.

### Make Your Own Bubbles Recipe:

Ingredients:

- ½ cup dish soap
- 1 ½ cups water
- 2 teaspoons sugar



### Instructions:

Pour all ingredients together in a large bowl, gently stir and go outside to blow your bubbles!

### Make Your Own Wand:

Plastic soft drink bottles – with adult supervision, cut off the bottom of the bottle, dip it in your bubble solution, use the lid end of the bottle to blow bubbles



Drinking straws and string – get two drinking straws and a piece of yarn or string that is six to eight times longer than one straw. Thread the yarn through the straws and tie in a knot. Use the straws as handles, dip the wand into the bubbles, and wave it through the air in a large sweeping motion – this creates big bubbles!

Pipe cleaners – create the shape you want (e.g., circle, triangle, heart) and then twist the two ends of the pipe cleaner together. Add beads to the handle if you want to!

You can help Interfaith Emergency Services feed the homeless every Thursday, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 450 N.W. 2nd St. Donations of a hot meal (Entrée or side dish) are needed. If you can help, drop off a prepared dish starting at 6 p.m. and/or stay and help serve. Call **(352) 598-6118** for more information.



# JUNETEENTH: NOT JUST FOR US

Sharrington Houston was 14 years old when her father, Wellington Gaitor Jr., mentioned Juneteenth to her.

“He always felt it necessary to teach me the things that I may not have learned in school, Houston said. “Although our history is not pretty, he always made sure I was never ashamed of my history and the significance Black Americans have had in this country and the world.”



The first time Houston took part in a Juneteenth celebration was the summer of 1997 in Colorado with her extended family. Eight years later, while attending Florida State University, she learned more about the significance of Juneteenth, a nationally recognized holiday that most states celebrate annually on June 19.

Houston believes it's important for others to learn the significance too. Juneteenth, also called Emancipation Day, is the oldest known holiday that commemorates the end of slavery in the United States.

But according to information in the “Emancipation for Florida” guide, which gives an historical overview and documents the emancipation of slaves in Florida, since it was May 20, 1865 that the Emancipation Proclamation ending slavery and providing freedom to all citizens was read in Florida for the first time, to be historically correct, Emancipation Day in Florida should be acknowledged and celebrated in May.

But Houston, president of the Ocala Juneteenth Celebration Commission, said Ocala will hold its first Juneteenth Celebration on Saturday, June 19, at 10 a.m. at Webb Field, 1501 W. Silver Springs Blvd. Other committee members helping organize the event include, TiAnna Greene, Marcy Owens, Davida Randolph, Dwan Thomas, Jessica Hadley-Brown, Niki Tripodi, Barbara Fitos, Wantanisha Dawson-Morant and the Rev. Dr. Tanya Hanks.

Greene, who serves as the vice president, said the feedback from the community has been awesome. She said everyone, regardless of their life experiences, has expressed their excitement for the Juneteenth Celebration in Ocala.

“Juneteenth is a day of remembrance and healing for African Americans. The opportunity to celebrate allows us to be proud of the progress we've made towards equality and just an overwhelming feeling of joy,” she said. “It give us not only an opportunity for solidarity, but to share black creativity, innovation as well as the opportunity to educate, inform and celebrate black excellence.”

The idea to hold a Juneteenth celebration resulted from a meeting Houston had with Mayor Kent Guinn after it was brought to her attention, during a town hall debate in 2019, that a proclamation for Confederacy Day had been signed and approved for recognition in the City of Ocala. Houston and several others were offended that the day was being recognized especially knowing what the Confederate Army stood for and stands for. After some discussion, the Mayor declined to rescind the proclamation, but it was during that meeting Houston had an opportunity to educate Guinn about Juneteenth. He agreed the day should be recognized and suggested she type up a proclamation. He told her he would sign it and present it at a City Council meeting in June.

Greene said, in her opinion, we need this event now more than ever before. She said recent events have made more people aware and want to be a part of change.

“We play a role in perpetuating racism and if we don't continue to educate ourselves to become part of a larger solution, we will not make the necessary changes,” Greene said. “Juneteenth is one of many events to assist with educating our community.”

Although Houston said she hesitated when the thought of planning an event of this magnitude was mentioned, she stepped up to make sure Ocala becomes a city that also recognizes Juneteenth.

“I figured if I am to serve my community, educate my community and leave something for my boys to carry on, why not.” she said.

See Juneteenth on page 10

## Juneteenth

The free event features more than 60 registered vendors and has something for everyone; food trucks, food vendors, medical providers, financial advisors, live entertainment, faith-based organizations, jewelry and home décor booths, political and social action organizations, positive affirmation recitations by children, scholarship presentations by the Juneteenth Commission and much more.

"People in the community will have the opportunity to network and educate one another on how to make improvements in their lives, whether it be spiritually, educationally, economically or how to become more involved in their community," she said.

Greene hopes people leave the event with a sense of pride, ownership, share what was learned and a change of mindsets. She said the Juneteenth Celebration Committee is committed to the community and have started making plans for next year.

Houston doesn't want the celebration to be just another gathering.

"I want the community to walk away from this celebration with a sense of cultural pride, feelings of support for small black owned businesses and support for one another, she said. "Although this celebration focuses on Black Americans, we also want others to see that the success of the community is inclusive of all races."



### STILL NEED HELP CONNECTING TO THE INTERNET DURING THE PANDEMIC?

The Emergency Broadband Benefit, an FCC program, connects eligible households to jobs, critical healthcare services and virtual classrooms. It provides a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on Tribal lands.

Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer or tablet from participating providers if they contribute \$10-\$50 towards the purchase price.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household. To see if you qualify, go to <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>.

Strong Families is now accepting applications for Class 11. Whether your goal is to find stable housing or build the home of your dreams, they can help. **Register by Friday, June 25, 2021.**

## GAIN FINANCIAL STABILITY THROUGH STRONG FAMILIES



### The Strong Families Initiative Provides:

#### 1 Skill Building

- Goal Setting
- Work Ethic & Career Opportunities
- Barriers to Poverty
- Resume Building & Interview Skills
- Budgeting
- Understanding & Managing Credit
- Conflict Resolution
- Parent's Role in Children's Education
- Educational Opportunities
- Nutrition/Cleaning/Organizing

#### Dual Services for Children Including:

- Money management
- Life skills

#### 2 Coaching

A Success Coach meets with the families on a bi-weekly basis for a year. They assist families with setting short and long-term goals. The Success Coach also tracks the families' progress such as goals of the family, public assistance and referrals to social services.

#### PARTICIPANT CRITERIA:

- Participants need to have stable housing (long-term shelter or transitional housing is acceptable).
- Participants are required to have substance abuse and mental health issues under control.
- Participants must be motivated to make positive, long-term changes to their lifestyle.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

352-732-9696

1401 NE 2nd ST., Ocala, FL 34470 | [www.uwmc.org](http://www.uwmc.org)



#### STRONG FAMILIES WORKS:



Graduating Families moved from temporary to permanent housing\*



Graduating Families reduced household debt\*



Increase of household income for Graduating Families\*



Graduating Families began taking steps towards advancing their education\*

\*Results from Strong Families 2020 Graduating Class

## MONEY \$MART

### STAY AWAY FROM RENT TO OWN FURNITURE

By Scott Hackmyer

Sometimes I get the chance to help people with their monthly budgets and just when we have it balanced, they tell me about their payment for furniture rental. You should never rent furniture because there are so many other options that are much better.



The first problem with renting furniture is you pay a lot. If you hit a bad time and miss a couple of payments, the rental companies are quick to come take it back and you lose everything. The late fees alone can put you in a bad place.

Here is my suggestion; there are several quality consignment and thrift stores in our community that have beautiful furniture at amazingly low prices. I visit these stores often and I'm really impressed at the quality of the sofas, dining room tables, chairs and coffee tables they have. Some suggestions are the Habitat ReStore, 926 N.W. 27th Ave; Interfaith Thrift Store, 718 N. Pine Ave.; Brother's Keeper, 320 N.W. 10th Street; and a block or two away is the Salvation Army and Humane Society Thrift stores.

I have seen many people furnish their entire place for under \$200 with no payments to make. Finding appliances like washing machines, dryers, refrigerators and stoves can be a little harder, but it's worth calling all these places to see if they have any available.

My other warning is to be very careful about nothing down and zero percent interest for sometimes up to seven years or longer. The fine print in many of these stores say if you are late on one payment they can go back and charge you interest from the day you made the purchase. It could be too that a few years after you bought it you are tired of it or the dog ate a large hole in it but you still have four or five more years of payments to make.

Again, hit the consignment or thrift stores first. Everyone wants to try to get some of your money, make good decisions and guard it carefully.

# JUNETEENTH FREEDOM DAY

JUNE 19

[www.showcaseeventsocala.com](http://www.showcaseeventsocala.com)

## Fundraising Dinner

RAMAL Educational and Social Services presents an evening of music, dance, food, and live entertainment.

Saturday June 19, 2021 - 7:00pm - 11:00 pm

Showcase Event Center (formerly the Ocala Ballroom)  
108 N. Magnolia Avenue, Suite 104

Tickets: \$35 per person - \$60 per couple

Attire: African Attire Encouraged or Casual Chic

For More Information  
Contact Dr. Brooks @ (352) 875-4237

Tickets Available on Eventbrite

[www.ramalservices.org](http://www.ramalservices.org)

#### FUNDING PARTNERS:





## AQUATIC FUN CENTERS OPEN

**Jervey Gantt Aquatic Fun Center:** 2390 S.E. 36th Ave.

**Hampton Aquatic Fun Center:** 255 N.W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

### Hours

Tuesdays - Saturdays

Morning: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Afternoon: 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

### Cost

One Time Admission

(Valid for **ONE** swim session)

\$2 per child

\$3 per adult

Due to COVID-19, the following restrictions and guidelines are in effect at both facilities:

- Temperature and health screenings at entry
- Social distancing is strongly encouraged
- Pool capacity will be reduced
- Limited table rentals available
- Groups/field trips by reservation only
- Daily cleaning will take place



READING WITH RANGERS & friends

OCALA Marion County FL/MC Library System

Parks are a great place to read, just ask an Ocala Park Ranger! In partnership with the Marion County Library System, Ocala Park Rangers and City staff will read a book in a different park. Pack a snack, blanket or chair and get ready to enjoy a good book together.

FRIDAYS | 11 AM | FREE TO ATTEND

**JUNE 4**  
TUSCAWILLA PARK  
800 NE Sanchez Ave.

**JUNE 11**  
JERVEY GANTT RECREATION COMPLEX  
2200 SE 36 Ave.

**JUNE 18**  
LILLIAN BRYANT PARK  
2200 NW 700 PL

**JUNE 25**  
SCOTT SPRINGS  
2825 SW 24 Ave.

## Florida A & M University Alumni Association Sponsors "Rattlers Round-UP"

The National Alumni Association, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, Marion County Chapter is sponsoring its annual membership drive of Rattlers, Rattlers' family and friends.



This virtual event will be held on Saturday, June 26, at 3 pm via Zoom.

Annual membership fees are: Regular \$90.00; Dues after life membership \$40.00; Life membership \$750.00; Associate is same as other fees.

Membership can be paid locally or through the National Alumni Website.

For more information, call Loretta Pompey Jenkins, Membership Chairman at (352) 351-0824 or email [lorettajenk@aol.com](mailto:lorettajenk@aol.com).

## Every Tuesday

Free Hot Breakfast, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Food Pantry Open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Donations of food also needed

Saint Paul A.M.E. Church

718 NW 7th St. Ocala, FL 34475



## Interfaith Emergency Services

450 N.W. 2nd St., Ocala, FL 34475

### Monday - Friday Food Giveaway

IES allows people to come twice each month for food. All you need to bring is your photo ID. Hours are Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.. They close at noon and re-open 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

If you don't have an ID, they will allow you to get food one time and offer assistance so that you can get your ID before the next service.



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).



# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## CYRUS GIBSON

The First African-American male from Marion County to swim at a Division 1 school.



Carol Davis dreamed of her grandson, Cyrus Gibson swimming at Howard University.

"She wanted her baby to attend Howard University and swim," said Antoinette Davis, Cyrus's mother. "She did not know if he would make it, but it was her dream."

She got her wish. Not only did her grandson make it, he also made history by being the first African-American male from Marion County to swim at Howard University, a Division 1 school.

Cyrus credits his grandmother, who passed away last year, with starting his swimming career. She taught private swim lessons for free to children at her home during the summer. His grandmother had previously taught Cyrus's best friend how to swim a year earlier and Cyrus got tired of watching him swim from the sideline, so he wanted to learn how to swim too.

"My mom threw him in the water and made him swim," his mother said. "He's been swimming since that time."

Gibson joined the Central Florida Marlins Swim Club when he was 6 years old. He has had the opportunity to swim and dive with the North Florida Swim Team, the University of Florida Dive Team and participate in the Black Heritage Swim Meet. He continues to swim with the Marlins and served as the team captain from 2018 - 2020.



An honor student at Vanguard High School, Gibson is active with the Marion County 4-H program; Omega Psi Phi focus group; the Marion County NAACP Youth Council; and currently serves as the Teen Chapter President of the Greater North Central Florida Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc.

Gibson recently signed an academic scholarship to attend the historic black research university located in Washington, D.C. He is one of the 2,300 freshmen accepted, out of the 29,000 applicants who applied, to attend the university in the fall.

"I had no interest in swimming, but I became good at it and I enjoy swimming," Gibson said.



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## MEALS AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS DURING THE SUMMER BREAK

The community can pick up meals at one of the 22 locations on a Monday between 9 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. The week of the **July 4**, Holiday, schools will distribute meals on Tuesday, July 6. Parents will receive ten meals per child, five breakfasts, and five lunches.

Parents/Guardians picking up meals without children must have documentation to verify their relationship to the child(ren) who will receive meals. Valid forms of identification include birth certificates, day care records, student identification or passport.

Marion County Public Schools Summer Food Service Operations June 7 - July 29, 2021		
Summer School Base Sites with Satellite Locations		
Base School	Community Curbside (Mondays 9:00 am - 9:30 am)	Satellite
Belleview Elementary (VPK)	X	Belleview Santos Elementary
Belleview High	X	Legacy Elementary
Belleview Middle		
College Park Elementary (VPK)	X	
Dr. N. H. Jones	X	
Dunnellon Elementary	X	Dunnellon High, Dunnellon Middle
East Marion Elementary	X	
Emerald Shores Elementary (VPK)	X	Lake Weir High
Forest High	X	Greenway Elementary, Marion Charter, Ocala YMCA
Ft. King Middle	X	Eighth Street Elementary , Osceola Middle, Wyomina Park Elementary
Ft. McCoy School	X	
Horizon Academy	X	Sunrise
Lake Weir Middle	X	Harbour View Elementary, Stanton Weirsdale Elementary
Liberty Middle	X	Hammett Bowen Elementary
Maplewood Elementary (VPK)	X	Hillcrest, Ward Highlands Elementary
Marion Oaks Elementary (VPK)	X	
North Marion Middle	X	North Marion High, Sparr Elementary
Oakcrest Elementary	X	Anthony Elementary
Ocala Springs		
Reddick-Collier Elementary (VPK)	X	Fessenden Elementary
Romeo Elementary	X	Boys and Girls Club (Dunnellon)
Saddlewood		
South Ocala Elementary	X	Shady Hill Elementary, Blessed Trinity
Thelma Parker Center		Madison Street Elementary, Croskey Ctr., Lillian Bryant, Boys and Girls (Ocala), PACE
Vanguard High	X	Howard Middle, Evergreen Elementary
West Port High	X	Ocala Brazilian JUI JITSU
Camp Kiwanis		

Curbside meals provided on the following dates: June 7, June 14, June 21, June 28, July 6 (Tuesday), July 12, July 19, and July 26.

County Commission Meetings  
**June 1 and June 15**  
9 a.m.  
McPherson Governmental Campus  
Auditorium  
601 S.E. 25th Ave.  
Ocala, FL 34471

Ocala City Council Meetings  
**June 1 and June 15**  
5 p.m.  
110 S.E. Watula Ave.,  
Ocala, FL 34471

Marion County School Board  
**June 8 and June 22**  
5:30 p.m.  
School Board Meeting Room  
512 S.E. 3rd St.  
Ocala, FL 34471