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Saturday, December 16, 2017

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GOP finalizes huge tax package

Sens. Rubio, Corker voice their approval, all but ensuring the first legislative victory for the Trump administration

By Stephen Ohlemacher and Marcy Gordon
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans solidified support for their major overhaul of the

nation's tax laws Friday, securing endorsements from wavering senators as they pushed to muscle their bill through Congress next week and give President Donald Trump his first major legislative victory.

Republican Sens. Marco Rubio of Florida and Bob Corker of Tennessee announced Friday that they would back the bill, the most sweeping rewrite of the tax

code in more than three decades. Their support all but ensures the package will pass the Senate.

A day earlier, a key faction of House Republicans came out in support of the bill, boosting its chances in that chamber.

"I'm confident we'll have the votes," said Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, one of the Republican negotiators on the bill.

Portman cast the bill as providing "the kind of middle-class tax relief that's desperately needed right now. People are looking at flat wages and higher expenses, and this will help."

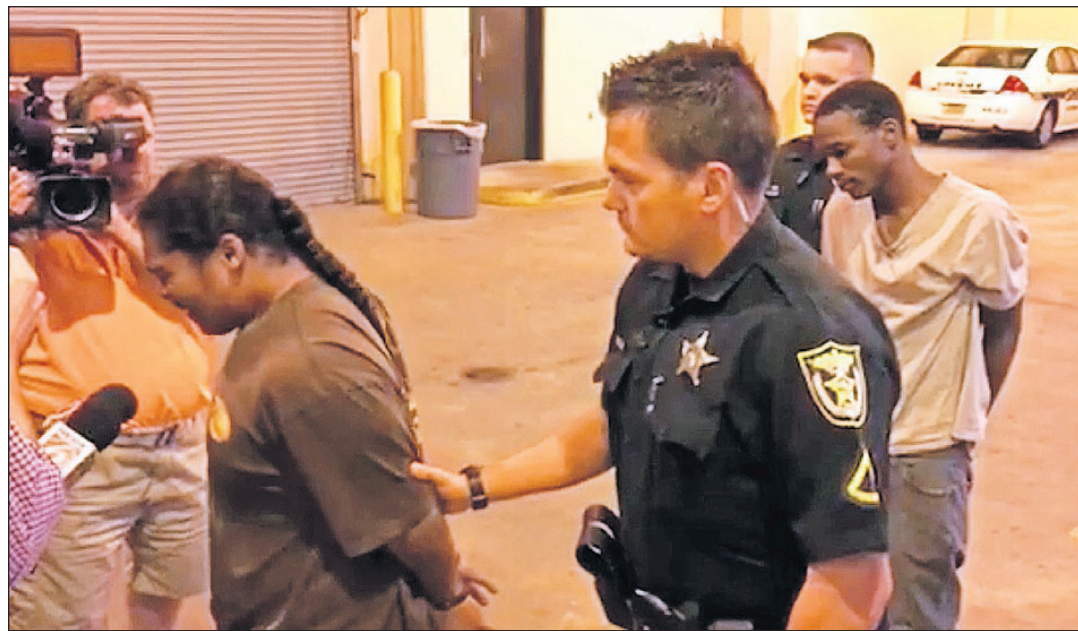
Democrats disagree, arguing that the legislation would help wealthy Americans and big business at the expense of the poor and middle class.

Members of a House-Senate conference committee

signed the final version of the legislation Friday, sending it to the two chambers for final passage next week. They have been working to blend different versions passed by the two houses.

Corker had opposed the Senate's original version of the bill out of concern it would add to the nation's mounting \$20 trillion in debt. In recent

See TAX, A5



Joshua McClellan, left and Krystopher Laws are led into the Lake County Jail after their arrests for the murder of Rubye James in February. [DAILY COMMERCIAL FILE PHOTOS]

'The right thing to do'

In confessions to police, suspects described how robbery of respected teacher became a vicious murder

By Frank Stanfield
frankstanfield@dailycommercial.com

Editor's Note: This story contains graphic descriptions of a killing. Reader discretion is advised.

TAVARES — The crime was savage.

Rubye James, 92, a beloved retired school teacher, had been stabbed and beaten to death, her modest home turned into a blood bath and her body dumped in a shallow grave.

Krystopher Laws' and Josh McClellan's confessions were contradictory tales that ran

See SUSPECTS, A5



Investigators huddle near the shallow grave where Rubye James' body was found in Leesburg in February. Krystopher Laws and Joshua McClellan, who were charged with her murder, told detectives they got \$70 in the robbery and spent it on marijuana.

Report details events leading up to man's murder in Clermont

By Tom McNiff
tom.mcnicff@dailycommercial.com

CLERMONT — Investigators on Friday released documents detailing the killing of a man in a drug deal gone bad in Orlando that spilled over into Clermont last month.

The probable cause affidavit describes how Ivan Figueroa-Serrano and Alex Nelson Arroyo allegedly beat John Hotchkiss, took him to Clermont in the trunk of a car, then set the car on fire and shot Hotchkiss when he tried to escape.

According to the affidavit, Hotchkiss and Ishmile Ramirez went to an apartment on Caralee Boulevard in Orlando on Nov. 27 to meet with Figueroa-Serrano. Ramirez waited outside in his aunt's Ford Mustang while Hotchkiss went inside.

When Hotchkiss didn't return after about 20 minutes, Ramirez knocked on the door but was met by Figueroa-Serrano holding a gun. Ramirez said Figueroa-Serrano was accusing Hotchkiss of stealing from him, but Hotchkiss denied it.

At some point, Figueroa-Serrano ordered Ramirez to duct tape Hotchkiss's hands, then he and Arroyo started beating Hotchkiss. They then forced the men into the back of the Mustang and drove to a 7-Eleven in Clermont, where a witness said they saw a gas can on the front seat of the car. Then the group drove to an area off Schofield Road in Clermont.



Figueroa-Serrano



Arroyo

Detectives say Arroyo poured gas on the car and it was set on fire. Hotchkiss and Ramirez realized the trunk was ajar and climbed out but Figueroa-Serrano was standing about 30 feet behind the car and fired about seven shots, chasing the men back into the trunk.

A little while later, Ramirez climbed out of the trunk again and realized the assailants were gone. He reportedly tried to get Hotchkiss out of the trunk but couldn't. Minutes later, according to a separate police report, officers got a call that a man was trying to flag down motorists. By the time officers got there, the Mustang was engulfed in flames.

An autopsy revealed Hotchkiss had been shot twice.

According to the probable cause affidavit, which is drawn up in support of a felony arrest, Arroyo admitted being present when Hotchkiss was beaten at the apartment in Orlando, but he denied setting the car on fire or having anything to do with Hotchkiss's death.

Figueroa-Serrano and Arroyo have both been charged with murder.

Disney's purchase ushers in new era for Hollywood

Acquisition of large portion of Fox accelerates the contraction of the 'Big Six' studios

By Jake Coyle
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — After years of tremors, the earthquake that had long been predicted finally shook Hollywood.

Disney's deal to purchase most of 21st Century Fox ends

the era of the "Big Six" major movie studios, toppling one of the industry's most famed studios and dramatically redrawing the Hollywood map.

Disney's move — to pay \$52.4 billion in stock for Fox assets — has countless reverberations. But by effectively absorbing Fox's film studio, 20th Century Fox, Disney has rapidly accelerated the industry contraction that many considered inevitable

See DISNEY, A5



LOCAL & STATE | A3

TEEN IN SUICIDE ATTEMPT AT LAKE MINNEOLA MAY HAVE MANIPULATED LOCK

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Opinion A7
Weather A8
Salute B1

Faith B3
Sports C1
Classifieds C7

TODAY
Some sun
71° / 53°

SUNDAY
Inc. clouds
79° / 60°

MONDAY
Clouds, sun
82° / 62°



NATION & WORLD

IN BRIEF

CHARLESTON, W.VA. Trump rethinks rules protecting coal miners from black lung

President Donald Trump's mining regulators are reconsidering rules meant to protect underground miners from breathing coal and rock dust — the cause of black lung — and diesel exhaust, which can cause cancer. An advocate for coal miners said Friday that this sends a "very bad signal."

The Mine Safety and Health Administration has asked for public comments on whether standards "could be improved or made more effective or less burdensome by accommodating advances in technology, innovative techniques, or less costly methods."

The notices on coal dust and underground diesel exhaust had few details.

THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS Man with knife at Amsterdam airport is not terror case

A man was shot in the leg at Amsterdam's busy Schiphol Airport on Friday after he walked into a military police office and threatened staff with a knife, a spokesman for the military police said.

The incident, which sparked a brief evacuation of parts of the airport, was not being treated as an extremist attack.

"The circumstances are telling us that it has nothing to do with terrorism," said Stan Verberkt, a spokesman for the military police service whose armed officers patrol Schiphol.

The man was arrested and then taken to an Amsterdam hospital as police began investigations at the scene and travelers who had been ushered outside were allowed back into the airport.

LONDON Prince Harry, Meghan Markle to marry May 19

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle will marry on May 19 in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, Kensington Palace announced Friday.

The couple have chosen a springtime Saturday for their wedding and a venue that holds a central place in the history of the royal family.

Windsor Castle, west of London, is one of Queen Elizabeth II's main residences. The 15th-century chapel is as historic but more intimate than Westminster Abbey, where Harry's older brother William married Kate Middleton in 2011.

The prince and Markle announced their engagement last month after an 18-month romance.

The Associated Press

LOTTERY

Thursday, Dec. 14
Fantasy 5: 3-10-12-20-27

Friday, Dec. 15
Pick 4
Afternoon: 0-0-0-0
Evening: 1-4-9-2

Pick 3
Afternoon: 5-6-3
Evening: 2-8-7

Four Palestinians killed in latest clashes

Violent protests stem from Trump's decision to regard Jerusalem as Israel's capital

By Fares Akram
The Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Four Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire and dozens more wounded along with an Israeli officer in clashes across the West Bank and near Gaza's border on Friday as the fallout continued over President Donald Trump's announcement last week recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Protests in response to Trump's announcement, which departed from decades of U.S. policy that the fate of Jerusalem should be decided through negotiations, have yet to relent across various Arab and Muslim countries in the region.

Following Friday prayers, Palestinians in the West Bank and along the Gaza border set fire to tires and threw rocks at Israeli troops who responded with tear gas and live fire.

Gaza Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Kidra said two Palestinians were killed from gunshots to the head. He identified one of the men as Ibrahim Abu Thraya, 29, a disabled man who had both legs amputated. He had taken part in several border skirmishes recently, images on social media show him carrying a Palestinian flag.

Another 82 Palestinians were injured in clashes in several locations along Gaza's border with Israel, at least five of whom were seriously wounded, he said.

Another Palestinian died later from wounds sustained in clashes near Jerusalem, the health ministry said.

Friday's deaths put to eight the number of Palestinians killed since Trump's declaration on Dec. 6.

The Israel military said thousands of "Palestinian rioters" rolled burning tires and hurled firebombs and rocks at security forces, who responded with tear gas and also "fired selectively toward main instigators."



Israeli troops arrest a Palestinian on Friday in the West Bank City of Nablus, following a protest against U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. [MAJDI MOHAMMED/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

Palestinians have been clashing with Israeli troops across the West Bank and along the Gaza border since President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital last week. The Islamic militant group Hamas that rules Gaza has called for a new armed uprising against Israel in response to Trump's declaration.

East Jerusalem is home to sensitive Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy sites and the fate of the territory is an emotionally charged issue at the heart of the conflict. The Palestinians seek east Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war from Jordan, as the capital of their hoped-for state. Israel says the entire city, including east Jerusalem, is its eternal capital.

Palestinians were infuriated by Trump's announcement because they saw it as siding with Israel on the most sensitive issue in the conflict. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has said Trump's move disqualified the U.S. from continuing in its role as the traditional mediator of peace talks.

Trump said his decision merely recognizes the reality

that Jerusalem already serves as Israel's capital and is not meant to prejudge the final borders of the city.

Vice President Mike Pence, however, was forced to delay a trip to the Middle East amid the outcry over Trump's decision. Aides to Abbas said that the Palestinian president would not meet with Pence, who is now scheduled to arrive in Israel from Egypt on Wednesday. Abbas had originally planned to host Pence, a devout Christian, in the biblical West Bank town of Bethlehem. White House officials also said Pence had no plans to visit the contested city's Church of the Holy Sepulchre — the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified and resurrected.

Also Friday, in another declaration likely to enflame passions among Palestinians and others across the Middle East, senior Trump administration officials outlined their view that the Western Wall in east Jerusalem, considered Judaism's holiest site, will ultimately be declared a part of Israel.

Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a senior adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, told

The Associated Press that such a policy that "decides unilaterally" on issues of final status negotiations is "unacceptable."

Meanwhile Friday, near the West Bank city of Ramallah, one Palestinian was shot and killed after he attacked an officer with a knife, stabbing him twice and wounding him moderately, said Israeli police. Spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said police are investigating the incident, and whether the attacker posed as a journalist to get close to the Israeli officer and if he was carrying explosives.

Video of the incident later emerged online, showing the alleged attacker retreating after apparently stabbing the officer. Israeli forces shoot him in the legs and again after he falls. A suicide bomb belt then becomes visible underneath his jacket, but it was not immediately clear if it was authentic. As two ambulances approach, the forces fire several more gunshots at the man and medical teams are forced to wait before evacuating him. The Palestinian Health Ministry said he died of his wounds.

DATELINES

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA



Commissioner Justice Peter McClellan shakes hands with Governor-General of Australia Peter Cosgrove at the release of the final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Friday in Canberra. The commission recommended that the Catholic Church lift its demand of celibacy from clergy and that priests be prosecuted for failing to report evidence of pedophilia. [JEREMY PIPER/AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ROYAL COMMISSION VIA AP]

ATLANTA



Health officials say the flu is spreading across the nation, with a dozen states now reporting widespread flu cases just ahead of the holiday season. One reason is that more than 90 percent of the influenza specimens tested nationwide are Influenza A (H3N2), and the rates of hospitalization and deaths are typically higher in seasons when H3N2 is the dominant strain. [MIGUEL ROBERTS/THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

NEW YORK



Peter Jackson arrives at the Los Angeles premiere of "The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies" Dec. 9, 2014, at the Dolby Theatre. Jackson says he is now realizing that Harvey Weinstein's advice to avoid working with Mira Sorvino or Ashley Judd was likely part of a smear campaign against the two actresses. Jackson said that he was told in the late 1990s that they were "a nightmare" to work with. [CHRIS PIZZELLO/INVISION/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

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LOCAL & STATE

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NEWS BRIEFS

BEST BETS FOR SATURDAY

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION:

At 5 p.m. at Umatilla Adventist Church, 1400 N. Central Ave. With performing artists and light refreshments. Free admission. Call 352-617-4636 for information.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA: From 9 to 10:30 a.m. at Leesburg Community Building, 109 E. Dixie Ave. Includes sausage, bacon, eggs, hash browns, biscuits, grits, cereal, fruits, juice and coffee. With classic holiday movie, photos and sing-a-long. Cost is \$7 in advance and \$10 at the door. Call 352-728-9885 for tickets and information.

A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER: At 6 p.m. at Impacting Word Family Worship Center, 746 E. 5th Ave. in Mount Dora. Light the Way Entertainment Group presents A Powerful Story of Forgiveness. Cost is \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. Call 407-989-1771 for information.

HOLIDAY CONCERT PART 2: From 1:30 to 3 p.m. at East Ridge High School, 13322 Excalibur Road in Clermont. With performances by The Knights Band, Jazz Band, Concert Band and Color Guard. Cost is \$12, \$10 for senior citizens and free for children under 8. Call 352-242-2080 for information.

ORIGAMI ORNAMENTS: At 11 a.m. at Modernism Museum Mount Dora, 145 E. Fourth Ave. With Paula Davis on the construction of a German Christmas star ornament and wreath. Cost is \$20. Call Natalie at 352-385-0034 or email ferron@modernismmuseum.org.

GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING: From 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at W.T. Bland Public Library, 1995 N. Donnelly St. in Mount Dora. Tickets available at the circulation desk. \$6 donation recommended. Call 352-735-7180.

NEWS BRIEFS

ORLANDO Police officer charged in off-duty, hit-and-run crash

Authorities say a Florida police officer who was fired and later rehired has been arrested following an off-duty, hit-and-run crash.

The Orlando Sentinel reports that Frederick Rolle Jr. was arrested Wednesday and charged with several counts, including driving under the influence and leaving the scene of an accident. Orlando police say Rolle turned himself in and has been suspended with pay.

Police say Rolle crashed his pickup into a toll plaza in November.

Rolle was previously fired after officials said he covered up an unauthorized police chase in 2015. He was rehired earlier this year during an arbitration process.

Jail records didn't list an attorney for Rolle.

ISLAMORADA Florida Keys attraction and resort reopen following Irma

A resort and a major attraction are reopening about three months after Hurricane Irma slammed into the Florida Keys.

Tourists can return to Islamorada's Amara Cay Resort and Marathon's Florida Keys Aquarium Encounters on Friday.

The Keys reopened to visitors Oct. 1, and most tourism facilities in less-affected Key Largo and Key West quickly recovered. But many properties elsewhere in the Keys were significantly impacted.

Tourism officials say just 32 percent of Islamorada hotel rooms are available, compared to more than 90 percent in Key West and 76 percent in Key Largo. Additional accommodations are set to reopen after Jan. 1.

Aquarium Encounters, where visitors can interact with and feed Keys fish, is among the island chain's last major attractions to reopen.

Charges against accused rapist dropped

Lack of physical evidence in Clermont case led to dismissal, prosecutors say

By Frank Stanfield
frankstanfield@dailyccommercial.com

TAVARES – Prosecutors have dropped charges against one of the two men accused of abducting and raping a woman in Clermont in June.

The woman told police that two men forced her

into an apartment on Disston Avenue and raped her after telling her “We’re going to teach you a lesson about dating a black man,” and that white women didn’t mean a thing in “this town.”

One of those men was Rodney Devon Cooper. The other was Justin Fedrick. At the time, police were also looking for another man.

The State Attorney’s Office dropped the charges against Fedrick on Friday.

“Based upon the results

of the DNA testing, there is a lack of physical evidence tying this defendant to these offenses. Without such evidence, the likelihood of conviction is minimal,” the prosecutors’ notice of non-prosecution stated.

“As Mr. Fedrick’s Public Defender we have maintained his innocence and welcomed the State Attorney’s desire to take his DNA,” said Raymond Sloan, Fedrick’s attorney in Clermont. “Mr. Fedrick has

always maintained and the DNA proved the allegations were unfounded and erroneous,” he said in an email to the Daily Commercial.

“With multiple perpetrators, it’s not all that unusual not to be able to identify DNA,” said Emily Curington with the State Attorney’s Office.

Genetic material can overlap, become mixed, she said.

In cases like that, lab results will come back as “inconclusive,” she said.

‘Quite an achievement’

SpaceX 1st: Recycled rocket soars with recycled capsule

By Marcia Dunn
AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL – SpaceX racked up another first on Friday, launching a recycled rocket with a recycled capsule on a grocery run for NASA.

The unmanned Falcon rocket blasted off with a just-in-time-for-Christmas delivery for the International Space Station, taking flight again after a six-month turnaround. On board was a Dragon supply ship, also a second-time flier.

It was NASA’s first use of a reused Falcon rocket and only the second of a previously flown Dragon.

Within 10 minutes of lift-off, the first-stage booster was back at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, standing upright on the giant X at SpaceX’s landing zone. That’s where it landed back in June following its first launch. Double sonic booms thundered across the area. At SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, California,



In this photo provided by NASA, the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with the Dragon spacecraft launches from Space Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral, Fla., on Friday. The unmanned Falcon rocket blasted off with a just-in-time-for-Christmas delivery for the International Space Station. The first-stage booster took flight again after a six-month turnaround. On board was a Dragon supply ship, also a second-time flier. It’s NASA’s first use of a reused Falcon and only the second of a previously flown capsule. [NASA VIA AP]

cheers erupted outside the company’s glassed-in Mission Control, where chief executive Elon Musk joined his employees.

The Dragon reaches the space station Sunday. The capsule last visited the 250-mile-high outpost in 2015.

This time, the capsule is hauling

nearly 5,000 pounds of goods, including 40 mice for a muscle-wasting study, a first-of-its-kind impact sensor for measuring space debris as minuscule as a grain of sand and barley seeds for a germination experiment by Budweiser, already angling to serve the first beer on Mars.

Ven Feng, a NASA manager, said he had “a little

See SPACEX, A4



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off from newly refurbished Pad 40 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. on Friday. The rocket is carrying supplies to the International Space Station. [CRAIG BAILEY / ASSOCIATED PRESS; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION / GATEHOUSEMEDIA]

Teen in suicide attempt at Lake Minneola High may have manipulated door lock

By Carlos E. Medina
cmedina@dailyccommercial.com

MINNEOLA – The 16-year-old Lake Minneola High School student who reportedly took dozens of pills after he snuck into the school early Thursday morning may have forced his way into the building, according to Lake County School officials.

The lock from the exterior door of the main building appeared altered, said Sherri Owens, a school spokeswoman.

The Lake County Sheriff’s Office said they are not actively investigating

See TEEN, A4



The 16-year-old Lake Minneola High School student that reportedly took dozens of pills after he snuck into the school early Thursday morning may have forced his way into the building, according to Lake County School officials. The lock from the exterior door of the main building appeared altered, said Sherri Owens, a school spokeswoman. [DAILY COMMERCIAL FILE]

Clermont rules on boat ramp location

By Linda Charlton
Correspondent

CLERMONT – The Clermont City Council this week decided to keep the city boat ramp open but then to re-locate the ramp to what the city is referring to as Lake Minneola West.

That site is located at the east end of Lake Hiawatha Preserve, on the west shore of Lake Minneola. Council member Diane Travis made the motion. New council member Heidi Brishke seconded it and Mayor Gail Ash provided the third vote. Council members Tim Bates and Ray Goodgame voted against it.

According to James Kinzler, the director of Capital Planning and Projects, while the current ramp is open, the city will use culverts to channel the treated water from the Victory Pointe storm water treatment system to Lake Minneola. This temporary arrangement is to stay in place while the new ramp is being built at Hiawatha Preserve.

Up until Tuesday night the boat ramp was slated to be closed at sundown on Dec. 17 in order to make way for the final stage of the Victory Pointe water treatment system and for the planned construction of the city’s Triathlon Beach.

As originally conceived, the ramp would then have been relocated to the east end of Waterfront Park, at what is known locally as the Bell Ceramics site. Council unofficially rejected that site over a year ago, citing traffic and safety concerns and focused instead on the environmentally-sensitive Hiawatha Preserve site. They were prepared to build at that site until this summer, when residents in the Hiawatha area and interested boaters objected.

Many residents and boaters joined the Lake County Water Authority in advocating for the Bell Ceramics site. On Sept. 21 the city sent letters to interested residents saying “Please know, the Clermont City Council has determined not to proceed with the Lake Hiawatha site for the boat ramp location.”

Addressing the council’s change of heart on Tuesday, City Manager Darren Gray said, “When the issue came up in August, some citizens did not agree with Lake Minneola West at Lake Hiawatha Preserve as an option so the

See BOAT, A4

Death Notices

Ruth M. Felton
Ruth M. Felton, 88, of Leesburg, Florida died Wednesday, December 13, 2017. Page-Theus Funeral Home and Cremation Services, Leesburg.

Today's Services

HEMINGWAY - George B. Hemingway, Jr., A Funeral Service will be held today, 11:00 AM at First Baptist Church of Umatilla.

BEYERS FUNERAL HOME and CREMATORY
Locally Owned and Operated since 1920

TURK - Jacqueline L. Turk, A Funeral Service will be held today, 11:00 AM at Wildwood United Methodist Church.

Banks-Page Theus Funerals and Cremations
410 North Webster St., Wildwood, FL 34785
352-748-1000

TEEN

From Page A3

the incident since the school's principal, Linda Shepherd-Miller, did not want to pursue burglary charges against the student.

The school is looking into how the young man entered the school and made it to the school nurse's office where he reportedly found the pills he took. The initial sheriff's report stated there were no obvious signs of forced entry and the doors to the main office and the school nurse's office were unlocked. The medicine locker, where the pills were kept, had a lock but was found opened with a key in the lock, reports state.

The internal school investigation continues. The main office and nurse's office doors should have been locked, according to district policy.

The teen, whose name is being withheld by the Daily Commercial, got onto campus, possibly through a damaged gate, reports state.

The boy called a friend just before 1 a.m. on Thursday and said he took dozens of pills, including over-the-counter pain medicine. The friend's father called 911 to report the incident. As deputies were on their way to the school, the boy called 911 and told a dispatcher he had taken the pills about 10 minutes earlier, reports state. When deputies arrived they found the boy sitting in a classroom with his eyes closed. He responded to deputies who helped him out of the building and into a waiting ambulance that took him to South Lake Hospital. Officers found empty pill bottles in the nurse's office for ibuprofen, acetaminophen and an anti-depressant, reports state.

The medications belonged to other students and are held in the nurse's office for dispensing as is school policy.

The teen was treated at the hospital and was in stable condition hours later. Once cleared medically, he will be held for three days for a mental health evaluation, according to reports.

Americans pessimistic about Trump, country: AP-NORC Poll

By Julie Pace and Emily Swanson
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump frequently casts his first year in office as a string of successes and campaign promises fulfilled. But less than a quarter of Americans think Trump has made good on the pledges he made to voters while running for president, according to a new poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Among Republicans, just half say Trump has kept his promises, which included vows to overhaul his predecessor's health care law, withdraw the United States from a nuclear accord with Iran and invest millions in new projects to fix the nation's aging infrastructure. None of those steps have been taken.

"Everything has stalled out," said Mark Krowski, 37, an independent from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who leans Republican but didn't vote for Trump last year.

As 2017 comes to a close, the majority of Americans painted a broadly pessimistic view of Trump's presidency, the nation's politics and the overall direction of the country. Just three in 10 Americans said the United States is heading in the right direction, and 52 percent said the country is worse off since Trump became president — worrisome signs both for the White House and Republicans heading into a midterm election year where control of Congress will be at stake.

Along with the 23 percent who think Trump has kept his promises, another 30 percent



President Donald Trump listens as people speak in support of Republican tax policy reform Wednesday during an event in the Grand Foyer of the White House in Washington. [EVAN VUCCI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

think he has tried and failed and 45 percent think he hasn't kept them at all.

In a second AP-NORC poll conducted this month, Trump's job approval rating sits at just 32 percent, making him the least popular first-year president on record. A quarter of Republicans say they're among those who disapprove of the president.

One bright spot for Trump? The improving economy.

With a soaring stock market and unemployment hovering around 4 percent, 40 percent of Americans approved of Trump's handling of the economy. That's higher than the three in 10 Americans that approved of the president's handling of health care, foreign policy or taxes.

Still, Trump continues to talk about his presidency with lofty rhetorical flourishes, declaring that his first months in office outshine those of his predecessors. But there's no doubt that 2017 has been devoid of any significant legislative accomplishments, though Republicans are urgently trying to pass a sweeping overhaul of

the nation's tax system. The package would give generous tax cuts to corporations and the wealthiest Americans, and more modest tax cuts to low- and middle-income families.

"We're very, very close to a historic legislative victory, the likes of which rarely has this country seen," Trump said during a meeting with lawmakers earlier this week.

Republicans are banking on the tax overhaul being enough to carry them through next year's House and Senate contests, elections that will largely be a referendum on Trump's first two years in office and the GOP's stewardship as the majority party on Capitol Hill. But with the legislation rushed through Congress and negotiated largely in private, Trump and lawmakers may have more work to do to sell the public on its benefits.

"There's so much back and forth and so many adjustments being made. It's just so uncertain," Edward Hale, a 72-year-old independent, said of the tax legislation.

One thing Hale, a retired federal government employee from Clarion, Pennsylvania, is certain of in the proposal? "It definitely favors Mr. Trump and his wealthy friends," he said.

The survey results suggest that with or without a tax overhaul, Trump has work to do in convincing the public that his presidency is benefiting them. Just 25 percent of Americans think the country is better off since Trump took office — and only 20 percent say they personally are doing better.

By contrast, an AP-NORC poll conducted a year ago found that Americans were more likely to think the country had become better off over the course of Barack Obama's presidency than worse off, 46 percent to 33 percent.

Only 9 percent think the country has become more united as a result of Trump's presidency, while 67 percent think the country is more divided because of Trump. That's far higher than the 44 percent of Americans who said in a poll one year ago that Obama's presidency had served to divide the country further.

Even Republicans are more likely to say Trump has divided America than united it, 41 percent to 17 percent.

Notably, the deep-seated pessimism about the president and national politics doesn't extend to local communities. Overall, about half of Americans said they feel optimistic about their local communities. And that feeling is shared across the political spectrum: 55 percent of Democrats and 50 percent of Republicans feel optimistic about the way things are going locally.



The Clermont City Council this week decided to keep the city boat ramp open but then to re-locate the ramp to what the city is referring to as Lake Minneola West. [LINDA CHARLTON / CORRESPONDENT]

BOAT

From Page A3

council asked me to take it off the list of potential sites. It was removed August 8th. However, after an exhaustive search for viable sites in order to try to accommodate citizens, the council discovered there were a limited number of potential relocation sites and asked me to put it back on the list of potential sites."

So what's next for the residents and boaters who have been advocating for the Bell Ceramics site for the past five months? At least one of them already has a legal challenge in

the works.

Cindy Davis, who lives just a few houses up from the proposed Hiawatha Preserve boat ramp site, has filed a formal appeal of the St. Johns River Water Management District permit. That initial appeal was rejected due to an error in the paperwork, but with assistance of legal council, Davis asked for and got an extension of the normal 15-day limit for re-filing so she and her attorney could see what the council would do.

"We were hoping this would become a moot issue, and the city would do the right thing," Davis says, "but we have no choice. We want to fight the St. Johns permit because we don't feel they took everything into consideration."

SPACEX

From Page A3

sense of déjà vu" watching Friday's launch and landing of the same rocket he saw take off and return in June.

"Quite an achievement," he said.

For the past two years, the private SpaceX has been salvaging as much as possible from rockets following liftoff. Rather than letting first-stage boosters sink in the Atlantic, as other orbital rocket makers do, SpaceX flies them back to Cape Canaveral for vertical touchdowns or, when extra rocket power is needed to propel a satellite extra high, to a floating ocean platform.

Reusability is the future for spaceflight, according to NASA's station program manager Kirk Shireman.

"The reality is, the business of space is dominated by launch costs ... so getting the costs down is important for everyone," Shireman said.

NASA flew its first reused capsule back in June. But managers waited until SpaceX had three rocket reflights under its belt, before putting NASA's station equipment and experiments on a second-hand Falcon. After extensive reviews, the risk of flying a reused rocket, versus a brand new one, was judged to be pretty much equal, he said.



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off from newly refurbished Pad 40 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. on Friday. The rocket is carrying supplies to the International Space Station. [CRAIG BAILEY / ASSOCIATED PRESS]

Friday's booster recovery was the 20th for the company.

Jessica Jensen, a SpaceX manager, said the company aims to reuse rockets — and capsules — far more than twice. The only way to get thousands of people into space — the ultimate goal of Musk — is by drastically cutting launch costs, she said.

This was the first launch from the SpaceX-rented Complex 40 in more than a year. The last time a Falcon

rocket stood at the pad ready to fly, in September 2016, it blew up during a fueling drill. SpaceX spent \$50 million rebuilding the pad.

Friday's successful liftoff means SpaceX has now launched from all three of its pads — two in Florida and one in California — in the same year.

"This was a fantastic way to end the year for SpaceX East Coast launches," Jensen told reporters.

The space station is down to three astronauts until Sunday's launch of three more. The Dragon should arrive at the orbiting outpost a few hours after the fresh crew launches from Kazakhstan. Once back up to full capacity, the station will be home to three Americans, two Russians and one Japanese.

SpaceX — one of two private shippers contracted by NASA — has been making station supply runs since 2012.

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SUSPECTS

From Page A1

in circles and that finally ended in an admission that all they got out of it was \$70 for drugs, an examination of court documents reveals.

"You are putting on a show and I'm tired of it. Stop... stop the fake crying, let's talk," an exasperated sheriff's detective told Laws during an interrogation after Laws' arrest in February.

"I swear. I swear. I swear. I swear. I swear. I swear. And Josh (McClellan) wouldn't kill Ms. Rubye. He loves her too much. They've done so many things together."

The "things" involved McClellan doing chores for her, and sometimes she fed him.

The detective had already given up trying to get McClellan to admit guilt.

"... he continued to deny any involvement in the victim's death although he admitted to never being apart from Krystopher Laws," he noted in his report.

Sheriff's deputies got the first inkling that something was wrong on Feb. 8 when neighbors called Lake County sheriff's deputies to 2202 Edgewood Road. Her friends had not seen her in two days. A house slipper was on the front porch next to two overturned potted plants. Once iron security bars were pried off the door, deputies could see blood on the floor — in droplets, puddles, drag marks and on a light switch.

Her purse had been dumped out in the bedroom. Drawers, dressers and file cabinets had been yanked open.

Her white 2016 Hyundai Veloster was missing from the garage.

Soon, it was spotted at Snow Place apartments off Sunnyside Road. There was blood on the outside and on a pocket knife and a Bible on the console. There was also a used Band-Aid on the floor.

A cadaver dog named "Nutz" had a strong reaction to the car. He was led to tire tracks on a dirt road cut-through. "It was obvious the car had driven off the road toward the woods," a deputy noted in his report. "There was grass hanging from underneath the car."

The dog "alerted" on a white sock, and then another. Soon, the search team found a shallow grave with vegetation piled on top.

It wasn't long before detectives got a call that blew the case wide open.

McClellan's mother, who lived at Snow Place, called police to say that her son and Laws had stolen a car from the Leesburg parking garage near the library.

McClellan told investigators Laws cut himself in the car when the knife blade folded on his hand. McClellan, who at first eyed the Bible's pages as a makeshift source for marijuana joint rolling papers, said he ended up using it as a blotter for the blood.

Detective Levi Burns wasn't buying any of it.

"I have got a matching Band-Aid at the house, Josh, that's also got blood on it. In Ms. Rubye's bathroom there is a matching Band-Aid with blood on it as well."

McClellan would not give it up.

"I did not kill her," McClellan said. "He did."

"Then what happened? If he killed her, tell me what happened?"

"I don't know because I was not there."

Detectives started their questioning of Laws by taking a genetic swab of his mouth.

He claimed he cut himself chasing his fiance's nephew around a tree.

"Why would your blood be on Ms. Rubye's car?" Burns asked.

"It's not inside Ms. Rubye's car, is it?"

"Yeah, it is."

When asked why his palm print was on a mirror in the living room, he cursed.

He was asked why his sweater was found in the house.

"That's not mine."

"Then why is your DNA on it?"

He also asked why his blood would be on the knife in the car.

"I don't know."

Eventually, he started to crack.

"It was Josh's plan."

"What was the plan?"

"I don't know."

He then made a series of contradictory remarks.

"I thought she was, she needed me for something."

He then said, "I didn't go to her house with Josh."

Laws then admitted that the two walked to her house.

"Josh said he was going to get a few dollars."

Eventually, he admitted the plan was to rob her, but he could not explain how they would accomplish that, since she would have recognized McClellan.

He described going into the house.

"Ms. Rubye, I'm so sorry I did it. I didn't want to do it."

"What did you do, Krys?"

"I... killed Ms. Rubye."

Asked how, he said, "I didn't kill Ms. Rubye, though."

"You just told me you did."

He said Josh struck her on the side of her face with his hand.

Later, he said he struck the first blow.

"I hit her on the side of the head."

He said McClellan closed the front door.

"...he started stabbing her and then he handed me the knife."

He said she was lying face down.

"I kicked her a couple of times and stuff like that... the back of her head or something. He told me to make sure... he told me to make sure she was dead."

Burns asked how he made sure.

"I... stabbed her."

The autopsy report cited "multiple sharp force injuries," including several head wounds, a large neck wound and injury to the spine, five stab wounds to the back, including injuries to the ribs, left lung and spine, two stab wounds to the buttocks multiple blunt force injuries, broken ribs and several cuts and bruises.

Burns wanted to know how things went from a vague robbery plan to a frenzied stabbing and beating.

"It was just the right thing to do."

"Killing her was the right thing to do?"

"No," he said, explaining that robbing her seemed like the right thing to do.

He said they got \$70 in the home invasion robbery and murder and spent it immediately on marijuana.

"Krys, you are going to jail for murder today, OK?" Burns said. "Listen, I appreciate you... I appreciate you talking to me, OK? But you are going to jail for murder, OK? You brutally killed a 92-year-old lady. Stand up. Stand up."

"I didn't do it."

TAX

Continued from A1

days, he had said those concerns had not been allayed.

"I know every bill we consider is imperfect and the question becomes, is our country better off with or without this piece of legislation?" Corker said in a statement. "I think we are better off with it. I realize this is a bet on our country's enterprising spirit, and that is a bet I am willing to make."

Rubio had been holding out for a bigger child tax credit for low-income families. After he got it, Rubio tweeted that the change is "a solid step toward broader reforms which are both Pro-Growth and Pro-Worker."

The tax package would double the basic per-child tax credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000. The bill makes a smaller amount available to families even if they owe no income tax. Rep. Kristi Noem, R-S.D., said Friday that that amount had been increased from \$1,100 to \$1,400.

Rubio had said he wanted the earlier \$1,100 figure increased.

Low-income taxpayers would receive the money in the form of a tax refund, which is why it's called a "refundable" tax credit.

Senate Republicans passed their original tax bill by a vote of 51-49 — with Rubio's support. If they had lost Rubio and Corker, they would have been one more defection away from defeat.

On Thursday, members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus predicted the vast majority of their members would support the package, boosting the bill's chances in the House.

House and Senate Republican leaders on Wednesday forged an



House Budget Committee Chair Diane Black, R-Tenn., arrives at the House Ways and Means Committee room to work with Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, on the GOP tax bill conferee report, Friday at the Capitol in Washington. (J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS)

agreement in principle on the most sweeping overhaul of the nation's tax laws in more than 30 years. The package would give generous tax cuts to corporations and the wealthiest Americans — Trump among them — and more modest tax cuts to low- and middle-income families.

"I'm confident that at the end of the day, the Senate will approve this conference committee report because no one should be defending the status quo in this horrible tax code Americans have had to live with for too long," said Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas, a top House negotiator.

The tax legislation would cut the top tax rate for the wealthiest Americans from 39.6 percent to 37 percent.

The package would nearly double the standard deduction, to \$24,000 for married couples. But it would scale back the deduction for state and local taxes, allowing families to deduct only up to a total of \$10,000 in property and income taxes. The deduction is especially important to residents of high-tax states such as New York, New Jersey and California.

The final package slashes the corporate rate from 35 percent to 21

percent, a big win for corporate America.

Business owners who report business income on their personal tax returns would be able to deduct 20 percent of that income.

The agreement also calls for repealing the mandate under the "Obamacare" health law that requires most Americans to get health insurance, a step toward the ultimate GOP goal of unraveling the law.

The business tax cuts would be permanent, but reductions for individuals would expire in 2026 — saving money to comply with Senate budget rules. In all, the bill would cut taxes by about \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years, adding billions to the nation's mounting debt.

Rubio's opposition had come at a bad time for Senate Republicans, with two of them missing votes this week because of illness.

John McCain of Arizona, who is 81, is at a Washington-area military hospital being treated for the side effects of brain cancer treatment, and 80-year-old Thad Cochran of Mississippi had a non-melanoma lesion removed from his nose earlier this week. GOP leaders are hopeful they will be available next week.

DISNEY

Continued from A1

in an era of flat-lining ticket sales and new streaming competitors like Netflix, Amazon and Apple.

The Big Six are now the Big Five — and the mightiest of them all has just been supersized.

The Disney deal hasn't just made 20th Century Fox's 3,200 employees anxious about their future within Disney. It's sent shockwaves through an industry that has until now bent under the pressures of the new digital landscape, but not broken. Now, Hollywood as an industry is quite literally shrinking.

"The strongest will get stronger and the weaker will fall off or merge with other entities," said Exhibitor Relations analyst Jeff Bock. "The future is right now and it's pretty obvious what's going on."

Many analysts consider further consolidation simply a matter of time. Before Rupert Murdoch earlier this fall began shopping Fox, most expected the first studio to fall would be either Viacom's Paramount Pictures (5 percent of the market) or Sony Pictures (8.8 percent), both of which have struggled in recent years and replaced their chief executives. Lionsgate and CBS are also frequent sources of speculation.

Fox is bigger, though.



Disney announced Thursday that it is buying a large part of Fox, but the Fox studio lot in Los Angeles will remain with the Murdoch family. (ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO)

Founded in 1935 by the merger of Twentieth Century Pictures and Fox Films, 20th Century Fox is the home of "The Sound of Music," the original "Star Wars" and the highest grossing film of all-time, "Avatar." The studio has generally ranked either third or fourth in market share. This year, it's fourth with 12.3 percent, following the market-leader Disney, Warner Bros. and Universal.

Fox isn't necessarily disappearing. Disney will lease its fabled Los Angeles lot for the next seven years. But 20th Century Fox will be folded into Walt Disney Studios. Its movie-making operations will be reduced and likely restructured.

As a studio, Disney is already based on several distinct silos of brands: Disney, Marvel, Pixar and Lucasfilm. Its strength in intellectual properties — especially "Star Wars" and its library of animation classics — has made

the studio dominant.

In a conference call with investors Thursday, Disney chief executive Robert Iger suggested Fox may function similarly as a label within Disney.

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Tillerson backtracks on offer of unconditional NKorea talks

By Matthew Pennington
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's top diplomat stepped back Friday from his offer of unconditional talks with North Korea, telling world powers the nuclear-armed nation must earn the right to negotiate with the United States.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's declaration before the U.N. Security Council marked a stunning reversal after he proposed discussions with Pyongyang without preconditions earlier this week. That overture was almost immediately rebutted by White House officials.

Still, Tillerson had planned to reiterate his call at a special U.N. ministerial meeting on North Korea at the council Friday morning. His prepared remarks suggested only that North Korea would have to undertake a sustained halt in its threatening behavior before talks could begin. But Tillerson changed the script.

"North Korea must earn its way back to the table," Tillerson told the foreign ministers. "The pressure campaign must and will continue until denuclearization is achieved. We will in the meantime keep our channels of communication open."

The debate over offering North Korea unconditional talks reflects the differences within the Trump administration as it runs



U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, right, speaks to reporters Friday after a high level Security Council meeting on the situation in North Korea at United Nations headquarters. [MARY ALTAFFER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

out of time to prevent North Korea from perfecting a nuclear-tipped missile that can strike the U.S. mainland. President Donald Trump has vowed to prevent such capability, with military action if necessary.

So far, U.S.-led sanctions on North Korea and diplomatic isolation haven't compelled Kim Jong Un's government to stop its nuclear and missile tests, or to seek negotiations.

Asked Friday if he supported unconditional talks, Trump did not answer directly.

"Well, we're going to see what happens with North Korea. We have a lot of support. There are a lot of nations that agree with us — almost everybody," Trump told

reporters. He credited China — which accounts for about 90 percent of North Korea's external trade — with helping on pressuring North Korea, while Russia was not.

"We'd like to have Russia's help — very important," Trump said. He raised it in a Thursday phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

At the U.N. Tillerson called on China and Russia to go beyond U.N.-mandated economic sanctions.

He said North Korean laborers were toiling in "slave-like conditions" in Russia for wages used to fund nuclear weapons, while China was still allowing crude oil to flow into North Korean refineries.

North Korea has

conducted more than 20 ballistic missile tests during 2017 and its most powerful nuclear explosion to date. Its more recent missile test in late November fired a projectile that experts say could carry a nuclear warhead to the U.S. Eastern Seaboard.

Tillerson said the North's growing capabilities were a "direct threat to our security and the security of the entire world. We do not regard this claim as an empty threat."

He said U.S. does not want war, but "will use all necessary measures to defend itself against North Korean aggression." He said "our hope remains that diplomacy will produce a resolution."

Trump blasts FBI leadership but says he's loyal to police

By Jonathan Lemire and Zeke Miller
The Associated Press

QUANTICO, Va. — President Donald Trump laced into FBI leadership Friday, while proclaiming his loyalty and support for law enforcement in an address at the agency's training academy.

"It's a shame what's happened" with the FBI, the president said as he left the White House for a speech at the FBI training academy in Quantico, Virginia. He called the agency's handling of Hillary Clinton's email investigation "really disgraceful" and told reporters "we're going to rebuild the FBI."

Afterward, Trump lavished praise on graduates of a weekslong FBI National Academy program and their families, touting their accomplishments and pledging his unwavering support.

"Anti-police sentiment is wrong and it's dangerous," he added. "Anyone who kills a police officer should get the death penalty."

Trump used the speech to promote his administration's tough-on-crime policies, delivering a stern warning to members of the international gang MS-13 that his administration will root them out and arrest them. He also celebrated his decision to make it easier for police forces to purchase surplus military equipment, and questioned rising violence in Chicago.

"What the hell is going on in Chicago? What the hell is happening there," he asked.

Hours before, White House Deputy press secretary Hogan Gidley told Fox News Channel that edits to former FBI Director James Comey's statement on Clinton's private email server and anti-Trump texts from a top agent are "deeply troubling."

"There is extreme bias against this president with high-up members of the team there at the FBI who were investigating Hillary Clinton at the time," Gidley charged, as special counsel Robert Mueller pushes on with a probe of possible Trump campaign ties to Russia. Gidley says Trump maintains confidence in the FBI's rank-and-file.

Edits to the Comey draft appeared to soften the gravity of the bureau's finding in its 2016 investigation of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server while secretary of state.

"It is very sad when you look at those documents, how they've done that is really, really disgraceful, and you have a lot of really angry people who are seeing it," Trump said of the document.

Gidley said the disclosure of politically charged text messages sent by one of the agents on the Clinton case, Peter Strzok, were "eye-opening." Strzok, who was in the room as Clinton was interviewed, was later assigned to special counsel Robert Mueller's team to investigate potential coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign. He was re-assigned after the messages were uncovered this summer.

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Just Getting Started	PG13	9:55	12:05	2:15	4:30	6:45	9:00	
Going in Style	PG13	10:25	12:50	3:10	5:30	7:45	9:55	
Coco	PG	9:45	12:10	2:35	5:10	7:35	10:00	
Lady Bird	R	9:40	12:05	2:25	4:35	6:50	8:55	
Wonder	PG	10:15	1:00	3:45	6:30	9:15		
LBJ	R	Fri-Tue	9:45	12:10	2:30	4:50	7:15	9:40
Novitiate	R	Fri-Sun & Tue	9:50	12:35	3:30	6:15	9:10	
	R	Mon	9:50	12:35	3:30	9:10		
The Greatest Showman	PG	OPENS WED	9:30	11:55	2:20	4:45	7:10	9:35
Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle	PG13	OPENS WED	2D	9:35	2:55	8:15		
			3D	12:15	5:35	NO PASSES ON 3D		

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Ferdinand PG 2D 1:20 7:50 3D 10:10 4:30 NO PASSES ON 3D

Man Who Invented Christmas PG 10:20 12:50 3:40 6:10 8:40

The Star PG 10:20 12:40 3:20 5:40 7:50

Murder on the Orient Express PG13 10:30 1:40 4:30 7:20

Justice League PG13 10:50 2:00 5:00 8:20

THOR: Ragnarok PG13 10:40 2:10 5:10 8:10

Let There Be Light PG13 10:30 1:00 3:30 6:00 8:30

Star Wars: The Last Jedi PG13 2D 10:00 4:20 10:00 3D 12:45 7:20 NO PASSES ON 3D

Just Getting Started PG13 10:00 12:15 2:30 4:45 7:10 9:30

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri R 10:20 1:00 4:15 7:40 10:25

Roman J. Israel, Esq. PG13 10:15 1:15 4:25 7:15 10:05

Justice League PG13 10:45 1:45 4:45 7:25 10:15

Last Flag Flying R 10:15 1:00 4:00 7:00 9:45

A Bad Moms Christmas R Fri-Tue 10:40 1:40 4:40 7:30 10:10

Daddy's Home 2 PG13 10:10 1:35 4:00 7:35 10:35

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Woman alleges misconduct by Hoffman when she was 16

By Trisha Thomas
The Associated Press

ROME — A playwright who says Dustin Hoffman exposed himself to her and had her massage his feet in a hotel room when she was 16 said Friday that she spent years in guilty silence and took pains to not dress suggestively in professional contexts because she assumed the incident was her fault.

Playwright Cori Thomas was a classmate of Hoffman's daughter in 1980 when she says she met the actor, who invited her to his New York hotel room to wait for her mother after dinner with the teenagers. After his daughter left, Hoffman went to take a shower, Thomas said in an interview with The Associated Press.

"I was just sitting there waiting for my parents. He came out of the bathroom

and had a towel around him and that was the first, 'Hmm, that is kind of weird,'" Thomas, now 53, said. "And then he dropped the towel, and I think I just like....I had never seen a naked man. I had never kissed a man."

Entertainment trade outlet Variety first reported Thomas' account in a story published Thursday that included another woman's allegation that Hoffman pushed his hand down her pants in a recording studio while working on the 1987 movie "Ishtar."

During an interview with the AP in Rome, where she had attended an event for Italian and American playwrights, Thomas described her shock and confusion in the hotel room with "a pretty huge star" who she thought of at the moment "as my friend's dad."

She said that after

dropping his towel, Hoffman put on a robe and asked her to massage his feet.

"I didn't know what to do. I acted my age. I was 16. I thought, 'Eewww, yuck,'" Thomas said. "I didn't know what to do really. He made a call to someone and he said, 'Oh I have the most beautiful girl massaging my feet. How old are you?' and I said 16, and he said 'She is 16.' So he knew my age."

The uncomfortable encounter continued after the call with Hoffman repeatedly asking if she wanted to see him naked again, Thomas said.

"I was in a state of shock, not knowing what to do," she said. "He kept saying, 'You know I am naked. You know I am naked. If you look, you will see I am naked.'"

"I didn't want to be rude. I was trying to be

polite. This was so weird and wrong.... There was a part of me worried about what might happen," she continued.

After her mother finally picked her up, Thomas said she did not tell her about what had happened but was quiet enough to make her mother suspicious.

"She kept asking, 'What happened, is everything OK?' I kept saying 'I am fine.' I was afraid of making a fuss. I didn't want to embarrass my friend. I didn't want to embarrass myself. I didn't want to tell her," Thomas said. "I just kept thinking it was my fault."

Thomas said it would be years before she would talk about the experience and that she just tried to push it aside. The effect on her lingered, though, she said.

"Especially because I thought it was an isolated incident, I took more guilt and blame onto myself. I think I have always behaved in a way not to act suggestive," Thomas said. "In the professional world, I try to be very refined and not in any way look seductive or seem as if I am trying to be."

Thomas said she decided to come forward publicly to support Hunter and counter attacks on the actress's credibility.

"He is 80 years old. I don't think anything is going to change with him," she said. "I do think that he should know that he did something wrong and it is not OK with me that he did something wrong. People also need to know that it is not OK to do these things."

The Variety report included the account of Melissa Kester, who said Hoffman pushed his hand down her pants while he was recording music for "Ishtar" and happened behind a partition while others, including Kester's boyfriend, were nearby.

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DAILY COMMERCIAL

Steve Skaggs | Publisher
Tom McNiff | Executive Editor
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ANOTHER OPINION

The evolving threat of Islamic State

Were Akayed Ullah a more accomplished suicide bomber, we might today be writing about the horrible repercussions of mass casualties in New York City's subway just days before Christmas. Fortunately, Ullah's makeshift bomb failed to fully detonate; he was most seriously injured in his own attack.

"I did it for Islamic State," Ullah reportedly told investigators.

You may ask: What remains of Islamic State?

In recent weeks the U.S. and its partners have crushed the last remnants of Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria. The terrorists' dream of an empire lies in shambles.

We had hoped that the defeat of Islamic State on the battlefield would demolish the group's recruiting appeal. Unfortunately not. Its violent message still inspires willing wannabes via cyberspace. One British counterterrorism official warns that there is "incitement to attack through the internet, 24/7."

There's much more work to be done before the U.S. can declare VI Day.

There is progress. The U.S. has choked off potential terror recruits' efforts to gain weapons training overseas. Instead, Islamic State devotees have turned to tutorials on encrypted communications channels, The New York Times reports.

The recent subway tunnel bombing was the third terrorist attack in New York City in about 15 months. Truck attacks, suicide bombings — more common in European capitals and the Middle East — are now moving up the list of potential threats to U.S. cities.

Two reasons:

These attacks take little expertise, planning or money.

They're nearly impossible for law enforcement to detect and thwart.

Eradicating Islamic State on the military battlefield may prove easier than expunging its call to arms on the internet. Cyberspace's borders are infinite; authorities may play whack-a-mole against websites that hoist the banner of hate.

But let's remember that just two years ago, the ground war against Islamic State raged. Fighters from 90 countries poured into Iraq and Syria. Former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell wrote in Time magazine in 2015: "The nature and significance of the threat flow from the fact that (Islamic State) is — all at the same time — a terrorist group, a state and a revolutionary political movement. We have never faced an adversary like it."

Islamic State is no longer a state. But the threat evolves. Terrorists routed from one place regroup elsewhere. Islamic State may be poised to grow in Central Asia. Authorities also warn that thousands of former fighters may be returning from battle to set up shop in parts of Africa.

In a related security issue, President Donald Trump, like his predecessor, seeks to bolster America's prowess on the electronic battlefield — not just against Islamic State but all terror groups. This includes eavesdropping on terrorist phone calls overseas, sweeping up emails and texts. The law that allows such surveillance, Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Amendments Act, expires at year's end. We urge Congress to renew it without delay.

Terror groups change tactics to evade law enforcement. America can't holster any of its anti-terror weapons. A terrible thought: The next bomber, in New York or another American city, may not be so inept.

Chicago Tribune

ANOTHER OPINION

Budweiser wants to be first beer on Mars...



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

When does public opinion matter?

A new national Pew poll released Dec. 7 shows that President Donald Trump's approval rating is declining among demographic groups that previously gave him relatively high numbers, particularly among evangelicals.

Trump's approval rating either remained the same or dropped among every group that was polled. This has little meaning to a narcissist because he abides in an alternative world, where he claims to be the greatest and constantly conveys these lies over the airways. The fact is that an increasing number of Americans don't believe him. In a real world situation — not the delusional world — a leader would change their actions to more align with the desires of voters. To do the opposite will result in negative consequences at the ballot box. Evidently Trump doesn't see the connection between his actions and public opinion.

Here's a summary of poll numbers:

- Overall public approval is 32 percent and disapproval 63 percent.
- Approval of white evangelical Protestants dropped 17 percent, now 61 percent.
- Approval by women, 29 percent and 47 percent of female respondents said Trump should be impeached. Thirty-two percent of men

agreed. Women approve of Trump far less than any other president at this point in his administration in at least the last 64 years.

- Seventy percent of Americans want congress to investigate Trump for sexual harassment, only 25 percent said no.
- Considering the biased, supportive accounts of Trump's actions by FOX, I am shocked that so many Americans realize what a failing president we have. I suspect that after Mueller's investigation Trump's approval will be less than 25 percent. Will the majority of Americans be heard or will their voice be blanketed by more distortions and lies?

Carole Bruski, Leesburg

Rich get tax cuts, most Americans don't get trickle

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. After hearing Mitch McConnell continue to claim that the results of the tax bill will not adversely affect the national debt and will create jobs, I challenge you to do one thing: Google the use of the trickle-down economic theory in Kansas and North Carolina to see the devastating results.

When you cut taxes for the wealthy, you must cut benefits for the 99 percent. Surveys of businesses who will

receive tax cuts conclude they intend to use the money to pay higher dividends, robots and increase management wealth but not create jobs. Trump's campaign promise to "bless Americans with the Kansas solution" is just another ignorant statement by a delusion president. Don't fall for it like the Republicans did. In a couple of years we will see this false assumption fail totally. If Reagan's trickle-down economic theory had worked to make America great, we would not have the increasing disparity of wealth we have today. The top 20 percent of Americans own 85 percent of the country's wealth and the bottom 80 percent of the population owns just 15 percent.

In theory, money to the wealthy would create well paying jobs, yet anyone can see that isn't true as wages have stagnated for more than a decade. Median household income was \$51,017 in 2012 compared to \$56,080 in 1999. Contrary to what lobbyists for corporations and the wealthy one percent have convinced conservatives, the primary cause for increased wealth going to the few was caused by this invalid theory and tax cuts for the wealthy. Application of the trickle-down theory and tax cuts for the wealthy has failed over and over and it will not result in benefits for most Americans.

Barry McAlister, Leesburg

HAVE YOUR SAY

We welcome signed letters and guest columns. Letters should not exceed 300 words and columns should not exceed 500 words. Columns need to include a recent headshot of the writer. We edit for length, clarity, and grammar. **Mail:** Voices, P.O. Box 490007, Leesburg, FL 34749-0007 **Email:** letters@dailyccommercial.com **Fax:** 352-365-1951

Chance to drill off Florida's coast has some salivating



Carl Hiaasen

Donald Trump's feverish war on the American wilderness compels us to celebrate an unexpected voice of conscience, rare as it might be.

Last week, Rep. Carlos Curbelo of Miami and 11 other House Republicans co-signed a letter asking Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to remove from the tax-reform bill a provision that will allow oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

"For decades, Congress has voted to prohibit oil and gas development in the Refuge, with the overwhelming support of the American

people," the letter said.

"Support for this protection remains strong today. After years of debate, the Arctic refuge stands as a symbol of our nation's strong and enduring natural legacy."

To no one's surprise, McConnell disregarded the plea of Curbelo and the others.

The Senate version of the tax-reform bill includes a green light for Arctic drilling, which was inserted purely to win the support of Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, a longtime advocate of oil and gas exploration on the fabled North Slope.

Drilling has nothing to do with the tax-reform debate, but McConnell needed Murkowski's vote for the bill to pass.

Why would Curbelo, a congressman from South Florida, buck the GOP leadership over an environmental sellout in faraway Alaska?

There's always a possibility

that, despite being a Republican in the year 2017, Curbelo truly believes the Arctic refuge is worth preserving.

At the very least, he understands that coastal Florida could be the next battleground.

In April, Trump signed an executive order with a goal to expand offshore oil drilling in both the Arctic and Atlantic oceans, and evaluate the feasibility of energy exploration in certain marine sanctuaries.

The president's review of leasing boundaries includes vast tracts in the eastern Gulf of Mexico that are currently protected.

For decades drilling has been kept far offshore because of strong bipartisan opposition from many Florida lawmakers as well as business leaders, who dread the potentially devastating impact of oil spills on tourism and the marine industries. Gov. Rick Scott, who's

running for the Senate next year, is one office holder who has offered no lucid opinion on Trump's drilling plans, which is all you need to know about his priorities.

Scott's future Democratic opponent, Sen. Bill Nelson, has been a perennial opponent of allowing oil rigs closer to the coastlines.

As for the reliably evasive Sen. Marco Rubio, he'll do whatever McConnell wants him to do.

The administration says the Interior Department is studying other areas ahead of the Gulf, but don't doubt for a moment that the energy companies are salivating over the chance to drill near Florida's shores.

Ironically, only a week after Trump's announcement, the Florida Legislature was ratifying a plan to distribute \$300 million in compensation funds for several counties in the

Panhandle that got economically crushed by the BP spill.

Given Florida's catastrophic vulnerability to oil spills, it makes sense that Curbelo would be alarmed by his own party's strategy of sneaking another fragile region — the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge — into the Senate tax package. The precedent should scare every tourist town along the Gulf and Eastern seaboard.

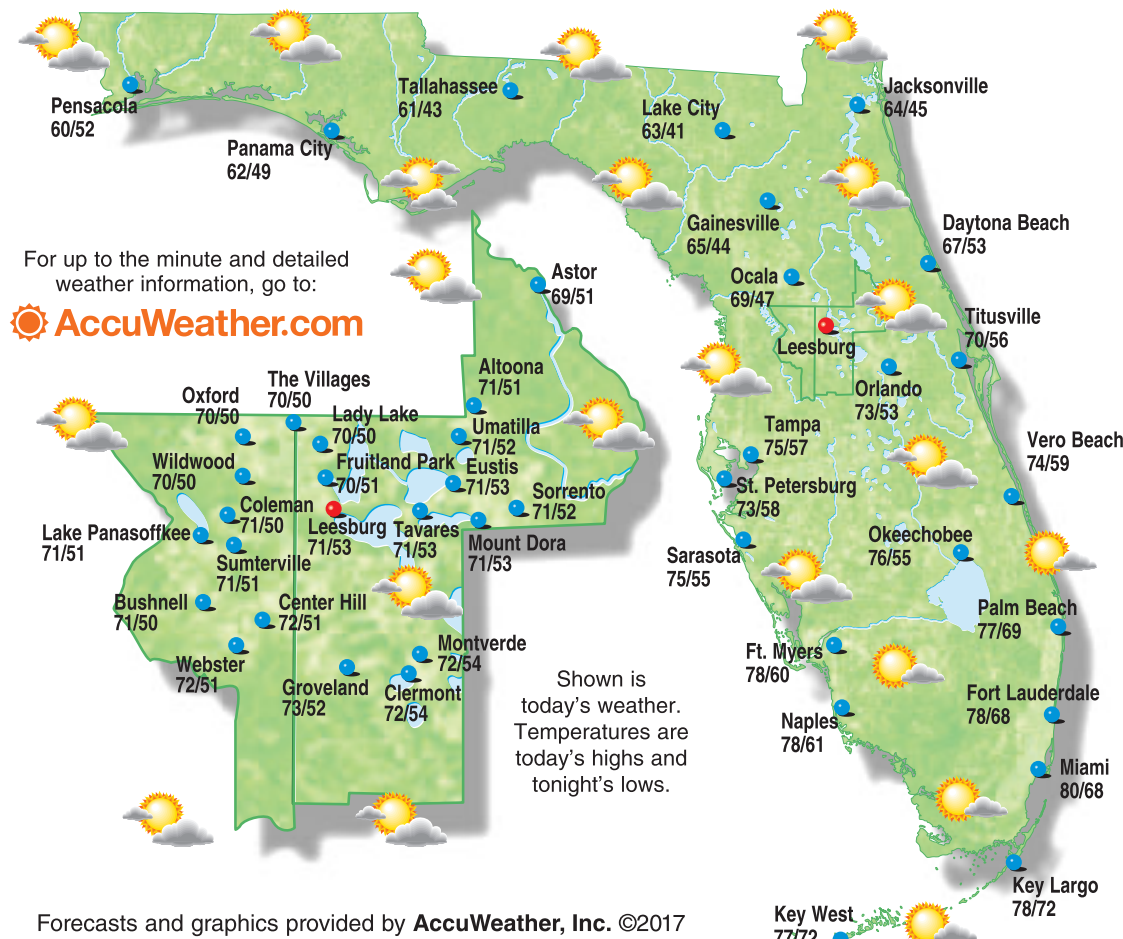
If McConnell's ploy survives the House-Senate conference committee, the drilling approval for the Alaskan refuge will appear in the final tax-overhaul bill. Then Curbelo gets to vote again, and he'll have a hard choice to make.

March with his party, or stand with his conscience.

Carl Hiaasen is a columnist for the Miami Herald. Readers may write to him at: 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132.

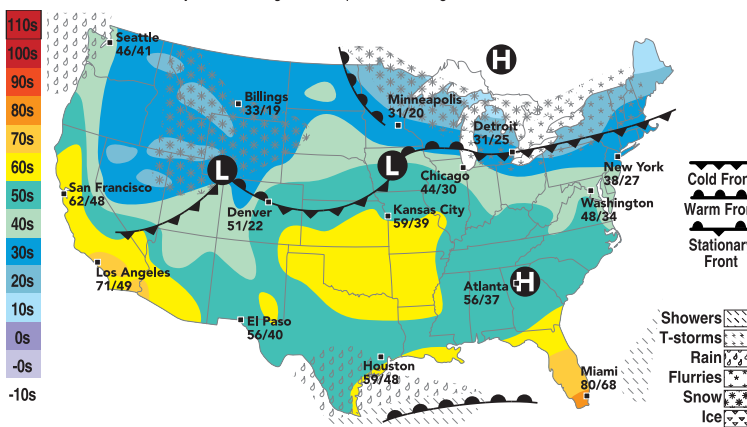
FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR LEEBSBURG

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Some sunshine	Some sun, then turning cloudy	Very warm with periods of clouds and sunshine	Very warm with sun and areas of low clouds	Cloudy with a shower possible
HIGH 71° LOW 53°	HIGH 79° LOW 60°	HIGH 82° LOW 62°	HIGH 83° LOW 65°	HIGH 75° LOW 59°



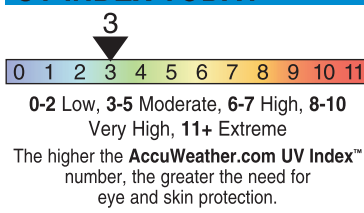
NATIONAL WEATHER FOR DECEMBER 16, 2017

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are today's highs for the day. Forecast high/low temperatures are given for selected cities.



Yesterday's National High/Low: (for the 48 contiguous states)
 High 81° in Miramar MCAS, CA Low -16° in Morrisville, VT

UV INDEX TODAY



SOLUNAR TABLE

The solunar period schedule allows planning days so you will be fishing in good territory or hunting in good cover during those times. Major periods begin at the times shown and last for 1.5 to 2 hours. The minor periods are shorter.

Major	Minor	Major	Minor
Today 9:46 a.m.	3:35 a.m.	10:10 p.m.	3:58 p.m.
Sun. 10:31 a.m.	4:19 a.m.	10:54 p.m.	4:42 p.m.

THE SUN AND MOON

	Today	Sunday	New	First	Full	Last
Sunrise	7:14 a.m.	7:14 a.m.				
Sunset	5:33 p.m.	5:33 p.m.	Dec 18	Dec 26	Jan 1	Jan 8
Moonrise	5:39 a.m.	6:31 a.m.				
Moonsset	4:42 p.m.	5:24 p.m.				

TIDES

Homosassa				Daytona Beach					
Day	High	Feet	Low	Feet	Day	High	Feet	Low	Feet
Today	2:56 am	.....1.3	12:04 pm	.....0.1	Sun.	3:31 am	.....1.3	12:50 pm	.....0.1
	4:59 pm	.....0.7	9:17 pm	.....0.4		5:45 pm	.....0.7	10:04 pm	.....0.4

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Sunday	City	Today	Sunday	City	Today	Sunday	City	Today	Sunday
Albany	31 12 sf	28 21 pc	Cheyenne	43 22 c	35 24 s	Great Falls	33 20 sn	38 34 c	Norfolk, VA	49 34 s	56 43 pc
Albuquerque	48 28 pc	46 28 sh	Chicago	44 30 pc	43 35 c	Greensboro, NC	50 31 s	56 41 c	Oklahoma City	60 41 s	56 32 pc
Anchorage	37 24 sn	28 16 sn	Cincinnati	49 32 s	44 36 r	Hartford	34 14 pc	31 22 pc	Omaha	52 27 pc	41 24 c
Asheville	51 29 s	55 41 r	Cleveland	38 23 sf	42 34 c	Honolulu	79 71 pc	81 69 sh	Philadelphia	42 28 pc	40 32 pc
Atlanta	56 37 s	59 51 t	Columbia, SC	57 32 s	65 47 c	Houston	59 48 c	69 56 pc	Phoenix	68 51 pc	62 44 sh
Atlantic City	44 25 pc	46 34 pc	Concord, NH	30 10 sf	27 13 pc	Indianapolis	49 33 s	45 37 r	Pittsburgh	42 26 sf	43 36 r
Baltimore	45 28 pc	46 34 pc	Dallas	64 44 pc	65 48 pc	Jackson, MS	59 46 pc	66 58 r	Portland, ME	32 12 sf	28 14 pc
Billings	33 19 sn	37 29 pc	Dayton	45 30 s	42 35 r	Kansas City	59 39 pc	50 37 r	Portland, OR	44 39 r	46 42 c
Birmingham	56 39 pc	56 50 r	Denver	51 22 c	40 24 c	Las Vegas	60 43 s	58 35 pc	Providence	36 18 pc	34 25 pc
Bismarck	43 22 c	44 26 s	Des Moines	53 29 pc	43 28 c	Little Rock	60 41 pc	58 40 c	Raleigh	52 30 s	58 44 pc
Boise	35 20 pc	33 26 pc	Detroit	31 25 sn	38 31 c	Louisville	55 36 s	49 41 r	Reno	42 19 s	42 21 pc
Boston	35 19 pc	32 24 pc	Duluth	21 13 c	26 16 c	Memphis	58 42 s	59 47 r	Richmond	50 29 s	54 39 pc
Buffalo	26 14 sf	30 26 pc	El Paso	56 40 s	56 36 sh	Milwaukee	39 31 c	39 32 pc	Sacramento	62 43 s	65 37 s
Burlington, VT	28 12 sf	20 10 c	Fargo	34 22 c	36 22 s	Minneapolis	31 20 c	33 21 c	St. Louis	60 40 s	52 43 r
Charleston, SC	58 36 s	66 49 c	Fairbanks	28 13 s	18 6 sn	Nashville	56 37 s	52 45 r	Salt Lake City	36 24 sf	34 24 s
Charleston, WV	50 30 s	49 39 r	Flagstaff	45 23 s	39 13 pc	New Orleans	60 55 pc	74 59 r	San Antonio	53 41 r	67 54 pc
Charlotte, NC	54 31 s	60 45 c	Grand Rapids	29 22 sn	36 30 sn	New York City	38 27 pc	37 33 pc	San Diego	66 49 s	68 45 s

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.

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A STEP FORWARD

Clinical trials are helping some Lake County residents. Tune in to find out why a Eustis doctor has high hopes for an upcoming trial that may help diabetes patients with neuropathy.

LOFTY GOAL

Faced with two knee replacement surgeries, a Cassia woman set a goal to be able to volunteer at a camp for kids. You'll hear her story.

LIFESAVING TREATMENT

A local woman celebrates the end of her radiation treatment and shares how she became cancer-free. Plus, her Tavares oncologist explains advancements in immunotherapy.

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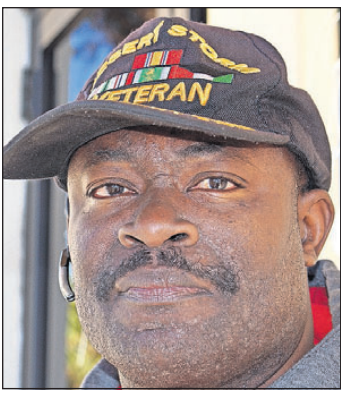
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CHAT WITH A VETERAN



JAMES HANNA

Town: Clermont
Branch of service and rank: Army, specialist E-4, Desert Storm
Enlisted or drafted? Enlisted. I wasn't doing anything. I grew up in a small town and I just had to get away from there.
What did you do in the service? I was a M1A1 tech mechanic. That was one of my jobs.
Why was it important? It was important because the M1A1 was the main battle vehicle in the ground war.
What is your most important memory from service? Just being able to serve, the interaction with other countries, growing from a boy to a man, maturing.
What did you like least about service? Watching comrades die. There's a lot of death, a lot of pain.
What do you want people to understand about war? There's a lot of confusion. A lot of time we were just sent out to do a mission. We were never told why. You never question authority.

CALENDAR

SATURDAY

DINNER AND ENTERTAINMENT: At 5 p.m. every Saturday at Amvets Post 1992, 32201 Amvets Way in Mount Dora. Nonmembers must be signed in by a member of the post. Go to amvetspost1992.org.

NSDAR MEETING: At 9:30 a.m. at Royal Highlands Recreation Center, 5350 Monarch Blvd. in Leesburg. Mary Ellen Robertson Chapter with speaker Benjamin Mack-Jackson on Veterans History Project and Traveling WWII Museum. Call Charyl Winner at 317-432-0421 for invitation.

HOAGIE NIGHT: At 4 p.m. the third Saturday of the month at AMVETS Post 2006, 500 N. Canal St. in Leesburg. Nonmembers must be signed in by a member of the post. Call 352-323-8750, email amvetspost2006@gmail.com or go to amvets2006.com.

VETERANS MEETING: At 2 p.m. the third Saturday of the month at the Silver Oaks Room Saddlebrook Recreation Center, 3010 Saddlebrook Lane in The Villages. Korean War and Service Veterans Chapter 169. For all veterans who served in Korea. Call 352-748-7009.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA DAY: At 12 p.m. at Lone Oak Cemetery, 306 Thomas Ave. in Leesburg. Call Glorianne Fahs at 352-787-5969 or Midge Dodge at 352-326-9085 for information.

WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY: At 10 a.m. at Florida National Cemetery, 6502 SW 102nd Ave. in Bushnell. To honor veterans by laying remembrance wreaths on their graves. Call 352-793-7740 or go to wreathsacrossamerica.org for information.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA CEREMONY: At 12 p.m. at Shiloh Cemetery in Fruitland Park. To honor veterans by laying remembrance wreaths on their graves. Pick up sponsorship forms at American Legion Post 219, 194 W. Fountain St. in Fruitland Park or call Diane at 352-360-0016. Go to wreathsacrossamerica.org for information.

See CALENDAR, B4

A part of his father

Son given dad's WWII Purple Heart medal found at thrift shop

By Wilson Ring
The Associated Press

BURLINGTON, Vt. — A man in Vermont born seven months after his father was killed in combat during World War II has received his father's Purple Heart medal, which recently was found in a Florida thrift store.

Art Broaderick, who lives part of the year in Vermont and part in St. Petersburg, was given Earl Broaderick's medal Dec. 8 in Burlington during a ceremony arranged by the Vermont-based group Purple Hearts Reunited. The group contacted Art Broaderick after hearing from a woman who found the medal in Tampa and wanted to help finding its rightful owner.

Earl Broaderick died in combat in 1944. His son first learned of the medal this week when contacted by Purple Hearts Reunited. It was officially presented to him by Boy Scout Daniel Durgin, of Cabot, who raised the money for the ceremony as part of his Eagle Scout project. An emotional Broaderick hugged Durgin.

Art Broaderick is a Vietnam War veteran who went off to fight and earned his own Purple Heart for his service. He's the youngest of three children.

"It gives me a part of our father," Broaderick said of his father's medal.

The medal was in a frame along with a description of his father's service and a photograph.

Purple Hearts Reunited was found in 2012 by Vermont National Guardsman Zachariah Fike. He started the organization informally three years earlier when his mother gave him a Purple Heart and dog tags she had bought in an antique shop. Fike tracked down the sister of that veteran.

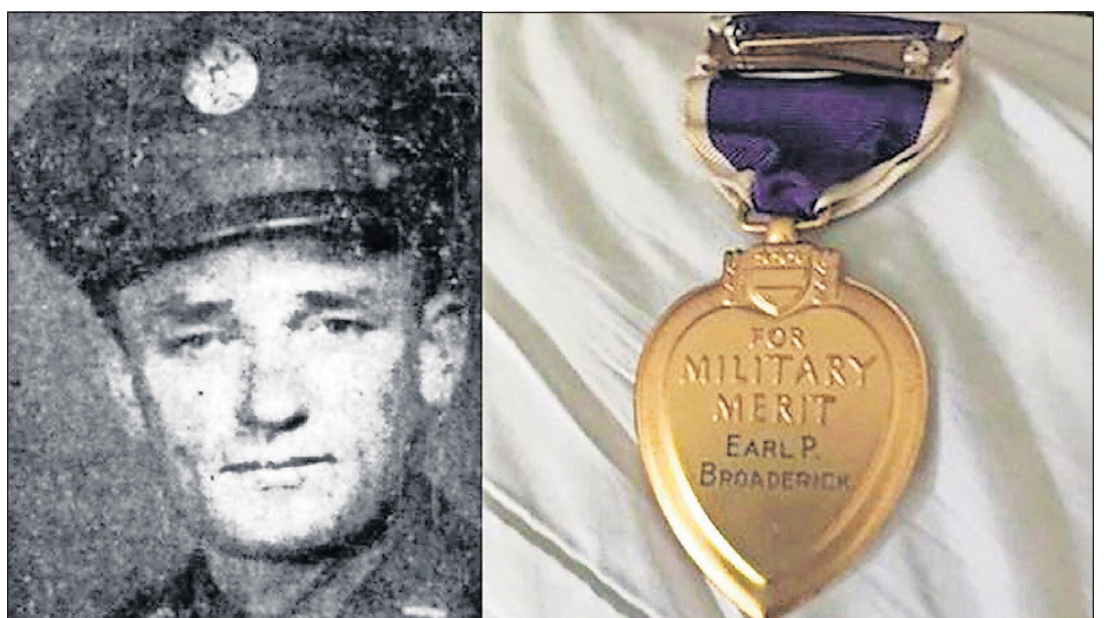
The organization has presented hundreds of medals and lesser memorabilia received by the organization, including dog tags, earned in conflicts ranging from World War I to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. About 400 medals, including about 100 this year, have been returned so far, Fike said.

There was no explanation about how the medal ended up at the thrift store. The woman who found the Purple Heart called Fike on Sunday, he said. He quickly tracked down Broaderick and was surprised to learn he was

See FATHER, B4



Art Broaderick, with his wife Caryl, holds the framed Purple Heart medal awarded to his father during World War II during a ceremony on Dec. 8 in Burlington, Vt. [WILSON RING/AP]



After being found at a Florida thrift shop, Earl Broaderick's Purple Heart medal was given to his son. [FILE]

"It gives me a part of our father."

Art Broaderick said of his father's medal

American Legion Auxiliary collects peanut butter for food bank



On Oct. 30, John Gella Memorial Unit 219, American Legion Auxiliary in Fruitland Park, delivered 300 jars of peanut butter to Beyond The Walls food pantry. This was the group's Make-A-Difference project, and they surpassed last year's total and all expectations. From left, Unit V.P. Diane Rousseau, Beyond The Walls Director Hannah McClain, Unit President Lucy McCann, Unit Ex. Com. Tawanna Villeneuve, Unit Secretary Kathi Malachowski, Unit Ex. Com. Reta Hoernis. [SUBMITTED]

South Lake grad completes basic training for Air Force

Staff Report

SAN ANTONIO — U.S. Air Force Airman Briana K. Logan graduated from basic military training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland in San Antonio, Texas.

Logan completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training also earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community



Logan

College of the Air Force. Logan is the daughter of Brian K. Logan, Kerry W. Logan and Carol A. Logan of Clermont.

She is a 2017 graduate of South Lake High School in Groveland.

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www.holytrinityfp.com
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 On US441/27: go south .4 mile past Phillips Buick;
 turn right on Spring Lake Rd.

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www.communityumcfp.com

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 Morning Service 10:30 am
 Sunday & Wednesday Evening 6:00 pm

LIFE Church Assembly of God
 04001 Picciola Rd., Fruitland Park
 352-787-7962
Pastor Rick Welborne
 Sunday Deaf Impaired 10:00am
 Sunday Evening 6:00pm
 Wednesday Prayer and Youth Service 7:00pm
 Sunday School 9:00am
 Wednesday Bible Study 7:00pm

LaVida Spanish Ministry
 un ministerio de
Life Church Assembly of God
 04001 Picciola Rd., Fruitland Park
 352-787-7962 or 321-947-2644
Pastor Rick Orisini
 Es Domingo et al 4:00 PM
www.LifeChurchAG.net/Lavida

Trinity Assembly of God
 200 Urick Street, Fruitland Park
 352-787-0996
Pastor Chuck Padgett
 Sunday School 9:00 am
 Sunday Worship 10:00 am
 Sunday Evening Worship 6:00 pm
 Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 pm
www.trinityaogfp.org

FRUITLAND PARK

Unity Spiritual Center
 509 CR 486, Fruitland Park, FL
 352-454-5107
 Offers a Positive Path for
 Spiritual Living. Everyone welcome.
 Sunday service 10 am
www.unityspiritualcenterfl.org

GROVELAND

South Lake Christian Church
 19455 Villa City Road, Groveland, FL 34736
 352-429-3400
 Traditional Service 8:45AM
 Coffee, Donuts and Fellowship 9:45AM
 Bible School 10:15
 Contemporary Service 11:00AM
Slcc.church

LEESBURG

Bethany Lutheran Church
 1334 Griffin Road, Leesburg
 352-787-7275
 Sunday Service 10:30am
 Wednesday Bible Study 10:00am
 Sunday Bible Study 9:15am
 Thursday Bible Study 5:30pm

Central Baptist Church est.1883
 104 Perkins St. Leesburg,
 Corner of Perkins & Main St. in Downtown Leesburg
 352-787-3966
Pastor Jay Williams
 Service Times: Sunday 10:30am & 6:00pm
 Wednesday Bible Study and Kids Awana 6:30
 Facebook centralbaptistchurchleesburg
www.centralbaptistchurch.info

Christ United Methodist Church
 1313 Griffin Road
 352-365-0622
Pastor Priscilla Scherrah
 Traditional Worship 8:30am & 10:45am
 Sunday School 9:30am
Wednesday Bible Study (September-May) 10:00am
www.christumcleebsburg.com

**Emmanuel Baptist Church of
 Leesburg**
 1710 U.S. Hwy 441 E., Leesburg
 352-323-1588
Pastor Jeff Carney
 Sunday School 9:15am
 Worship Service 10:30am
 Wednesday Men's Prayer Breakfast 8:00am (off site)
 Wednesday Praise & Prayer 6:30pm
 Wednesday EPIC Youth & Children Ministry 6:30pm
www.excitingEBC.com

First Baptist Leesburg
 220 N. 13th St., Leesburg
 352-787-1005
 Sunday Service & Bible Fellowships
 9:45am & 11:00am
 Wednesday Night Activities 6:00pm
Village Park Campus
 American Legion Hall
 (699 W. Lady Lake Blvd., Lady Lake)
 Sunday service 8:00am & 9:00am
www.villagepark.org
www.fbccleesburg.org

**First Presbyterian Church
 of Leesburg**
 200 S. Lone Oak Dr., Leesburg
 352-787-5687
 Sunday Service 10:00am
 Sunday School 8:45am
www.firstpresleesburg.org
 "Disciples Making Disciples"

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
 130 S. Lone Oak Drive, Leesburg
 352-787-3223
 Sunday Worship Service 9:30am
www.gloriadeielca.net



LEESBURG

Good News Church
 400 Executive Blvd, Leesburg, FL 34748
 352-315-1695
Pastor John Blake
 Service Time 9 am & 11 am
www.goodnewschurch.org

**Grace Evangelical Presbyterian
 Church**
 Worship Service @ (Women's Club of Leesburg)
 700 S. 9th St. Leesburg
 (352) 552-0052
Pastor Dave Dorst
SUNDAYS
 9:30 AM Food & Fellowship
 10:00-11:00 AM Worship
 11:15-11:55 Sunday School
 Call for more information on Small Groups, Bible
 Studies and Choir!!
 Email: graceepclesburg@gmail.com
 Website: www.graceepchurch.org
 Like on Facebook: Grace EPC

Leesburg Church of the Nazarene
 2100 Dr. M. L. Boulevard, Leesburg
 352-326-8878
Senior Pastor Gregory R. Brown
 Associate Pastor of Care Steve Wilson
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 Sunday School All Ages 9:30am
 Worship Service 10:30am
 Wednesday Bible Study 6:00pm
 Sunday Service 6:00pm
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 Presence, Purpose and Power*
www.leesburgnazarene.org
leesburgnazarene.office@gmail.com

Midway Baptist Church
 32707 Blossom Lane, Leesburg
 352-314-3080
James Nickerson Jr.
Senior Pastor
 Sunday Bible Study 9:30am
 Sunday Worship 10:30am
 Sunday Evening 6:00pm
 Wednesday Prayer Meeting 6:00pm
 "We sing hymns and Gospel songs"
www.MidwayBaptistOnline.org

Seventh Day Adventist
 508 S. Lone Oak Dr., Leesburg
 352-326-4109
 Worship Service 9:30am
 Sabbath School Service 11:00am
 Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00pm

St. James Episcopal Church
 204 Lee Street, Leesburg
 352-787-1981
Rev. Thomas H. Trees, Rector
 Sunday Holy Eucharist Services
 8:00am & 10:00am
 Thursday Holy Eucharist and Healing Service
 10:00am
www.stjames-leesburg.org

St. Paul Roman Catholic Church
 (In union with the Roman Catholic Diocese of
 Orlando & The Vatican)
 1330 Sunshine Avenue, Leesburg
 Weekday Masses M-F 8:30am
 Sacrament of Penance
 Saturday 2:30-3:30pm (or by appointment)
 Saturday Masses 4:00, 5:30 & 7:00pm (Spanish)
 Sunday Masses 7:00, 9:00, 11:00am, 12:30pm
 Office Hours M-F 8:00-12:00, 1:00-4:00

MOUNT DORA

St. Philip Lutheran Church
 1050 Boyd Drive, Mt. Dora
 352-383-5402
Pastor Rev. Dr. Johan Bergh
 Worship 9:30am
 Gathering 10:45am
 (Childcare Provided)
www.stphiliplc.com

OKAHUMPKA

Corpus Christi Episcopal Church
 3430 County Road 470, Okahumpka
 352-787-8430
 Sunday Holy Eucharist Service 10:00am
 Fellowship following the service
 Thursday Morning Prayer 9:30am
 Sunday Evening Prayer with Eucharist 4:00pm
www.corpuschristiepisopal.org

TAVARES

**Tavares First United
 Methodist Church (UMC)**
 Corner of Old 441 & SR 19, Tavares
 352-343-2761
Pastor Mike Briggs
 Sunday Services
 8:30 am & 11:00 am – Traditional service in the
 Sanctuary
 10:00 am –Contemporary, café service in the UMAC
 9:45 am –Adult Small Group
 10:00 am –TreeHOUSE Kids (preK thru elementary)
 Nursery for 3 & under available 8:15am-12:15am
www.functavares.com

**Union Congregational Church
 United Church of Christ**
 At the corner of St. Clair Abrams Ave and
 Old 441 (Alfred Street)
 352-343-6183
Rev. Kenneth H. Frey, Pastor
 Traditional Services 10:00am
 Communion 1st Sunday, Monthly
 Adult Sunday Bible Study 8:45am
 Thrift Store: Thursday, Friday, & Saturday
 9:00am - 1:00pm - 352-343-7557
 Senior Congregate Meal Program Monday,
 Wednesdays 10:00am - 12:00 Noon
 WEB: unioncctavares.com
 FB: Union Congregational Church Tavares, FL
 We Welcome Everyone to Our Church,
 Never a Stranger, Always a Friend!

YALAHA

Yalaha Community Church
 9050 Citron Street, Yalaha
 Sunday Evening Service 6:00-7:00
 Tuesday Evening Bible Study 6:30-7:30
 Non-Denominational
 Phone: 352-408-4517

WILDWOOD

Rock Of Ages Lutheran Church
 201 Barwick St.
 Wildwood, FL 34785
 (352) 330-0463
Pastor Don Erickson
 8:30 am Traditional Communion Service
 10:30 am Contemporary Communion Service
www.rockofageslutheran.com

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 352-314-3278

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FAITH

Tom McNiff, editor
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REFLECTIONS

I need to let God in again



Rick Reed

I can understand why the holidays can be so hard to get over. It's been almost a year since my wife went into the hospital. She came home the end of January under Hospice care and went Home on Feb. 26. Needless to say, I'm haven't been looking forward to the holidays, and I started mapping out what I would do instead.

I thought about a cruise during Christmastime, not really caring where I went — only that I was gone. I also thought about spending Thanksgiving with my brother in Maine. In fact, I went ahead and made those plans for Thanksgiving, booking my flight. It seemed like I would be able to escape for just a little while. But all of that changed when I awoke Nov. 9 and went to a Life Luncheon, which is part of my daytime job.

After the event was over, I got my things together and was getting ready to head for home. All of the sudden something went terribly wrong. I started having some sort of headache, something I had never experienced. Next, I was tumbling down to the ground, unable to get myself right. Then I was on the ground and couldn't make myself sit up. Eventually someone came over to me. I was able to get up and, somehow I was able to get in my car and drive home.

Obviously, that wasn't the right move, but God must have been with me as I drove 30 minutes and made it home. I was disoriented and called Greg, my best friend. The connection didn't last and I called Emily, my younger daughter in Seattle. That didn't go well either and eventually I called Greg once more on my house phone. I think Emily had called Becca by that time, and someone called Greg. They knew that something was wrong. Greg arrived soon and took me to the hospital.

It became pretty obvious that I had a stroke and indeed, that is what the tests revealed. I was admitted and stayed to recover for the next several days, finally being discharged on the Nov. 11, a Sunday. Becca stayed with me for several days as I started to recuperate. We went to the cardiologist the Monday after and also the neurologist officer after that. We wanted to make sure I wouldn't have another stroke and also to find out what I needed to do to get my memory and speech back.

I realized that I didn't have a way to get all of my thoughts out. The right words just wouldn't come. I was told I could expect to get some or all of my memory and speech back over the next six or so months. So, with the doctors' blessings, I decided to see Brother Bob and had nine days of good care in Maine. Becca was able to get back to her life as much as she could with her dad having a stroke. I was home again Nov. 29, which leads me back to what to do with Christmas.

I had already made plans to go to New Jersey, but I started to rethink my position. Then I realized I would still have to deal with the holidays.

During my stroke, I realized I had gone days without thinking of Nancy. I was told it was only natural, but I wasn't ready for it. I didn't want to let Nancy go.

I know somehow I will get through it, but even my relationship with God isn't really there. So what can I do? The only thing I can do: I need to let God in again, to help with

See REED, B4



The Rev. Jim Edmonson of Elders Baptist Church in Sykesville, Maryland. [SALWAN GEORGES PHOTOS/THE WASHINGTON POST]

'Smack them with a hymnal'

Authorities train church leaders to respond if tragedy strikes

By Dana Hedgpeth
The Washington Post

WESTMINSTER, Md. — A Maryland sheriff reached out to a few churches to gauge interest in a training session on how to react if a mass gunman entered their house of worship.

Sixty people signed up, but on the day of the training, 120 attended in the standing-room-only basement of a sheriff's office training facility about 60 miles north of Washington. The training wasn't new, but after shootings at a church in Charleston, South Carolina, a mosque in Quebec City and last month at a Texas church, officials are seeing a heightened concern for safety at places of worship — a place that usually brings a sense of comfort and peace for congregants.

Margaret Blye, 77, said she came to the training out of a sense of fear after a gunman fatally shot 26 people on a Sunday morning at a rural Texas church.

"We're scared," said Blye, who attends Millers United Methodist Church

in Manchester, Maryland. "You're sitting in church on Sundays thinking, anyone could come right in the door and do what he did to all those nice people and children."

Law enforcement agencies have long offered similar trainings to hospitals, schools, businesses and community groups. Now more police departments, including those in Montgomery and Queen Anne's counties in Maryland, and Prince William County, Virginia, are starting to offer additional sessions geared to churches. A program in Prince William is called "Worship Watch."

Most of the program's focus is on teaching people to think about three possible actions to take — run, hide or fight — in active-shooter scenarios. Previously, law enforcement typically advised those involved to stay put, not take action and call 911.

Many officials now encourage people to think about how they would react

See LEADERS, B4



Leaders of churches and other members attend the Carroll County Public Safety Training Center in Westminster, Maryland.



Dan Schaefer of Mount Airy Bible Church, center, listens to Sgt. Michael Zepp speak during the safety training for church leaders at the Carroll County Public Safety Training Center in Westminster, Maryland.

CALENDAR

SATURDAY

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION:

At 5 p.m. at Umatilla Adventist Church, 1400 N. Central Ave. With performing artists and light refreshments. Free admission. Call 352-617-4636 for information.

CHRISTMAS PRESENCE:

At 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church of Tavares, 600 W. lanthe St. A Christmas musical. Free but required ticket may be obtained by calling church office at 352-343-2761.

SHABBAT SERVICES:

At 10 a.m. every Saturday at the Chabad House — Center for Jewish Life and Learning, 13030 County Road 103 in Oxford. Call 352-330-4466 or go to ourchabad.org.

A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER:

At 6 p.m. at Impacting Word Family Worship Center, 746 E. 5th Ave. in Mount Dora.

The Way Entertainment Group presents A Powerful Story of Forgiveness. Cost is \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. Call 407-989-1771 for information.

CONCERT: At 6:30 p.m. at Catfish Johnny's Restaurant, 2396 N. County Road 470 in Lake Panasoffkee. Knights of Columbus Council 12544. Featuring Audience of One from Cavalry Baptist Church. Cost is \$8. Call

440-488-0250 for tickets and information.

SUNDAY

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP: From 3 to 5 p.m. every Sunday at First Presbyterian Eustis, 117 S. Center St. To help people face challenges and rebuild their lives. Go to fpceustis.com.

CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE: At 6:30 p.m. at First United Methodist Church of Clermont, 950 7th St. A Night of Hope, for those who may be struggling or grieving. Childcare provided for newborns to 5th grade. Go to FUMC-Clermont.org or call 352-394-2412 for information.

CHRISTMAS CANTATA: During 8 and 10 a.m. services at Oxford Assembly of God, 12114 N. US Highway 301. Come to Bethlehem. Free. Call 352-748-6124 for information.

CHRISTMAS MUSICAL: At 7 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church of Mount Dora, 222 W. 6th Ave. Everyone welcome. Free but offerings will be accepted. Call 352-383-4089 or go to fpcmt-dora.org for information.

COMMUNITY CHANUKAH PARTY:

At 5:30 p.m. at Chabad House, 13030 County Road 103 in Oxford. With Kosher Chinese buffet and Latke bar, music,

Menorah lighting, clowns and dreidel competition. Go to Our-Chabad.org or call 352-330-4466 to register.

BIBLE STUDY AND FELLOWSHIP: At 10 a.m. the first and third Sunday of the month at the home of Joe Tassell, Pastor of Mercy Church in Mount Dora. Go to mercychurchfl.org.

CHANUKAH CELEBRATION: At 2 p.m. at Congregation Beth Shalom Synagogue, 315 N. 13th St. in Leesburg. With games, traditional foods, Menorah lighting and singalong. Go to bethsholomflorida.org for reservation form. Call 352-326-3692 for information.

MONDAY

GRIEF SHARE: At 3:30 p.m. every Monday at First United Methodist Church of Tavares, 600 W. lanthe St. For those grieving the loss of a loved one. Cost is \$15 for workbook. Call Betty at 352-308-8229 to register.

TOASTMASTERS MEETING: From 7 to 8:30 p.m. every Monday at FaithPoint Church, 290 Citrus Tower Blvd., Suite 200 in Clermont. Call 352-234-6495.

TUESDAY

CHRISTMAS CONCERT: At 7

p.m. at Calvary Baptist Church, 3740 Eagles Nest Road in Fruitland Park. Old Time Southern Gospel with Troy and Tammy Burns. Love offering will be taken. Call 352-787-7673 for information.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE: At 2 p.m. at Tri-County Unitarian Universalists, 7280 SE 135th St. in Summerfield. To help those who have suffered a loss deal with sadness during the Christmas season. Open to everyone. Call 352-408-4920 for information.

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MEETING: At 7 p.m. the third Tuesday of every month at Trinity Lutheran Church, 17330 US Highway 27 in Summerfield. Nonprofit organization that provides support for families grieving from the death of a child. Central Florida Chapter. Email tcarlyon@aol.com for information.

WEDNESDAY

YOGA THERAPY CHURCH: At 11 a.m. every Wednesday at Wildwood United Methodist Church, 300 Mason St. Amrit Yoga Therapy and Christian Scripture. Call 352-203-7258.

See EVENTS, B4

FATHER

From Page B1

in Stowe, about 35 east of Burlington. Purple Hearts Reunited immediately began working on the ceremony so the medal could be returned to Broaderick before he heads south for the winter.

LEADERS

From Page B3

before an incident happens. The change, security experts said, is a result of law enforcement realizing situations unfold so quickly that people need tools to react. In most places of worship, people have their backs to doors and wouldn't see a gunman approaching.

"Whether it's a bike path, schools, movie theater or a church, these soft targets are more difficult to protect, and it has an impact on Americans' freedoms to go to public places," said Chuck Wexler, head of the Police Executive Research Forum, a policing policy think tank. "People feel more vulnerable."

Wexler compared the current safety training in churches to that of the 1950s. Back then, he said, "we were training people to hide in shelters if there were bombs. Now people are being trained on how to deal with mass murderers, even in churches."

At the recent two-hour training offered by the Carroll County Sheriff's Office, officials gave tips to the audience, which included organ players, pastors, clergy, choir directors, ushers, church trustees and secretaries, along with Sunday school teachers.

If a gunman enters a church, they were told to throw a barrage of hymnals at him or stab him in the shin with a letter opener. Those little pencils in the back of each pew? Use them to stab

REED

From Page B3

Nancy, to help with me. Lord that is my prayer. And I know you will hear it.

Rick Reed is a columnist for the Daily Commercial. Email him at ricoh007@aol.com.

"I realize I'm asking people who preach compassion, love and peace to pick up a pen and try to stop a shooter if you have the opportunity."

Sgt. Michael Zepp, who led the training and oversees the sheriff's SWAT team and major crimes unit

the gunman in the neck.

"I realize I'm asking people who preach compassion, love and peace to pick up a pen and try to stop a shooter if you have the opportunity," said Sgt. Michael Zepp, who led the training and oversees the sheriff's SWAT team and major crimes unit.

But, he said, it's the reality of the times.

"You can be a saint, and you can be a sinner," he said.

To be sure, Zepp said while some of the tips might sound trivial, they should be thought of as an interruption. Throwing a hymnal at a shooter, he said, "may not stop him but it may limit the casualties, and it's better than sitting there waiting to get killed."

Carroll County Sheriff James T. DeWees said he decided to expand the training because church leaders feel an obligation to protect their congregants.

"You always think of a church or place of worship as a spot where people can go and enjoy what they're there to do — pray and worship," DeWees said. "But that's changed."

"It's depressing, but there is no place that is off-limits, even churches."

EVENTS

From Page B3

THURSDAY

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION GROUP: At 1 p.m. at Sumter County Administration and Library Building, 7375 Powell Road in Wildwood. With Rabbi Karen Allen of Congregation Beth Sholom in Leesburg. Informal discussion on topics of contemporary Jewish interest. Go to bethsholomflorida.org or call 352-326-3692.

FRIDAY

SHEAR LOVE AT SOUL SALON: From 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. every Friday at Wildwood United Methodist Church, 300 Mason St.

Pastor and cosmetologist Krista Olson is offering care for the community. Donations suggested but not mandatory. Wash hair beforehand and bring Bible. Call 352-203-7258.

MOVIE NIGHT: At 6 p.m. at Fairway Christian Church, 251 Avenida Los Angeles in The Villages. Showing of Christmas for a Dollar. Free. Guests welcome. With snacks. Call 352-259-9305 for information.

SATURDAY, DEC. 23

PAWS OF PRAISE: At 9:30 a.m. every second and fourth Saturday at Bark Park, 6085 County Road 44 in Wildwood. Community gathering for humans and canine companions. Contact Michael Beck at 352-203-7258.

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE: At 1 p.m. at Congregation Beth Sholom Synagogue, 315 N.

13th St. in Leesburg. A Kiddush will follow the service. Go to bethsholomflorida.org or call 352-326-3692.

SUNDAY, DEC. 24

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE: At 11 a.m. at Mt Olive AME Church, 9826 County Road 44 in Leesburg. With music, readings and message. Call 352-323-9355 for information.

UNDER THE STARS CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE: From 6 to 8 p.m. at Revolution Church, 10837 US Highway 441 in Leesburg. Three local churches come together. With music and food. Call 352-321-0256 for information.

CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICES: At 9:30 and 11 a.m. and 3, 6 and 11 p.m. at First United Methodist Church of Clermont, 950 7th St. Go to FUMC-Clermont.org or call 352-394-2412 for information.

CALENDAR

From Page B1

SUNDAY

BREAKFAST BUFFET: From 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. every Sunday at Amvets Post 1992, 32201 Amvets Way in Mount Dora. With biscuits and gravy, bacon, sausage, eggs and pancakes. Cost is \$6.50. Free to first responders with ID and kids under 6. Call 352-483-3327.

WINGS AND KARAOKE: At 2 p.m. every Sunday at AMVETS Post 2006, 500 N. Canal St. in Leesburg. Nonmembers must be signed in by a member of the post. Call 352-323-8750, email amvetspost2006@gmail.com or go to amvets2006.com.

BAKE SALE FOR CHARITY: From 1 to 7 p.m. the third Sunday of the month at AMVETS Post 2006, 500 N. Canal St. in Leesburg. Check time before heading over. Call 352-323-8750, email veteransinfoandevents@gmail.com or go to amvets2006.com.

MONDAY

CHRISTMAS PARTY: At 11:30 a.m. Tri-County Women Veterans. Call Sue Roper at 757-576-9688 or email usnodu@aol.com for location and details.

CARE PACKAGES FOR TROOPS: From 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. every Monday at AMVETS Post 2006, 500 N. Canal St. in Leesburg. Drop off and label "care package for our troops." Call 352-430-4355 or email veteransinfoandevents@gmail.com.

CHICKEN WINGS, PIZZA AND CORNHOLE: At 5 p.m. every Monday at Amvets Post 1992, 32201 Amvets Way in Mount Dora. Nonmembers must be signed in by a member of the post. Go to amvetspost1992.org.

TUESDAY

BINGO: At 1:01 p.m. every Tuesday at Amvets Post 1992, 32201 Amvets Way in Mount Dora. Nonmembers must be signed in by a member of the post. Go to amvetspost1992.org.

TACO TUESDAY: At 5 p.m. every Tuesday at AMVETS Post 2006, 500 N. Canal St. in Leesburg. Nonmembers must be signed in by a member of the post. Call 352-323-8750, email amvetspost2006@gmail.com or go to amvets2006.com.

WEDNESDAY

BINGO: From 6 to 8 p.m. every Wednesday at AMVETS Post 2006, 500 N. Canal St. in Leesburg. Sign in at the door. Connect with members and see what the post is all about. Call 352-323-8750,

and ask for an AMVET officer or auxiliary officer.

WACKY WEDNESDAY: From 4 to 7 p.m. every Wednesday at Amvets Post 1992, 32201 Amvets Way in Mount Dora. Nonmembers must be signed in by a member of the post. Go to amvetspost1992.org.

SUBMARINE VETERANS MEETING: At 1 p.m. the third Wednesday of the month in the grand hall at American Legion Post 347, 699 W. Lady Lake Blvd in Lady Lake. Call 352-461-1690.

THURSDAY

AMERICAN LEGION POST 330 MEETING: At 7 p.m. every third Thursday of the month at Mid-Florida Lakes, 200 Forest Drive in Leesburg. Call 352-217-2757.

FRIDAY

DINNER AND ENTERTAINMENT: At 5 p.m. every Friday at Amvets Post 1992, 32201 Amvets Way in Mount Dora. Nonmembers must be signed in by a member of the post. Go to amvetspost1992.org.

FRIDAY FISH FRY: From 5 to 7 p.m. every Friday at AMVETS Post 2006, 500 N. Canal St. in Leesburg. Non-members must sign in with a sponsor. Wear red to honor those deployed. Call Post Commander or Vice at 352-323-8750, email veteransinfoandevents@gmail.com or go to amvets2006.com.

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SPORTS

Paul Jenkins, Sports editor
352-365-8204
paul.jenkins@dailycommercial.com



FOOTBALL C3

**BORTLES
FINALLY
GETS KEYS
TO OFFENSE**

UF playing for national title

Gators take on Nebraska in volleyball final

By Dave Skretta
The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — There is very little these days that can dampen the mood of Florida coach Mary Wise, whose Gators knocked off reigning national champion Stanford in the NCAA volleyball semifinals.

Not the daunting challenge of now facing Nebraska, a four-time champion. Or knowing that the Huskers have won 19 straight matches, including a semifinal victory over top-seeded

Penn State. Or the pressure that her Gators face trying to win their first championship after eight semifinal appearances.

Wise even managed to put a positive spin on playing at Sprint Center in downtown Kansas City, where thousands of Nebraska fans made the short drive south to paint the building red Thursday night.

“Red and loud,” she replied, when ask what she expects for Saturday’s 9 p.m. championship match. “This is so good for women’s volleyball. Actually,

See UF, C3



Florida players celebrate a point during a game against Stanford during the NCAA Division I volleyball semifinal round Thursday in Kansas City, Mo. Florida won the match in five sets. [AP PHOTO / CHARLIE RIEDEL]

DAILY COMMERCIAL ALL-AREA DEFENSE



Mount Dora Christian Academy's Jesiah Pierre is the Daily Commercial's All-Area Defensive Player of the Year. [PAUL RYAN /CORRESPONDENT]

A dynamic game changer

MDCA's Pierre is All-Area Defensive Player of Year

By Frank Jolley
frank.jolley@dailycommercial.com

MOUNT DORA — Football doesn't come easy to Jesiah Pierre.

He just makes it look that way.

The 6-foot-3, 215-pound linebacker/running back at Mount Dora Christian Academy has played a key role in transforming the Bulldogs into one of the top teams in the Sunshine State Athletic Conference. Despite playing against offenses that often ran away from him, Pierre still managed to make 81 solo tackles and was a devastating short-yardage back with 428 yards and seven touchdowns.

For his prowess and his role in leading MDCA to an undefeated regular season and the second round of the SSAC playoffs, Pierre is the Daily Commercial's All-Area Defensive Player of the Year.

“This is an honor I'm going to share with my family, my teammates, coaches and my school,” Pierre said. “I've

See PIERRE, C3

Daily Commercial All-Area Team

**DEFENSE
Player of the Year**
Jesiah Pierre, Mount Dora Christian Academy

**FIRST TEAM
Defensive Line**
Jack Hopkins, Eustis
Hank Matthew, South Lake
Garrison Corbin, Wildwood
Elijah Rubin, East Ridge
Linebacker
Jesiah Pierre, MDCA
Patrick Horan, Eustis
Trace Andrews, Umatilla
Defensive Backs
Enrique Johnson, Eustis
Tommy Jeckovich, Mount Dora
Deontae Grant, South Sumter
Kenan Johnson, Lake Minneola

**SECOND TEAM
Defensive Line**
Tyree Bryant, Wildwood
Ben Reed, South Lake
Mac Cobb, Lake Minneola
Troy Haynes, Leesburg

“This is an honor I'm going to share with my family, my teammates, coaches and my school.”

Jesiah Pierre, Mount Dora Christian Academy linebacker/running back

Linebacker
Andy Thurston, East Ridge
Nick Gilchrist, Eustis
Sebastian Rolon, MDCA
Defensive Back
Tyler Smith, Lake Minneola
James Tharp, MDCA
Rashon Scott, Leesburg
Zion Waller, East Ridge

Honorable Mention
Zaylen Powell, East Ridge;
George Karapiperis, Mount Dora;
Kanyon Walker, First Academy of Leesburg;
Jacob LaCourse, The Villages;
Brandon Vilassaint, East Ridge;
“Pop” Williams, Lake Minneola;
Sam Brooks, MDCA;
Deon Mensah, Leesburg;
Ryan Boval, South Lake;
Stephone Atkinson, Lake Minneola;
Cameron Hudson, South Sumter,
Ricky Tenorio, South Sumter;
Tommy Lea, First Academy of Leesburg;
Taylor Von Maxey, Tavares.

Bowls are home sweet home for some teams

By Tim Reynolds
The Associated Press

BOCA RATON — Late Friday afternoon, Florida Atlantic loaded up its luggage and headed south to the hotel that will house the Conference USA champions for their bowl-game preparations.

It was a 4-mile drive.

The comforts of home await the Owls this weekend as they get ready to play in the Boca Raton Bowl, and they're hardly the only team in America that won't be seeing a new part of the country as part of the post-season perk package. FAU, Miami, Navy and Memphis are playing bowl games on their home fields, and five other teams — six if Georgia makes the College Football Playoff title game — will play bowls in their home states.

“A chance to stay home is really special, basically to have another home game,” said FAU coach Lane Kiffin, whose Owls will essentially “host” Akron in the Boca Raton Bowl. “From that advantage, it's really neat. Our players obviously at first were like, ‘Well, we don't get to go anywhere.’ But then when they really looked at it, they realize, ‘Hey, we're honored because we're going to the best bowl that there is for our conference.’”

The Boca Raton Bowl is Tuesday, the first of the four de facto home games for some teams in this post-season. Navy is remaining in Annapolis, Maryland, for its bowl, the Dec. 28 Military Bowl against Virginia. Miami is headed to the Orange Bowl on Dec. 30, where Wisconsin awaits. And Memphis is off to the Liberty Bowl, set to meet Iowa State on Dec. 30.

Memphis had hopes of getting into a New Year's Six bowl. When that didn't happen after a loss to UCF in the American Athletic Conference title game, wide receiver Anthony Miller said going to the Liberty Bowl “was the

next-best thing.”

“I don't mind,” Miller said. “I just love the energy of being at the Liberty Bowl. I love being in Memphis. I love the fans. It's my senior year. It's my last year. I don't think there's a better way that I could end it.”

FAU hasn't been to a bowl game since 2008, so its upperclassmen all will attest that being home for a bowl obviously is better than being at home with no games left to play. Navy had prearranged many of its bowl sites for the last decade or so, though now falls into the AAC mix — and the Military Bowl was thrilled to pit the Midshipmen against the Cavaliers, given how the campuses are roughly 150 miles apart.

Miami ended a decade-long bowl-victory drought last season, rose to No. 2 in the national rankings this season before dropping its final two games and has revealed in how that success re-energized the fan base. The Hurricanes fell out of CFP contention with losses to Pittsburgh and Clemson, but one last night at Hard Rock Stadium is more than a consolation prize for their seniors.

“It's going to be somewhat of a home game for us,” coach Mark Richt said. “It is our home stadium. Our fans have been phenomenal all year long. It's been one of the best turnouts of fans, probably in the history of Hard Rock Stadium. ... Even though we are home, in our home city, we know we're going to get a chance to do some things we don't normally get to do that the bowl will provide for us.”

Florida International, SMU, Texas, TCU and Wake Forest are also playing in-state bowls. SMU is going only 28 miles to Frisco, Texas, for its game, Wake Forest is going 80 miles to Charlotte, and Texas coach Tom Herman is going back to Houston

See BOWLS, C3



FAU head coach Lane Kiffin looks over his team before the Conference USA championship game against North Texas on Dec. 2 in Boca Raton, Fla. FAU, Miami, Navy and Memphis are playing their bowl games on their home fields. [JIM RASSOL / SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL VIA AP, FILE]

SCOREBOARD

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SPORTS RESULTS

Schools or coaches can report game results by calling 352-365-8204. Submissions also can be emailed to sports@dailyccommercial.com. Results submitted after 9:30 p.m. may not appear in the next day's edition of the Daily Commercial.

SPORTS ON TV

BOXING
9:40 p.m.
HBO — Billy Joe Saunders vs. David Lemieux, 12, for Saunders' WBO middleweight title;
Antoine Douglas vs. Gary O'Sullivan, for the WBO Intercontinental middleweight title; Cletus Seldin vs. Yves Ulysses Jr., junior welterweights

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Noon
BTN — Seton Hall at Rutgers
CBSSN — Miami at George Washington
ESPN2 — Memphis vs. Louisville, at New York
ESPN — Michigan vs. Detroit, at Little Caesars Arena
FOX — Butler vs. Purdue, at Indianapolis
FOX — Northwestern at DePaul
CBS — Syracuse at Georgetown
SEC — Stephen F. Austin at LSU
BTN — Drake vs. Iowa, at Des Moines, Iowa
ESPN2 — Virginia Tech at Kentucky
ESPNU — Michigan St. vs. Oakland, at Detroit
FS1 — Northwestern at DePaul
FS2 — Oklahoma St. vs. Florida St., at Sunrise
FSN — East Tennessee St. at Xavier
2:30 p.m.
FOX — Notre Dame vs. Indiana, at Indianapolis
3 p.m.
NBCSN — Georgia at UMass
3:30 p.m.
CBS — Cincinnati at UCLA
SEC — Illinois St. at Mississippi
4 p.m.
ESPN2 — Oklahoma vs. Wichita St., at INTRUST Bank Arena
4:30 p.m.
FS2 — Clemson vs. Florida, at Sunrise
6 p.m.
BTN — Appalachian St. at Ohio St.
CBSSN — Oregon at Fresno St.
SEC — Middle Tennessee vs. Auburn, at Birmingham, Ala.
8 p.m.
BTN — New Mexico St. vs. Illinois, at Chicago
CBSSN — Arizona at New Mexico
FS1 — Kansas at Nebraska
8:30 p.m.
SEC — North Florida at Missouri
ESPN2 — Utah at BYU

COLLEGE FOOTBALL
Noon
ABC — Celebration Bowl, NC A&T vs. Grambling St., at Atlanta
1 p.m.
ESPN — New Orleans Bowl, Troy vs. North Texas, at New Orleans
2:30 p.m.
CBSSN — Cure Bowl, Georgia St. vs. W. Kentucky, at Orlando
3:30 p.m.
ABC — Las Vegas Bowl, Boise St. vs. Oregon, at Las Vegas
4:30 p.m.
ESPN — New Mexico Bowl, Marshall vs. Colorado St., at Albuquerque, N.M.
ESPNU — NCAA FCS playoffs, second semifinal, South Dakota St. at James Madison
6 p.m.

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL
9 p.m.
ESPN2 — Women, NCAA Tournament, championship, Nebraska vs. Florida, at Kansas City, Mo.

GOLF
11 a.m.
GOLF — PNC Father/Son Challenge, first round, at Orlando, Fla.
4 p.m.
NBC — PNC Father/Son Challenge, first round, at Orlando, Fla.
10 p.m.
GOLF — Asian Tour, Indonesian Masters, final round, at Jakarta, Indonesia

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS
5 p.m.
FS1 — UFC Fight Night, prelims, at Winnipeg, Manitoba
8 p.m.
FOX — UFC Fight Night, Robbie Lawler vs. Rafael Dos Anjos, at Winnipeg, Manitoba

NBA BASKETBALL
7:30 p.m.
NBA — Oklahoma City at New York
NBA — Oklahoma City at New York
7:30 p.m.
NBA — Oklahoma City at New York

NFL FOOTBALL
4:30 p.m.
NFL — Chicago at Detroit
8:25 p.m.
NFL — L.A. Chargers at Kansas City

NHL HOCKEY
7 p.m.
NBCSN — NHL 100 Classic, Montreal vs. Ottawa
9 p.m.
SUN — Tampa Bay at Colorado

SKIING
5 p.m.
NBCSN — FIS World Cup, Women's Downhill, at Val d'Isere, France (same-day tape)
6 p.m.
NBCSN — FIS World Cup, Men's Downhill, at Val Gardena, Italy (same-day tape)

SOCCER
7:30 a.m.
NBCSN — Premier League, Leicester City vs. Crystal City
9:30 a.m.
FS1 — Bundesliga, Stuttgart vs. Bayern Munich
FS2 — Bundesliga, Eintracht Frankfurt vs. Schalke
10 a.m.
CNBC — Premier League, Arsenal vs. Newcastle
NBCSN — Premier League, Chelsea vs. Southampton
12:30 p.m.
NBC — Premier League, Manchester City vs. Tottenham

WINTER SPORTS
2:30 p.m.
NBC — U.S. Olympic Team Trials: Speed Skating, short track (men's & women's 500m), at Kearns, Utah
10 p.m.
NBCSN — U.S. Olympic Trials: Curling, semifinals, at Blaine, Minn.

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL All times Eastern
AMERICAN CONFERENCE
EAST W L T Pct PF PA
New England 10 3 0 .769 368 250
Buffalo 7 6 0 .538 240 290
Miami 6 7 0 .462 236 318
N.Y. Jets 5 8 0 .385 266 311
SOUTH W L T Pct PF PA
Jacksonville 9 4 0 .692 329 202
Tennessee 8 5 0 .615 273 294
Houston 4 9 0 .308 312 335
Indianapolis 3 11 0 .214 225 368
NORTH W L T Pct PF PA
Pittsburgh 11 2 0 .846 320 251
Baltimore 7 6 0 .538 318 246
Cincinnati 5 8 0 .385 226 271
Cleveland 0 13 0 .000 197 335
WEST W L T Pct PF PA
Kansas City 7 6 0 .538 329 289
L.A. Chargers 7 6 0 .538 298 225
Oakland 6 7 0 .462 264 304
Denver 5 9 0 .357 254 328

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
EAST W L T Pct PF PA
Philadelphia 11 2 0 .846 404 250
Dallas 7 6 0 .538 316 294
Washington 5 8 0 .385 285 344
N.Y. Giants 2 11 0 .154 199 321
SOUTH W L T Pct PF PA
New Orleans 9 4 0 .692 370 263
Carolina 9 4 0 .692 300 262
Atlanta 8 5 0 .615 294 261
Tampa Bay 4 9 0 .308 264 312
NORTH W L T Pct PF PA
Minnesota 10 3 0 .769 309 235
Detroit 7 6 0 .538 338 329
Green Bay 7 6 0 .538 285 302
Chicago 4 9 0 .308 224 274
WEST W L T Pct PF PA
L.A. Rams 9 4 0 .692 396 265
Seattle 8 5 0 .615 314 252
Arizona 6 7 0 .462 231 317
San Francisco 3 10 0 .231 228 314
y-clinched division

WEEK 15
Thursday's Game
Denver 25, Indianapolis 13
Saturday's Games
Chicago at Detroit, 4:30 p.m.
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City, 8:25 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.
Cincinnati at Minnesota, 1 p.m.
Houston at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.
Arizona at Washington, 1 p.m.
N.Y. Jets at New Orleans, 1 p.m.
Miami at Buffalo, 1 p.m.
Green Bay at Carolina, 1 p.m.
Baltimore at Cleveland, 1 p.m.
L.A. Rams at Seattle, 4:05 p.m.
New England at Pittsburgh, 4:25 p.m.
Tennessee at San Francisco, 4:25 p.m.
Dallas at Oakland, 8:30 p.m.
Monday's Game
Atlanta at Tampa Bay, 8:30 p.m.

WEEK 16
Saturday, Dec. 23
Indianapolis at Baltimore, 4:30 p.m.
Minnesota at Green Bay, 8:30 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 24
Cleveland at Chicago, 1 p.m.
Atlanta at New Orleans, 1 p.m.
Denver at Washington, 1 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Carolina, 1 p.m.
Miami at Kansas City, 1 p.m.
L.A. Rams at Tennessee, 1 p.m.
L.A. Chargers at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.
Detroit at Cincinnati, 1 p.m.
Buffalo at New England, 1 p.m.
Jacksonville at San Francisco, 4:05 p.m.
N.Y. Giants at Arizona, 4:25 p.m.
Seattle at Dallas, 4:25 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 25
Pittsburgh at Houston, 4:30 p.m.
Oakland at Philadelphia, 8:30 p.m.

LATE THURSDAY BRONCOS 25, COLTS 13
DENVER 0 7 15 3 - 25
INDIANAPOLIS 7 3 3 0 - 13
First Quarter
Ind.—Brissett 7 run (Vinatieri kick), 8:02.
Second Quarter
Ind.—FG Vinatieri 45, 6:33.
Den.—Osweiler 18 run (McManus kick), 1:19.
Third Quarter
Ind.—FG Vinatieri 39, 9:13.
Den.—Latimer 22 pass from Osweiler (McManus kick), 4:16.
Den.—Heuerman 54 pass from Osweiler (Latimer pass from Osweiler), 2:37.
Fourth Quarter
Den.—FG McManus 40, 5:13.
A—63, 411.

First downs 23 15
Total Net Yards 462 228
Rushes-yards 45-213 22-70
Passing 249 158
Punt Returns 1-0 0-0
Kickoff Returns 1-23 0-0
Interceptions Ret. 0-0 1-25
Comp-Att-Int 17-26-1 17-30-0
Sacked-Yards Lost 3-12 1-0
Punts 1-52-0 4-41-0
Fumbles-Lost 1-0 1-0
Penalties-Yards 12-80 4-39
Time of Possession 36:51 23:09

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
RUSHING—Denver: C.Anderson 30-158, Booker 11-39, Osweiler 3-17, Janovich 1-(minus 1), Indianapolis: Gore 10-31, Brissett 5-18, Mack 6-14, Rogers 1-7.
PASSING—Denver: Siemian 5-9-1-67, Osweiler 12-17-0-194, Indianapolis: Brissett 17-30-158.
RECEIVING—Denver: Sanders 7-68, DeThomas 5-69, Latimer 3-60, Heuerman 1-54, Booker 1-10, Indianapolis: Doyle 7-47, Hilton 5-41, Gore 3-37, Travis 2-33.
MISSED FIELD GOALS—Denver: McManus 40.

PRO BASKETBALL

NBA EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division W L PCT. GB
Boston 24 6 .800 —
Toronto 18 8 .692 4
New York 15 13 .536 8
Philadelphia 14 13 .519 8½
Brooklyn 11 16 .407 11½
Southeast Division W L PCT. GB
Washington 15 13 .536 —
Miami 13 14 .481 ½
Orlando 11 18 .379 4½
Charlotte 10 17 .370 4½
Atlanta 6 22 .214 9
Central Division W L PCT. GB
Cleveland 21 8 .724 —
Milwaukee 15 11 .577 4½
Indiana 16 12 .571 4½
Detroit 15 13 .536 5½
Chicago 7 20 .259 13

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Southwest Division W L PCT. GB
Houston 22 4 .846 —
San Antonio 19 9 .679 4
New Orleans 15 14 .517 8½
Memphis 8 20 .286 15
Dallas 8 21 .276 15½
Northwest Division W L PCT. GB
Minnesota 17 12 .586 —
Denver 15 13 .536 ½
Portland 14 13 .519 2
Oklahoma City 13 14 .481 3
Utah 13 15 .464 3½
Pacific Division W L PCT. GB
Golden State 23 6 .793 —
L.A. Clippers 11 15 .423 10½
L.A. Lakers 10 17 .370 12
Sacramento 9 19 .321 13½
Phoenix 9 21 .300 14½

Thursday's Games
Detroit 105, Atlanta 91
New York 111, Brooklyn 104
Minnesota 119, Sacramento 96
Cleveland 121, L.A. Lakers 112
Golden State 112, Dallas 97
Friday's Games
Detroit at Indiana, late
L.A. Clippers at Washington, late
Miami at Charlotte, late
Oklahoma City at Philadelphia, late
Portland at Orlando, late
Brooklyn at Toronto, late
Utah at Boston, late
Atlanta at Memphis, late
Chicago at Milwaukee, late
New Orleans at Denver, late
San Antonio at Houston, late
Today's Games
Portland at Charlotte, 7 p.m.
Oklahoma City at New York, 7:30 p.m.
Utah at Cleveland, 7:30 p.m.
L.A. Clippers at Miami, 8 p.m.
Milwaukee at Houston, 8 p.m.

Phoenix at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
Dallas at San Antonio, 8:30 p.m.
Boston at Memphis, 9 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Sacramento at Toronto, 3:30 p.m.
Orlando at Detroit, 4 p.m.
Cleveland at Washington, 6 p.m.
Indiana at Brooklyn, 6 p.m.

PRO HOCKEY

NHL EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division GP W L OT Pts GF GA
Tampa Bay 31 23 6 2 48 117 75
Toronto 33 20 12 1 41 108 94
Boston 29 15 10 4 34 84 82
Montreal 32 14 14 4 32 87 100
Detroit 31 11 13 7 29 83 102
Florida 32 12 15 5 29 93 110
Ottawa 30 10 13 7 27 82 103
Buffalo 32 8 18 6 22 68 106
Metropolitan Division GP W L OT Pts GF GA
Columbus 32 20 11 1 41 94 84
Washington 33 20 12 1 41 105 96
New Jersey 31 17 9 5 39 95 94
N.Y. Islanders 32 17 12 3 37 114 111
N.Y. Rangers 31 16 12 3 35 101 92
Pittsburgh 33 16 14 3 35 95 106
Philadelphia 31 13 11 7 33 89 89
Carolina 30 12 11 7 31 83 93

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Central Division GP W L OT Pts GF GA
Nashville 31 20 7 4 44 106 85
St. Louis 33 21 10 2 44 105 84
Winnipeg 32 18 9 5 41 108 92
Minnesota 31 17 11 3 37 91 88
Dallas 32 18 13 1 37 96 92
Chicago 32 16 11 5 37 98 85
Colorado 31 15 14 2 32 96 101
Pacific Division GP W L OT Pts GF GA
Los Angeles 31 20 9 3 43 98 73
Vegas 32 20 9 2 42 107 95
San Jose 30 17 10 3 37 82 71
Calgary 32 16 13 3 35 91 99
Anaheim 32 14 11 7 35 86 92
Vancouver 32 14 14 4 32 83 97
Edmonton 32 13 17 2 28 93 105
Arizona 34 7 22 5 19 76 118

2 points for a win, 1 point for OT loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Thursday's Games
Philadelphia 2, Buffalo 1
Washington 5, Boston 3
Columbus 6, N.Y. Islanders 4
Montreal 2, New Jersey 1, OT
Chicago 5, Winnipeg 1
Anaheim 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 2, Toronto 0
Colorado 2, Florida 1
Tampa Bay 4, Arizona 1
Nashville 4, Edmonton 0
San Jose 3, Calgary 2
Vegas 2, Pittsburgh 1
Friday's Games
Dallas at New Jersey, late
Carolina at Buffalo, late
Los Angeles at N.Y. Rangers, late
Toronto at Detroit, late
San Jose at Vancouver, late
Today's Games
Edmonton at Minnesota, 2 p.m.
N.Y. Rangers at Boston, 5 p.m.
Los Angeles at N.Y. Islanders, 7 p.m.
Winnipeg at St. Louis, 7 p.m.
Montreal at Ottawa, 7 p.m.
Columbus at Carolina, 7 p.m.
Dallas at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Anaheim at Washington, 8 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Arizona, 8 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Colorado, 9 p.m.
Nashville at Calgary, 10 p.m.
Sunday's Games
St. Louis at Winnipeg, 6 p.m.
Minnesota at Chicago, 7 p.m.
Calgary at Vancouver, 8 p.m.
Florida at Vegas, 8 p.m.

AHL EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division GP W L OLSOL Pts GF GA
Providence 25 17 6 2 0 36 75 59
WB/Scranton 24 15 7 1 1 32 87 72
Charlotte 27 17 9 0 1 35 101 80
Lehigh Valley 28 16 9 1 2 35 103 96
Bridgeport 24 12 10 1 1 26 75 70
Hershey 28 12 13 0 3 27 75 92
Hartford 27 10 12 3 2 25 74 96
Springfield 29 10 18 1 0 21 80 96
North Division GP W L OLSOL Pts GF GA
Toronto 25 20 5 0 0 40 83 47
Rochester 26 15 5 3 3 36 88 76
Syracuse 25 13 9 1 2 29 82 73
Laval 27 10 11 4 2 26 82 97
Belleville 26 11 12 0 3 25 72 94
Utica 25 10 11 3 1 24 69 80
Binghamton 25 8 13 3 1 20 65 87

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Central Division GP W L OLSOL Pts GF GA
Manitoba 26 18 5 1 2 39 99 57
Rockford 26 15 10 1 0 31 85 73
Iowa 26 12 8 5 1 30 80 82
Milwaukee 24 12 11 1 0 25 67 75
Cleveland 22 8 10 2 2 20 46 68
Grand Rapids 26 10 13 0 3 23 78 87
Chicago 25 8 12 4 1 21 66 77
Pacific Division GP W L OLSOL Pts GF GA
Stockton 23 14 7 0 2 30 80 59
Tucson 22 12 7 2 1 27 72 63
Texas 27 16 10 0 1 33 82 90
San Antonio 26 14 10 2 0 30 85 81
Ontario 22 11 10 0 1 23 52 64
San Jose 22 11 10 0 1 23 58 64
San Diego 23 11 11 0 1 23 74 83
Bakersfield 23 9 11 3 1 21 61 70

2 points for a win, 1 for an OT or shootout loss; Standings determined by winning percentage (not shown) not points
Thursday's Game
San Antonio 4, Cleveland 2
Friday's Games
Providence at Syracuse, late
Binghamton at Utica, late
Manitoba at Belleville, late
Chicago at Grand Rapids, late
Bridgeport at Springfield, late
Toronto at Rochester, late
WB/Scranton at Hartford, late
Iowa at Milwaukee, late
Rockford at San Antonio, late
Stockton at Ontario, late
Today's Games
Manitoba at Toronto, 4 p.m.
Laval at Charlotte, 6 p.m.
Providence at Hershey, 7 p.m.
WB/Scranton at Bridgeport, 7 p.m.
Rochester at Utica, 7 p.m.
Milwaukee at Grand Rapids, 7 p.m.
Hartford at Springfield, 7:05 p.m.
Syracuse at Lehigh Valley, 7:05 p.m.
Belleville at Binghamton, 7:05 p.m.
Iowa at Chicago, 8 p.m.
Cleveland at Texas, 8 p.m.
Tucson at Ontario, 9 p.m.
Bakersfield at San Jose, 10 p.m.
Stockton at San Diego, 10 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Laval at Charlotte, 1 p.m.
Lehigh Valley at Bridgeport, 3 p.m.
Manitoba at Toronto, 4 p.m.
Milwaukee at Chicago, 4 p.m.
Rockford at San Antonio, 4 p.m.
Bakersfield at San Jose, 6 p.m.

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
Today
FAVORITE **OPEN TODAY** **O/U** **UNDERDOG**
at Minnesota 2 3 51½ Notre Dame
at Washington 2 3 46½ Kansas City
Sunday
Philadelphia 9 7½ 40½ at N.Y. Giants
at Carolina 2 3 47 Green Bay
at Minnesota 10 11 42 Cincinnati
at Buffalo 4 3 38½ Miami
at Jacksonville 9½ 11 38 Houston
at New Orleans 10 15½ 47½ N.Y. Jets
at Washington 6 4 41½ at Cleveland
Baltimore 6 7 40 at L.A. Rams
at Seattle 2½ 2½ 47½ L.A. Rams
New England 2½ 3 54 at Pittsburgh
at San Francisco +2½ 1½ 45½ Tennessee
Dallas 1 3 45½ at Oakland
Monday
Atlanta 3½ 6 50 at Tampa Bay
Updated odds available at Pregame.com

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
Today
FAVORITE **OPEN TODAY** **O/U** **UNDERDOG**
at Texas 10½ Louisiana Tech
at Virginia 11½ Davidson
at Toledo 4½ Wright State
at W. Kentucky 9½ Indiana State
Georgia 3½ at UMass
at Mississippi 9½ Illinois State
Cincinnati 2 at UCLA
at Wichita State 7 Oklahoma
at Rhode Island 10½ Coll. of Charleston
at California 7 Cal State-Fullerton
at Temple 14½ Drexel
at Ohio State 16 Appalachian State
at Fresno State 1 Oregon
at Auburn 3 Middle Tennessee
at Wash. State 9 IUPUI
E. Michigan 2 at Long Beach State
at FAU 5½ Arkansas State
at Dayton 3½ Georgia State
at Marshall 2 Ohio
at Arkansas 16½ Troy
Arizona 15 at New Mexico
at Saint Mary's Calif. 18 UC Irvine
at Texas Tech 26½ Rice
Kansas 11½ at Nebraska
Princeton 1 at Cal Poly
UNLV 7 at Pacific
at San Diego 10½ North Texas
at Oregon State 6½ Saint Louis
at BYU 6½ Utah
Michigan 19½ Detroit
Michigan State 17½ Oakland
Purdue 8½ Butler
Notre Dame 6½ Indiana
Florida State 6 Oklahoma State
Florida 5½ Clemson
Iowa 5½ Drake
Iowa State PK N. Iowa

NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE
Today
FAVORITE **LINE** **UNDERDOG** **LINE**
at Minnesota -120 Edmonton +110
at Boston -10 NY Rangers +110
at Ottawa -115 Montreal +105
Columbus -108 at Carolina -102
at St. Louis -117 Winnipeg -107
at Philadelphia -117 Dallas +107
at N.Y. Islanders -107 Los Angeles -107
at Washington -147 Anaheim +137
Pittsburgh -165 at Arizona +155
Tampa Bay -170 at Colorado +158
at Calgary -105 Nashville -105

COLLEGE BOWL GAMES
Today
FAVORITE **OPEN TODAY** **O/U** **UNDERDOG**
New Orleans Bowl at New Orleans
Troy 5½ 7 62½ North Texas
Cure Bowl at Orlando, Fla.
W. Kentucky 4½ 6½ 53½ Georgia State
Las Vegas Bowl at Las Vegas
Oregon 5 7 61 Boise State
New Mexico Bowl at Albuquerque, N.M.
Colorado State 5½ 3½ 58 Marshall
Camellia Bowl at Montgomery, Ala.
Arkansas State 3½ 3½ 62 Middle Tenn.
Tuesday
Boca Raton Bowl at Boca Raton, Fla.
at FAU 9½ 22½ 64½ Akron
Wednesday
Frisco Bowl at Frisco, Texas
SMU 4½ 5 70 La. Tech
Thursday, Dec. 21
Gasparilla Bowl at St. Petersburg, Fla.
Temple 7 7½ 55½ FIU
Friday, Dec. 22
Bahamas Bowl at Nassau, Bahamas
Ohio Univ. 7 7½ 55½ UAB
Famous Idaho Potato Bowl at Boise, Idaho
Wyoming PK 1 44½ Cent. Mich.
Saturday, Dec. 23
Birmingham Bowl at Birmingham, Ala.
South Florida 2½ 2½ 68 Texas Tech
Armed Forces Bowl at Fort Worth, Texas
San Diego State 6 6½ 46½ Army
Dollar General Bowl at Mobile, Ala.
Toledo 8 7½ 62 Applin State
Sunday, Dec. 24
Hawaii Bowl at Honolulu
Houston 1½ 2½ 49 Fresno State
Tuesday, Dec. 26
Heart Of Dallas Bowl at Dallas
Utah 4½ 7 57 West Virginia
Quick Lane Bowl at Detroit
Duke 2½ 5½ 47 Northern Ill.
Cactus Bowl at Phoenix
Kansas State 2½ 2 64½ UCLA
Wednesday, Dec. 27
Independence Bowl at Shreveport, La.
Florida State 14 15½ 49Southern Miss.
Pinstripe Bowl at New York
Iowa PK 3 46½ Boston Col.
Texas Bowl at Houston
Missouri +1½ 3 60½ Texas
Foster Farms Bowl at Santa Clara, Calif.
Arizona 4½ 3½ 65 Purdue
Thursday, Dec. 28
Military Bowl at Annapolis, Md.
at Navy 3½ 1½ 55 Virginia
Camping World Bowl at Orlando, Fla.
Oklahoma State 6½ 4 63 Virginia Tech
Alamo Bowl at San Antonio, Texas
Kansas Christian 2 2½ 49 Stanford
Holiday Bowl at San Diego
Washington State 4½ 2 45 Mich. State
Friday, Dec. 29
Belk Bowl at Charlotte, N.C.
Wake Forest 2½ 3 65 Texas A&M
Sun Bowl at El Paso, Texas
NC State 5 6½ 59½ Arizona State
Music City Bowl at Nashville, Tenn.
Northwestern 6 7 51 Kentucky
Arizona Bowl at Tucson, Ariz.
Utah State 2½ 4 62 N.M. State
Cotton Bowl at Arlington, Texas
Ohio State 6 7½ 64½ Southern Cal
Saturday, Dec. 30
Taxislayer Bowl at Jacksonville, Fla.
Louisville 4½ 6½ 63 Miss. State
Liberty Bowl at Memphis, Tenn.
at Memphis 3 3½ 65½ Iowa State
Fiesta Bowl at Glendale, Ariz.
Penn State 3 2 55 Washington
Orange Bowl at Miami
Wisconsin 6 6½ 45 at Miami
Monday, Jan. 1
Outback Bowl at Tampa, Fla.
Michigan 7½ 7½ 42½ S. Carolina
Peach Bowl at Atlanta
Auburn 8½ 9½ 66½ Central Florida
Citrus Bowl at Orlando, Fla.
Louisiana State 1 3 51½ Notre Dame
COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS
Jan. 1
Rose Bowl at Pasadena, Calif.
Georgia +3 2 60 Oklahoma
Sugar Bowl at New Orleans
Alabama 2 3 47 Clemson

BASEBALL
American League
HOUSTON ASTROS — Designated OF Preston Tucker for assignment. Agreed to terms with RHP Hector Rondón on a two-year contract.
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Agreed to terms with INF Zack Cozart on a three-year contract.
MINNESOTA TWINS — Agreed to terms with RHP Fernando Rodney on a one-year contract and CF Wynston Sawyer, 2B Taylor Featherston and OF James Ramsey on minor league contracts.
TAMPA BAY RAYS — Agreed to terms with OF Brandon Snyder, LHPs Jonny Venters and Vidal Nuno and RHPs Colton Murray, Cody Hall and Ruben Alaniz on minor league contracts.
TEXAS RANGERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Chris Martin on a two-year contract.
National League
ATLANTA BRAVES — Named Nick Jensen trainer of Gwinnett (IL); Chris Maloney manager, Dennis Lewallyn pitching coach and Carlos Mendez hitting coach of Mississippi (SL); Luis Salazar manager, Mike Maroth pitching coach and Rene Tosoni hitting coach of Florida (FL); Ralph Wheeler manager and Vic Scarpace trainer of Rome (SAL); Barrett Kleinkecht manager and Drew Garner trainer of Danville (Appalachian); and Nestor Perez manager and Eric Hryciuk trainer of the GCL Braves.
COLORADO ROCKIES — Agreed to terms with LHP Jake McGee and RHP Bryan Shaw on three-year contracts.
MIAMI MARLINS — Designated LHP Hunter

Cervenka for assignment.
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Traded RHP Nick Burdi to Pittsburgh for future considerations. Agreed to terms with RHPs Pat Neshek and Tommy Hunter on two-year contracts.
SAN DIEGO PADRES — Traded RHP Enyel De Los Santos to Philadelphia for INF Freddy Galvis. Designated RHP Jose Ruiz for assignment.
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Named Alan Zinter assistant director of player development/offense, Matt Buschmann assistant director of player development/run prevention, Dave Hansen minor league hitting coordinator, Julio Rangel minor league pitching coordinator, Justin Lehr minor league rehab pitching coordinator and Dan O'Brien minor league development coach.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
NBA — Named Monty McCutchen vice president/head of referee development and training.

FOOTBALL
National Football League
NFL — Fined New Orleans coach Sean Payton, Jacksonville offensive line coach Pat Flaherty and Jacksonville wide receivers coach Keenan McCardell \$10,000 for improperly going on the field during last week's game.
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Placed RB Adrian Peterson on injured reserve. Activated LS Aaron Brewer from injured reserve. Claimed CB C.J. Goodwin off waivers from Atlanta.
BUFFALO BILLS — Placed OT Cordy Glenn on injured reserve.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Released OL Andrew Wyllie from the practice squad. Signed DL T.Y. McGill to the practice squad.
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Placed C Mitch Morse on injured reserve. Signed CB Keith Reaser from the practice squad.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Placed TE Blake Bell on injured reserve. Signed TE Kyle Carter. Signed S Jack Tocho to the practice squad.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League
NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Loaned F Josh Ho-Sang to Bridgeport (AHL).
ST. LOUIS BLUES — Recalled F Samuel Blais from San Antonio (AHL).
American Hockey League
AHL — Suspended Binghamton D Yaroslav Dyblenko two games and Stockton D Oleg Yevenko one game.
MILLWAUKEE ADMIRALS — Released F Phil Lane from his professional tryout agreement and returned him to Atlanta (ECHL).

OLYMPIC SPORTS
USA — Announced American long jumper Tori Polk accepted a two-year sanction for a non-analytical anti-doping rule violation involving her possession of prohibited substances.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer
COLORADO RAPIDS — Traded M Mike Grella to Columbus for a 2019 second-round draft pick.
FC DALLAS — Signed D Maynor Figueroa to a one-year contract.
LOS ANGELES FC — Acquired F Diego Rossi by transfer from Penarol (Primera Division-Uruguay).
SPORTING KANSAS CITY — Acquired M Yohan Crozet by transfer from Mechelen (Jupiler Pro League-Belgium).
National Women's Soccer League
WASHINGTON SPIRIT — Named Tom Torres assistant coach.

COLLEGES
NCAA — Named Lynn Holzman vice president of women's basketball. Placed North Colorado's men's basketball program on three years' probation for after finding academic fraud and recruiting violations by ex-coach B.J. Hill and some of his assistants.
HOLY CROSS — Named Bob Chesney football coach.
MISSOURI — Named Vernon Hargreaves inside linebackers coach.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

MEN'S BASKETBALL
THE AP TOP 25 POLL
The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records through Dec. 10, total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and last week's ranking:

	RECORD	PTS	LW

Jaguars let Blake Bortles change some plays – at last

The Associated Press

It took 13 games for the Jacksonville Jaguars to give quarterback Blake Bortles full control of the offense.

Offensive coordinator Nathaniel Hackett said this week that Bortles was allowed to audible from running plays to passing plays for the first time all season against Seattle. Hackett praised Bortles for switching to a pass on a second-and-6 play early in the 30-24 victory. Bortles found rookie Keelan Cole on a crossing route for a 10-yard gain that helped set up a field goal.

“He knows why the play is being called now,” said Hackett, in his first full season as the team’s OC. “It’s not just going out there and running a play and just kind of being a robot. He’s trying to understand and figure out what we’re trying to accomplish. ... Blake is starting to own the offense, and that’s what you want from him.”

Although the Jaguars (9-4) clearly had reservations about Bortles’ ability to get the team into better plays early in the season, they are trusting him more now. And for good reason: Bortles is the NFL’s highest-rated passer in December, completing 71 percent of his passes the last two games for 577 yards, with four touchdowns, no interceptions and no sacks.

And now he’s getting more control.

“We started giving him the green light because obviously people are trying to stop the run and put a lot of people in there,” Hackett said. “It’s like, ‘OK, Blake, you’ve got to start picking it up.’”

THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH AARON: Aaron Rodgers is such a big fan of “Star Wars” that the avatar for his Instagram account is an

illustration of the Green Bay Packers quarterback dressed as a “Jedi.”

But Rodgers probably won’t have time to catch the latest installment of the blockbuster series when “The Last Jedi” opens this weekend in theaters. Preparing for the Carolina Panthers takes precedence as he gets ready for his first action since missing seven games with a collarbone injury.

“This week is a little busy,” Rodgers said when asked Wednesday if he would see the movie. “I am excited, I’m a big Star Wars fan. I actually got my — I think I’m wearing a Star Wars shirt today. I am, you’ve got to take my word for it, but it’s a Star Wars shirt.”

He was spotted in the locker room later wearing a retro-looking Star Wars shirt after cleaning up following practice.

OH, SNAP!: When New York Jets long snapper Thomas Hennessy went down with a head injury at Denver last Sunday, special teams coordinator Brant Boyer turned to tight end Eric Tomlinson — who had never snapped in a game at any level in his life.

“It’s funny because when I walked up to him I said, ‘Hey, man, you’re up,’” Boyer recalled. “And typical Tomlinson, he looked up at me and said, ‘I got you Boyer,’ and gives me knuckles. He’s that kind of guy, though, so he was great.”

The 25-year-old Tomlinson ended up launching seven snaps to punter Lachlan Edwards in the Jets’ 23-0 loss to the Broncos.

“There were some that were iffy,” Tomlinson said with a big grin. “They were all right.”

The Jets have been working a few days a week with Tomlinson since last season after Boyer asked if anyone wanted to give it a shot as

the emergency snapper. And, aside from a few balls that were a bit high or a little low, all of Tomlinson’s snaps reached Edwards.

“Lach did a great job with that,” Tomlinson said. “I wasn’t even worried about protection. I was just worried about getting the snap to him. Lach did a good job, and the whole punt team, of protecting and Lach catching them to get the ball off.”

Boyer was impressed by how quickly Tomlinson adjusted to his new role.

“Seven punts with a backup long snapper, I don’t know how often that’s been done,” Boyer said. “Give Tomlinson the Purple Heart of the week. He did a hell of a job. It was awesome to see.”

Hennessy was limited in practice on Wednesday and Thursday, but was expected to be available for the Jets’ game at New Orleans on Sunday. That means Tomlinson can go back to his usual job of blocking defenders and catching passes.

“It gave me a good perspective of what they go through,” Tomlinson said of long snappers. “It was fun, though. It was good to try a little something different.”

EVERYBODY CAN VOTE: The Dolphins have every player on the roster registered as a voter. The initiative started in June when the Dolphins hosted Martin Luther King III and Bill Wachtel of the Drum Major Institute at practice to start the voter registration process.

Such voter registration success comes on the heels of an announcement by team owner Stephen Ross and Dolphins players of the creation of a yearly fund for advocacy and social justice programs. The fund will provide financial support and amplify programs centered on community engagement, education and justice reform.

BOWLS

From Page C1

— his former home.

“I think it’s neat,” Herman said. “It’s a city that my family and myself have called home on a couple of different occasions, at Rice (and) at the University of Houston. ... It is a city that I have a lot of friends and people that I know back there, and I’m excited to bring our team out to Houston to play in front of them.”

The last time Wake Forest went to Charlotte for a bowl game, the Demon Deacons brought 30,000 fans.

“We expect that number to

increase,” athletic director Ron Wellman said.

Miami isn’t staying at “home,” per se. The Hurricanes are moving to a resort in Broward County on Christmas night for bowl week, part of the Orange Bowl’s contractual obligations. And even though Wisconsin and Akron both know they’re playing road games, leaving winter behind for a few days seems like a fair trade-off.

Kiffin doesn’t see a downside for his team, either.

“Miami used to want to do what? Go to the Orange Bowl,” Kiffin said. “USC and UCLA want to do what? Go to the Rose Bowl. So it can be really special when it’s a premier bowl like this.”



Navy quarterback Zach Abey (9) runs with the ball during a game against Central Florida on Oct. 21 in Annapolis, Md. Navy is playing its bowl game on its home field. [AP PHOTO / JOSE LUIS MAGANA, FILE]

UF

From Page C1

it’s great for women’s volleyball, to have 18,000-plus and to be televised on ESPN. This is the growth of our sport. And our sport has grown in much part because of Nebraska.

“Their fans, their program — they get a whole lot of credit because they’ve been the standard-bearer for years in terms of attendances,” she said. “It’s going to be a really fun environment.”

It’s not as if the Gators don’t have reasons to be confident.

For one thing, they’ve been steeled by the pressure of five-set matches, winning all four of them this season. That included their match against the Cardinal, when the Gators (30-1) took the opening two sets, then withstood a rally by taking the decisive set 15-10 to advance.

Then there’s the confidence that comes with having already beaten Nebraska this season.

The two met the opening weekend of the season with the Gators beating the Huskers in a five-set thriller at the VERT Challenge on their home court. But that comes with a caveat that the Huskers’ star setter, Kelly Hunter, was injured and unavailable.

“Our theme has kind of been, ‘We’ve found a way to win,’” said the Gators’ Rhamat Alhassan, who had 17 kills in the semifinal. “That’s been the theme throughout the entire tournament.”

Yes, the Gators have found a way to win. But so have the Huskers.

The tournament’s fifth seed swept through the first three

rounds before knocking off No. 4 seed Kentucky on the road to reach the Final Four. Then in the semifinals, the Huskers dropped the second and third sets and were on the brink of elimination when they rallied to take the fourth set 28-26, and then used that momentum to take the decisive set 15-11.

“This team never ceases to amaze me with how resilient they are and how much fight they have and how hard they work together,” said longtime coach John Cook. “The Big Ten prepares us for matches like these. There’s never any panic on our side, and they just continued to grind through it.”

The Huskers (30-4), in the Final Four for the third straight year, are trying to follow up the title they won two years ago in Omaha. And while they had a massive home-crowd advantage that year, they figure to have a similar advantage just a couple hours’ drive south on Interstate 29.

“Our crowd is a big, important part of us,” Nebraska outside hitter Mikaela Foecke said, “and having so many Husker fans here is great, and seeing them representing and cheering us on is something really special because we have such a great following.”

Still, the Huskers know that nobody in the crowd is going to log a kill. Or make a block. Or deliver an ace at a crucial time. It’s up to them to take care of business against the Gators.

“Regardless of what happens in the finals, this team will go down as a legendary team in the chronicles of Nebraska volleyball history,” Cook said. “Those guys have done an amazing job, and like I said, they’ll be legends. They’ll be talking about this team for a long time.”

PIERRE

From Page C1

never focused on winning awards or anything like that. For me, it has always been about getting better and helping my team win games.

“That’s been my goal since I began playing the game when I came here when I was 13 years old.”

Pierre has been a game-changer on the football field since his freshman year at MDCA. He made 56 tackles for a team that went winless and began to establish his reputation.

The summer after, Pierre’s play during a camp at the University of the Miami was so impressive that incoming coach Mark Richt and his coaching staff made an official offer to Pierre to play football for the Hurricanes after graduating high school.

Since then, he has received four more official offers from NCAA Division I schools. Pierre has no timetable for making a college decision, other than to say he will announce his choice when the time is right.

“That first offer from Miami really opened my eyes to see what others thought of my potential,” Pierre said. “I knew I had to get a lot better to be able to play at that level, but it was just a matter of continuing to work at everything and never let down. When they offered, it was a great surprise, but it was also a blessing.”

On the artificial playing surface — the only one of its kind in Lake County — in MDCA’s new athletic facility, Pierre often stands out, like a man playing against a team of boys. His physical stature on the field also makes him easy to spot; something opposing offensive coordinators want to do.

Pierre’s presence dictates what plays are used and which direction those



Mount Dora Christian Academy's Jesiah Pierre (9) fires up his teammates during halftime of a Sunshine State Athletic Conference playoff game against Bradenton Christian in Mount Dora on Oct. 27. Pierre led the Bulldogs to a come-from-behind win in the second half despite playing on a broken ankle. [PAUL RYAN / CORRESPONDENT]

plays will be run. He is often double-, and sometimes, triple-teamed, but is strong enough and quick enough to get to the ball despite the obstacles he must address on each play.

And even when doesn’t play a role in a tackle, Pierre’s impact is apparent.

“When he’s on the field, Jesiah makes his teammates better,” MDCA coach Kolby Tackett said. “He’s a high-character young man who often cares more about others than he does about himself. He’s the kind of person I hope my kids turn out to be like. He simply does everything right.”

“He’s a great young man and I love him to death.”

Not only is Pierre one of the area’s most-talented players, he’s also one of the toughest.

If there were any questions about that, Pierre answered those when he played a portion of the Bulldogs’ first-round playoff game against Bradenton Christian and the entire second-round game against Jupiter Christian with a broken ankle. Once the injury was diagnosed, Pierre wore a protective boot for nearly a month while the break healed.

“I never realized how serious it was,” Pierre said. “I thought it was just a sprain and I wasn’t coming out of

either game for a sprained ankle. The coaches asked me often about it and I kept telling them I was OK. I didn’t know how bad it was until it didn’t get better after the season.”

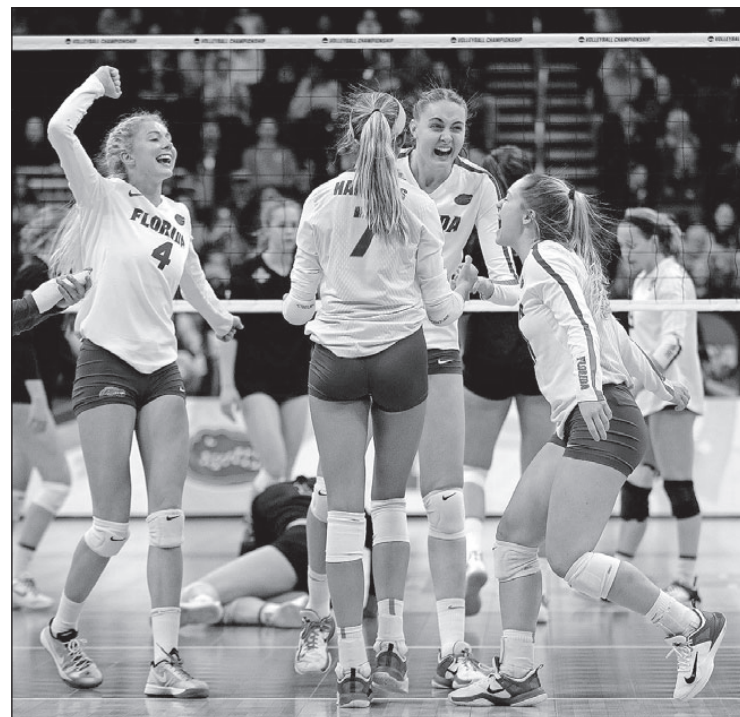
Said Tackett, “Tim Tebow once scored a touchdown in high school with a broken leg and I know Jack Youngblood played in a Super Bowl with a broken leg, but I’ve never heard of anyone trying to play football with a broken ankle. Certainly, he wouldn’t have played if we had known his ankle was broken, but he never complained other than to say it hurt a little.”

His ankle now healed and the boot removed, Pierre is helping the Bulldogs’ basketball team achieve its goals on the hardwood. Although he still spends considerable time in the weight room, basketball will help Pierre keep his conditioning level up.

Pierre expects to hit the ground running when spring practice begins in April. He will play with a passion and a fervor he hopes will rub off on his teammates as they strive to win the first SSAC championship at MDCA.

Tackett believes it’s a goal they can reach with Pierre in uniform.

“He’s the best high school football player I’ve ever seen,” Tackett said.



Florida players celebrate after defeating Stanford during the NCAA Division I volleyball semifinal game Thursday in Kansas City, Mo. [AP PHOTO / CHARLIE RIEDEL]

WEEK 15

By the numbers

15-15: The all-time series between New England and Pittsburgh is tied. They meet on Sunday.

AFC AT A GLANCE

Entering Week 15

EAST	Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
	New England	10	3	0	.769	368	250	4-2-0	6-1-0	7-2-0	3-1-0	3-1-0
	Buffalo	7	6	0	.538	240	290	5-2-0	2-4-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	1-2-0
	Miami	6	7	0	.462	236	318	4-3-0	2-4-0	5-4-0	1-3-0	2-2-0
	N.Y. Jets	5	8	0	.385	266	311	4-3-0	1-5-0	5-5-0	0-3-0	2-3-0

SOUTH	Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
	Jacksonville	9	4	0	.692	329	202	5-2-0	4-2-0	8-2-0	1-2-0	3-1-0
	Tennessee	8	5	0	.615	273	294	5-1-0	3-4-0	7-4-0	1-1-0	4-1-0
	Houston	4	9	0	.308	312	335	3-4-0	1-5-0	3-6-0	1-3-0	1-3-0
	Indianapolis	3	10	0	.231	212	343	2-4-0	1-6-0	2-7-0	1-3-0	1-4-0

NORTH	Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
	y-Pittsburgh	11	2	0	.846	320	251	5-1-0	6-1-0	8-1-0	3-1-0	5-0-0
	Baltimore	7	6	0	.538	318	246	4-2-0	3-4-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	2-2-0
	Cincinnati	5	8	0	.385	226	271	3-4-0	2-4-0	5-6-0	0-2-0	2-3-0
	Cleveland	0	13	0	.000	197	335	0-7-0	0-6-0	0-10-0	0-3-0	0-4-0

WEST	Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
	Kansas City	7	6	0	.538	329	289	4-2-0	3-4-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	3-1-0
	L.A. Chargers	7	6	0	.538	298	225	4-3-0	3-3-0	4-5-0	3-1-0	2-2-0
	Oakland	6	7	0	.462	264	304	4-3-0	2-4-0	5-6-0	1-1-0	2-3-0
	Denver	4	9	0	.308	229	315	4-3-0	0-6-0	3-7-0	1-2-0	2-3-0

AFC STAT LEADERS

QUARTERBACKS						PUNT RETURNERS					
Name	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int	Name	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Brady, NE	481	324	3865	27	6	Mickens, JAC	18	236	13.1	72	1
Rthlsbrgr, PIT	502	318	3744	24	13	Cmpnro, BAL	19	249	13.1	77	1
Rivers, LAC	462	290	3611	23	7	Tate, BUF	17	177	10.4	40	0
Al. Smith, KC	436	293	3507	23	5	Brjjamin, LAC	23	222	9.7	65	1
D. Carr, OAK	420	268	2942	18	10	Jackson, TEN	27	259	9.6	46	0
McCown, NYJ	397	267	2926	18	9	Amendola, NE	20	177	8.8	40	0
Bortles, JAC	410	247	2821	16	8	T. Hill, KC	23	202	8.8	82	1
Dalton, CIN	389	236	2747	21	9	McKneze, DEN	21	183	8.7	44	0
Brissett, IND	381	228	2611	11	7	Erickson, CIN	32	238	7.4	29	0
Mariota, TEN	360	224	2582	10	14	J. Grant, MIA	21	145	6.9	27	0

RUSHERS						KICKOFF RETURNERS					
Name	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD	Name	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Bell, PIT	283	1105	3.9	27	7	D. Lewis, NE	17	453	26.6	103	1
K. Hunt, KC	218	1046	4.8	69	5	A. Hunt, KC	19	460	24.2	42	0
McCoy, BUF	239	1007	4.2	98	5	Bray, IND	18	430	23.9	60	0
Fournette, JAC	231	923	4.0	80	8	J. Grant, MIA	18	410	22.8	31	0
Gordon, LAC	229	853	3.7	87	6	Jackson, TEN	21	448	21.3	48	0
A. Collins, BAL	162	825	5.1	50	5	Erickson, CIN	27	575	21.3	41	0
L. Miller, HOU	211	764	3.6	21	3	Tate, BUF	22	457	20.8	29	0
Gore, IND	210	762	3.6	21	3						
Crowell, CLE	174	716	4.1	37	2						
Anderson, DEN	181	700	3.9	40	2						

RECEIVERS					
Name	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
A. Brown, PIT	99	1509	15.2	57	9
Hopkins, HOU	88	1233	14.0	72	11
K. Allen, LAC	83	1143	13.8	51	5
T. Hill, KC	64	986	15.4	79	6
A. Green, CIN	65	950	14.6	77	8
Kelce, KC	73	945	12.9	44	7
Cooks, NE	54	924	17.1	64	5
Gmrvski, NE	55	849	15.4	53	7
Anderson, NYJ	52	848	16.3	69	7
T. Hilton, IND	43	811	18.9	80	4

NFC AT A GLANCE

Entering Week 15

EAST	Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	NFC	AFC	Div
	y-Philadelphia	11	2	0	.846	404	250	6-0-0	5-2-0	9-1-0	2-1-0	4-0-0
	Dallas	7	6	0	.538	316	294	3-4-0	4-2-0	6-4-0	1-2-0	4-1-0
	Washington	5	8	0	.385	285	344	3-3-0	2-5-0	4-6-0	1-2-0	1-4-0
	N.Y. Giants	2	11	0	.154	199	321	1-5-0	1-6-0	0-9-0	2-2-0	0-4-0

SOUTH	Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	NFC	AFC	Div
	New Orleans	9	4	0	.692	370	263	5-1-0	4-3-0	7-3-0	2-1-0	3-1-0
	Carolina	9	4	0	.692	300	262	4-2-0	5-2-0	5-4-0	4-0-0	2-2-0
	Atlanta	8	5	0	.615	294	261	4-3-0	4-2-0	7-2-0	1-3-0	2-1-0
	Tampa Bay	4	9	0	.308	264	312	3-3-0	1-6-0	2-7-0	2-2-0	0-3-0

NORTH	Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	NFC	AFC	Div
	Minnesota	10	3	0	.769	309	235	5-1-0	5-2-0	8-2-0	2-1-0	3-1-0
	Detroit	7	6	0	.538	338	329	2-4-0	5-2-0	6-4-0	1-2-0	3-1-0
	Green Bay	7	6	0	.538	285	302	4-3-0	3-3-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	2-2-0
	Chicago	4	9	0	.308	224	274	2-5-0	2-4-0	1-9-0	3-0-0	0-4-0

WEST	Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	NFC	AFC	Div
	L.A. Rams	9	4	0	.692	396	265	4-3-0	5-1-0	6-4-0	3-0-0	3-1-0
	Seattle	8	5	0	.615	314	252	4-2-0	4-3-0	6-3-0	2-2-0	4-0-0
	Arizona	6	7	0	.462	231	317	4-3-0	2-4-0	3-6-0	3-1-0	2-3-0
	San Francisco	3	10	0	.231	228	314	1-5-0	2-5-0	2-9-0	1-1-0	0-5-0

NFC STAT LEADERS

QUARTERBACKS						PUNT RETURNERS					
Name	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int	Name	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Stafford, DET	468	307	3683	23	9	Agnew, DET	22	370	16.8	88	2
Brees, NOR	442	317	3569	19	6	P. Cooper, LA	22	262	11.9	40	0
R. Wilson, SEA	473	293	3527	29	11	Tr. Davis, GBY	17	199	11.7	65	0
Cousins, WAS	440	290	3440	22	9	Sherels, MIN	26	269	10.3	46	0
Goff, LA	418	260	3383	22	6	Barner, PHL	21	211	10.0	76	0
Wentz, PHL	440	265	3296	33	7	Cohen, CHI	24	230	9.6	61	1
M. Ryan, ATL	417	275	3278	17	11	Switzer, DAL	21	197	9.4	83	1
Keenum, MIN	404	270	2983	18	7	T. Taylor, SNF	24	221	9.2	39	0
Prescott, DAL	399	252	2752	21	9	Roberts, ATL	18	137	7.6	27	0
Newton, CAR	402	241	2720	17	12	McCffry, CAR	22	162	7.4	25	0

RUSHERS						KICKOFF RETURNERS					
Name	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD	Name	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Gurley, LA	236	1035	4.4	36	10	Cper, LA	28	793	28.3	103	1
Howard, CHI	235	1032	4.4	53	7	Switzer, DAL	20	519	26.0	61	0
Ingram, NOR	192	971	5.1	72	9	Lockett, SEA	27	675	25.0	57	0
E. Elliott, DAL	191	783	4.1	30	7	Tr. Davis, GBY	25	601	24.0	34	0
Hyde, SNF	188	771	4.1	61	5	Cohen, CHI	20	454	22.7	46	0
Blount, PHL	152	696	4.6	68	2	Roberts, ATL	32	707	22.1	61	0
Freeman, ATL	152	680	4.5	44	6	Bolden, SNF	19	396	20.8	34	0
Stewart, CAR	180	634	3.5	60	6						
Kamara, NOR	87	608	7.0	74	7						
Coleman, ATL	139	593	4.3	52	5						

RECEIVERS					
Name	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Thielen, MIN	80	1161	14.5	65	4
Ju. Jones, ATL	73	1161	15.9	53	3
Thomas, NOR	85	992	11.7	35	4
Fzgerald, ARI	87	922	10.6	37	5
M. Jones, DET	51	885	17.4	46	8
Baldwin, SEA	66	860	13.0	54	5
Tate, DET	79	852	10.8	45	4
Adams, GBY	69	828	12.0	55	9
Kupp, LA	56	783	14.0	64	4
Goodwin, SNF	41	783	19.1	83	1

GAME PREVIEWS

For broadcast information on teams of area interest, check TV/radio listings.



Bears (4-9) at Lions (7-6)

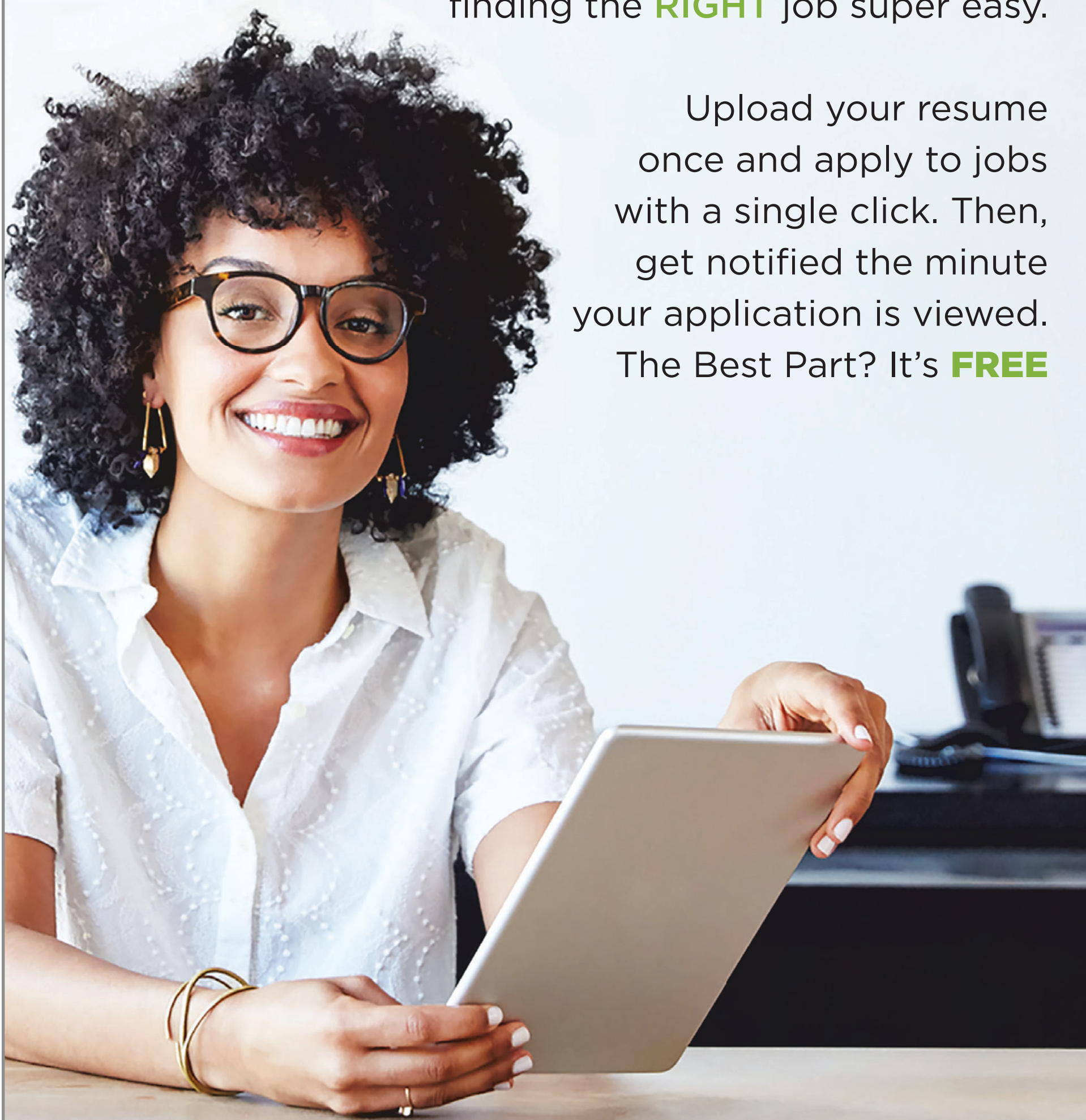
When, TV: Saturday, 4:30 p.m. ET, NFL Network
Opening line: Lions by 8
Series record: Bears lead 97-73-5
Last meeting: Lions beat Bears 27-24, Nov.

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HOMES

Tom McNiff, editor
352-365-8250
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TIP OF THE WEEK

SAFEGUARD YOUR ROOF

Check for any gaps around gutters, skylights and roofing vents, then utilize the correct caulking, patching and sealants. Sealing these areas can make a big difference in keeping out moisture and reducing heating costs — and many sealants are especially designed to adhere directly onto exterior surfaces.

— Brandpoint/Quarrix



SNOW BLOWERS

TUNE-UP TIPS

Briggs & Stratton Corporation, producer of gasoline engines for outdoor power equipment, encourages snow blower operators to tune up their equipment at the start of every season.

It is recommended operators change their snow blower's oil and add fuel stabilizer to their fuel can. Spark plugs should be changed after every 100 hours of use. And, if your engine isn't turning over, check to see if a faulty spark plug could be to blame.

— More Content Now

HOME TECH

EASE STRESS IN KITCHEN

Smart appliances can ease the stress of your home life in the following ways, according to SmartThinQ from LG.

- Consider using an app to tackle all those extra jobs that come with meal preparation.

- The more you use your smart appliances, the smarter they get by remembering usage habits and data to better anticipate your needs.

— Brandpoint

Deck the halls with Christmas greenery

By Betty Montgomery

More Content Now

Decorating your home for the holidays should be a time of reflection and a way to create some new memories and traditions. Using gifts from Mother Nature is a good place to start decorating for Christmas. You can brighten up any corner of the house with greenery gathered from the garden and adding berries, twigs and cones you might find in the woods.

Cedar, boxwood, pine, spruce, camellia and other greenery will add a festive and elegant touch as well as a fresh scent. Filling your house with the sights and smells of fresh greenery, helps bring on the spirit of Christmas.

That's why I like to start decorating with greenery. Shiny magnolia leaves make an elegant display and will last a long time indoors if your home is not too dry. The older varieties of magnolia have large glossy leaves and are great for larger spaces. Some of the newer varieties have smaller leaves and work nicely in smaller arrangements or placed on a mantel.

If you like red berries, there are many different kinds of hollies that have a perfusion of berries. Winterberry holly is a favorite to use in a vase by itself or with different evergreens. You can remove the leaves of burford holly stems and have a completely different look that can be used the same way as winterberry branches.

Nandina is another easy to find shrub that works well in decorating. The red berries will dress up a simple green arrangement or add color to a grapevine wreath. The leaves of a nandina provide easy to use greenery when you need leaves that will lay flat in an arrangement. Many of the newer varieties of nandina have leaves that turn red as the weather cools and can make a dramatic arrangement.

Boxwood is another evergreen that people use at Christmas. You can make traditional wreaths of boxwood and add fruit or berries to give it color. You also can mix boxwood with white pine, wiring them to a metal wreath form. Both of these ideas can be accomplished with a straw wreath form, securing the stems using floral pens.

Items from nature can be left natural or sprayed gold or silver. There are all kinds of things that can be used. I have used stems of millet sprayed gold as well as



An arrangement of hydrangeas and greenery spray painted gold. [BETTY MONTGOMERY]

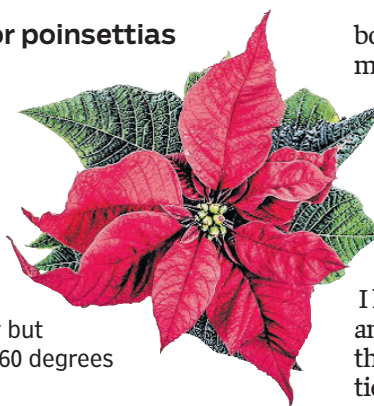
Care tips for poinsettias

- To keep a poinsettia in bloom, keep it in a room that maintains a temperature of 65 to 75 degrees F during the day but no lower than 60 degrees at night.

- Make sure the plant gets good light but not direct sunlight.

- Feed it once a week with houseplant fertilizer and only water it when the surface of the soil is dry.

— Better Homes and Gardens/TheSpruce.com



okra pods that had been left in a vegetable garden to dry. If you can find cotton

bolts, the bottom resembles a flower and makes a fabulous addition to a wreath or in an arrangement. Nuts, cones and large feathers give a bold and masculine touch to decorations, too. Poinsettias are the flower most associated with Christmas. Today, these traditionally red flowers come in all shapes, sizes and colors. I happen to be partial to the solid red and solid white poinsettias. The plants themselves make a lovely decoration but that is not the only way to use them. Most people would not think of cutting the flowers and using them as the flowers for a center arrangement for your dining room table but they are very dramatic used this way.

Make sure you do not get overwhelmed during the holidays. Do not make things too difficult for yourself. One big focal point in a room will set the tone. Also remember that you do not have to decorate all at once. Take your time and make sure you have plenty of time to relax and visit with friends and family.

AROUND THE HOUSE

For Christmas, buy an upgrade for your home



Don Magruder

At this moment, millions of holiday shoppers are walking malls and scouring websites looking for that perfect Christmas gift, which in about a week will turn into, "Just find something I can wrap and put under the tree."

The amount of money

wasted on last-minute gifts is probably in the billions of dollars. How many useless gadgets can one person receive in a lifetime? Why Americans do not learn to buy gifts that will last for the entire year and actually serve a purpose is a mystery. It's as if people like throwing away money.

That was my rant and here is my solution: Buy an upgrade or replacement product for your home. Consider this fact: The newest smart-fruit cell phone costs more than many front

See MAGRUDER, E2



Every day, people look at issues around their home they want to improve and if you listen close enough they will tell you what a perfect Christmas gift will be. Don't forget, not every gift has to be delivered on Santa's sleigh, it can come in a delivery truck from your local building material dealer. [AP FILE]

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FROM THE EXTENSION

Don't let the holidays cause anxiety and stress



Mia Wilchcombe

The holidays can be a joyous time with numerous festivities and the gathering of family and friends. But they can also be stressful. You may feel the pressure of buying gifts, decorating, cooking and cleaning. Sometimes it may seem that you do not have enough time to get everything done. It's important to learn how to manage and cope with stressors during the holiday season.

Become organized and plan ahead. Make lists of all of the tasks that need to be done and of items that need to be purchased. Create a realistic schedule in order to complete tasks and shopping. Take some time each day in order to get a few items off of your list completed. This will alleviate stress caused by last minute scrambling to buy forgotten items. But remember do not over commit. Learn your limitations. This will prevent you from becoming overloaded and overwhelmed.

Money tends to be the No. 1 stressor during the holidays. Try to make a budget and stick to it. Shop around and compare prices to make the most informed decision. Set an amount to spend for each person on your list. Don't buy gifts that will take you the rest of the year to pay off. This will limit the amount of stress you feel later. Homemade gifts, gift exchanges, or forgoing gifts are great ways to save money. Use the money saved to add to your savings account or to open a new one.

If planning a party or gathering, encourage guests to bring drinks or a food dish.



University of Florida Professor Marie Hammer wraps a gift with reusable ribbon and decorated brown paper. [SUBMITTED]

This will minimize your food preparation time and reduce your grocery bill. Try to cook ahead of time. Soups, stews, quiches and tarts are examples of food that freeze well. Assign duties for each family member to help with party preparations. It's okay to ask for help, especially when cleaning up.

Remember to take care of yourself. It's important to find healthy ways to decompress. Set aside at least 20 minutes daily for yourself. Try reading a book, taking a soothing bubble bath, meditation, or watching a movie. Make sure to engage

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in healthy eating behaviors, get plenty of sleep and find time to exercise regularly. Focus on healthier food choices such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein. Try to get at least 6 hours of sleep each night. It's recommended

to engage in 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

If your relatives are unable to be with you during the holidays, try other ways to celebrate with them, such as, video chatting or sharing pictures. If you still feel lonely during the holidays, reach

out and seek community or other social events. Try to give back by volunteering and helping people and/or animals in need. Helping others is a good way to lift your spirits and build friendships.

Don't let the holidays cause you anxiety and stress. Instead, take some steps to prevent stress in order to joy the holiday season. Read more on how to cope with stress at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1404>.

Mia Wilchcombe is the Family and Consumer Science Agent for the UF/IFAS Lake County Extension Center.

MAGRUDER

From Page E1

door replacements and a homeowner will get about 20 years of great service out of a new front door. That newfangled cell phone may be viable for about three years. If your home has an old, ugly rusted steel door unit, replace it with a new fiberglass door unit that will not rust, rot or ding and watch your spouse smile every day they open their new pretty door.

Maybe your home has an old garage door opener that works when it wants and you are constantly hearing your spouse complain about manually opening the door. A great Christmas gift is a new garage

Most builder-grade homes in the area do not have crown moulding. Let's face it, crown moulding makes any room look better and most spouses love it. An average size room of paint-grade crown moulding will cost about \$70 and a gallon of paint costs around \$25. For less than \$100, you can install beautiful crown moulding in your bedroom and get the love and adulation from your spouse for a job well done.

door opener with a battery back-up system and smart-phone technology that allows your special person to open the garage door even if the power is out. Plus instead of a separate garage door remote, their cell phone can be used to open the garage door. These new garage door openers can be installed for less than \$400.

Most builder-grade homes in the area do not have crown moulding. Let's face it, crown moulding makes any room look better and most

spouses love it. An average size room of paint-grade crown moulding will cost about \$70 and a gallon of paint costs around \$25. For less than \$100, you can install beautiful crown moulding in your bedroom and get the love and adulation from your spouse for a job well done.

Accent interior doors are extremely popular these days. Accent doors are usually a frosted glass interior door which has a word like "pantry" etched in the glass

or it may be something like a door to a kid's room that has a chalkboard built into it. A custom door operation can mill these doors so that the hinges and lock bore will match the existing jamb, which means a carpenter is not needed to change out the old door — just uppin the hinges. Accent doors normally cost less than \$300 and look great in a home.

Have you ever given a floor for a Christmas present? If you have old, ugly tile or carpet, new flooring is a great gift. Even if it is just one room, the spouse that replaces bad flooring becomes an instant hero. The joy of new flooring lasts for years while the excitement of a three-day weekend — well, three days.

For people on a tight budget, give the gift of a painted room. An average gallon

of paint covers about 400 square feet, or a typical bedroom. A couple of gallons of paint costs less than \$50. In one day, you can give a Christmas gift that anyone would love to have — a clean, freshly painted room.

Every day, people look at issues around their home they want to improve and if you listen close enough they will tell you what a perfect Christmas gift will be. Don't forget, not every gift has to be delivered on Santa's sleigh, it can come in a delivery truck from your local building material dealer.

Don Magruder is the CEO of Ro-Mac Lumber & Supply Inc. He is also the host of the *Around the House* radio show heard every Monday at noon on My790AM WLBE in Leesburg.

FEATURED HOMES

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Candelabra cactus is easy to grow

By Lee Reich
The Associated Press

On my living room floor once sat a clerodendron plant, a gift that became an indoor oasis of lush greenery and clusters of red-tipped white flowers. Problem was, I had to tiptoe among its sprawling stems every time I wanted to approach the window.

What's sometimes needed in a houseplant is a bold plant, but with a small footprint.

Such a plant has replaced my clerodendron. It's variously called candelabra cactus, hat-rack cactus, or dragon bones, all of which describe it adequately.

Cactus-like, but not a cactus

The plant is not a cactus but a euphorbia, evidenced by the milky sap that oozes out of cut stems. It does look like a cactus, a saguaro cactus, not prickly but with similarly thick, upright stems that branch to make arms.

The stems look like what dragon bones might look like: Thick, three-sided, with paired spines running down the ridges and a milky green line dripping down each of the three flat faces. A few small, spoon-shaped leaves now cap the very ends of some branches.

Flowers? No, dragon-bones has never been known to flower. Too bad, because its flowers might be spectacular if they were anything



Although not a true cactus, the so-called candelabra cactus is as easy to grow and to care for as any cactus.

(LEE REICH VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS)

like those of its cousins, poinsettia and crown-of-thorns.

Hard to find, easy to propagate

For some reason, you do not often see candelabra cactus for sale, or even mentioned in gardening books. The plant is easy enough to propagate, though.

My first plant started out as an impenetrable hedge that I happened upon during a visit to the tropical island of St. Croix. As soon as I saw

this hedge, I borrowed a knife and took cuttings: Two pieces of stem, each a half-foot or so in length.

Like those of other succulents, candelabra cactus cuttings root best if initially allowed to dry out and callus over.

Letting them sit out on a tabletop was the best I could do for them anyway for the few days until I returned home. Once home, I stuck the base of each of the stems into a mix of peat moss and perlite, watered them, and then watered again only when the mix was

bone dry. Rooting and growth soon followed.

Easy to grow

Candelabra cactus can be pruned at any time, which is how I keep my plant at 2 or 3 feet high, rather than letting it become the 15-foot wall of greenery that it was in St. Croix.

My plant summers in dappled shade on the deck, drinking mostly natural rainfall, although I give it occasional water and fertilizer when I think of it. As with other succulents, too much water is more harmful than too little.

To lessen the chance of drowning the plant, grow it in an unglazed clay pot and add extra sand to the potting mix for drainage. A tall, fleshy plant growing in often dry soil is apt to tip over, so the sand also adds needed weight around the plant's "ankles." With water and occasional fertilizer, dragon-bones grows fairly fast in summer, in addition to sporting a lush head of spoon-size leaves near the top of each stem.

Come fall, candelabra cactus gets more brutal treatment, but never balks beyond dropping a few leaves. I move the plant to a well-lit spot in the living room and then totally neglect it, watering it maybe once a month, maybe less. Well, not total neglect, because I do admire its svelte greenness each time I walk by.

The rise and fall of ivy: How a social climber went rogue

By Adrian Higgins
The Washington Post

There are many ever-green ground covers for the shade garden, but not so many that are tough, vigorous and capable of covering large areas quickly. Behold the English ivy, a woody vine that has entwined itself into history, myth and the carport.

It has other practical attributes: It will hold sloping soil against erosion and — unlike other ground covers — it doubles as a self-anchoring climber that will soften bare walls and hide plain fences.

Once routinely planted in the poshest gardens in the land, including the White House, and fashioned into wreaths by the Greek gods, the ivy has fallen on hard times.

Ivy was invaluable when gardens were more static, tidy and architectural, but it was eclipsed by more interesting ground covers by the end of the 20th century. Thus ignored, it decided to make mischief.

Untended for long enough, the ivy will clamber to the top of a tree and from its high perch transform itself into an evil twin. Aloft, its distinctive foliage shifts to a paddle shape. In the autumn, the clusters of little white flowers draw bees from afar and then spend the winter turning into black berries. Birds devour them and spread them into the wild. Thus seeded, the ivy begins its patient journey of conquest.

In Washington's Rock Creek Park, for example, it has been spreading for

years, though the invasion is being pushed back. Since 2013, volunteers have pulled ivy vines from 12,687 trees.

This is done by cutting the vines that cling to the trunk at shoulder level and at ground level, using pruning saws and loppers.

Often the severed segments have to be piled, carefully, from the tree using a crowbar, said John Maleri, program manager of the Rock Creek Conservancy.

You can (and should) do this at home, but don't rip down the vines immediately. They take a few weeks to die and wither, and it then takes a hard freeze to get the aerial roots to release their grip. At that point the vines either fall or can be tugged down without harming the tree.

What is the problem with English ivy in natural areas? On trees, the sheer mass of the vines can help bring down the host in storms. Ivy also blocks sunlight that trees need to feed. Aesthetically, it's hard to love the look of a tree cloaked in ivy, unless you're into Gothic horror.

On the ground, the ivy suppresses indigenous woodland plants, including such spring beauties as trilliums, May apples and Virginia bluebells. And for people who want their landscapes to consist of native flora, it's simply a bullying invader. This is a contemporary viewpoint, as English ivy was once considered an elegant element in American gardens that looked to English and European garden traditions.



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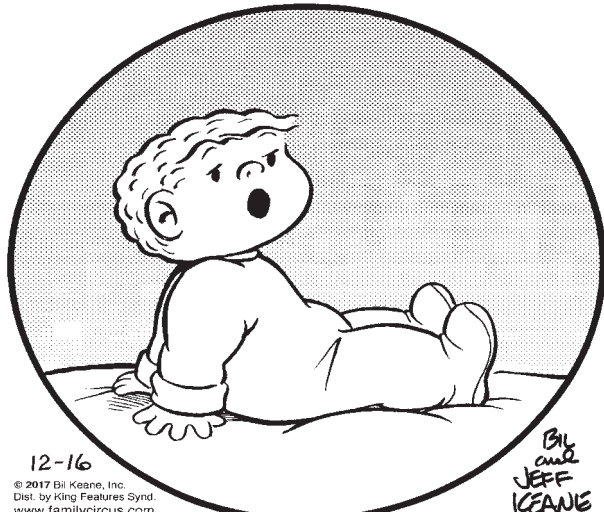
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COMICS

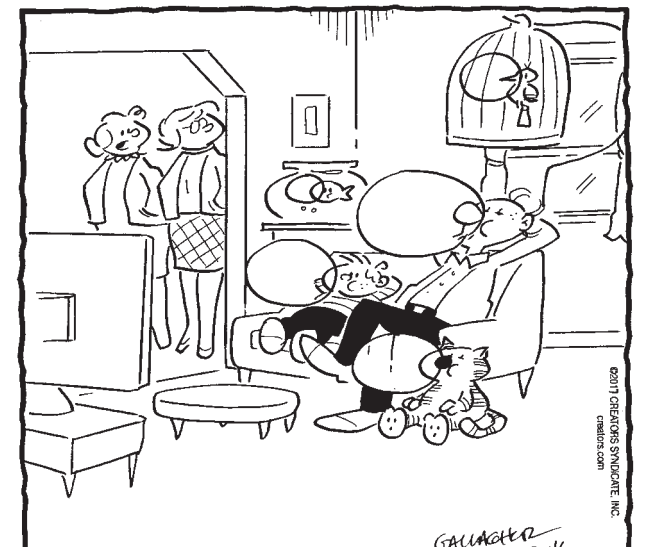
DENNIS THE MENACE



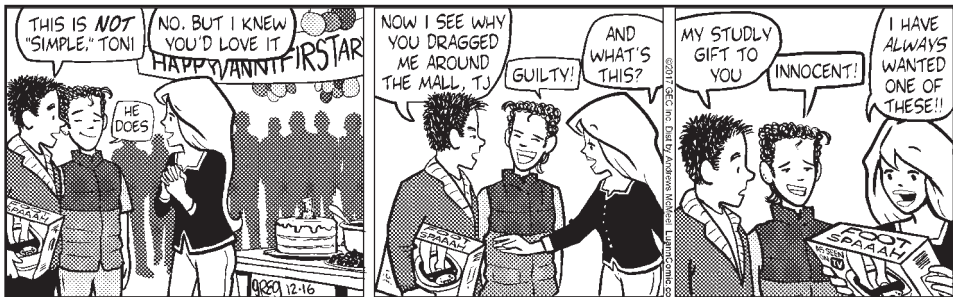
FAMILY CIRCUS



HEATHCLIFF



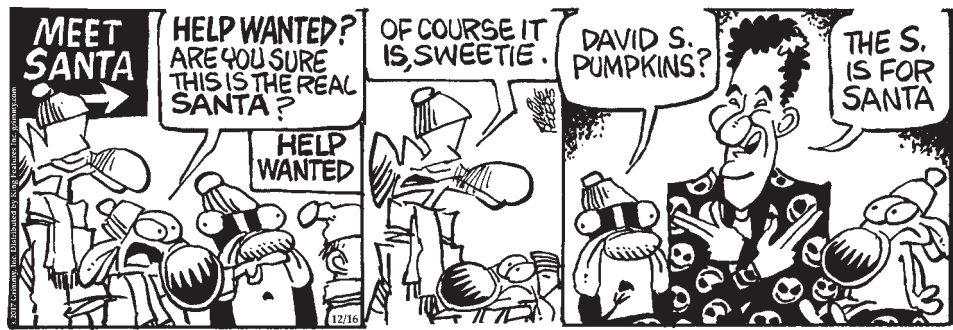
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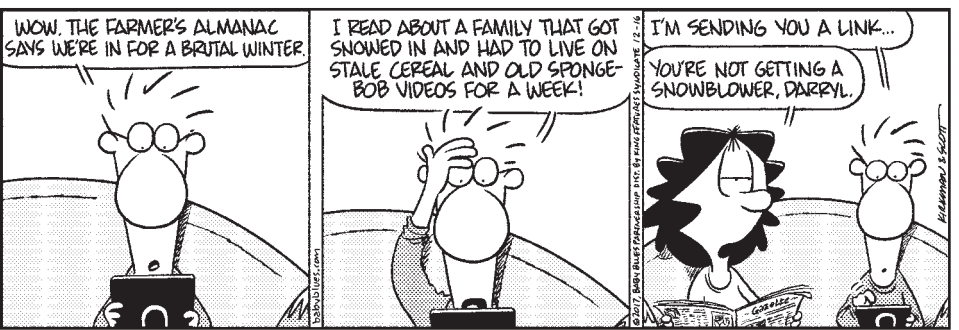
DILBERT



MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM



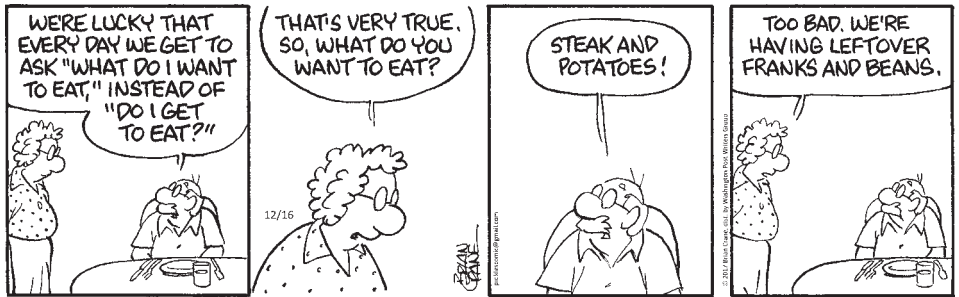
BABY BLUES



BETLE BAILEY



PICKLES



ZITS



PHANTOM



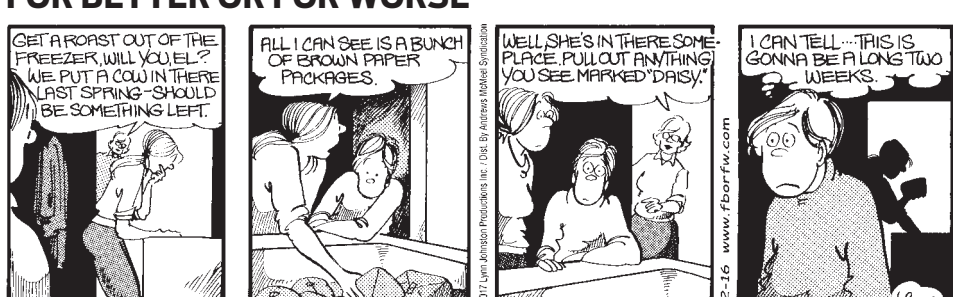
GARFIELD



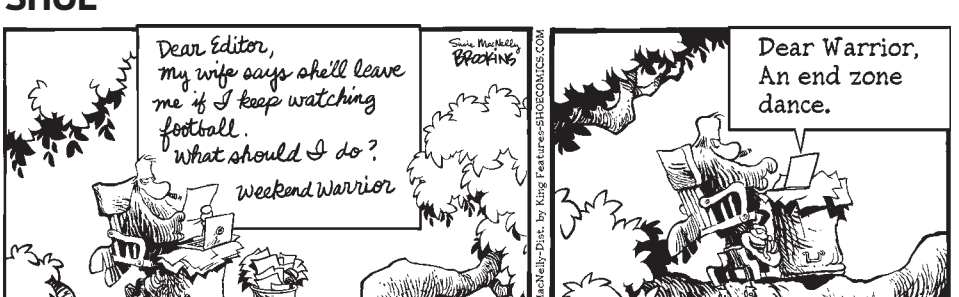
BLONDIE



FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE



SHOE



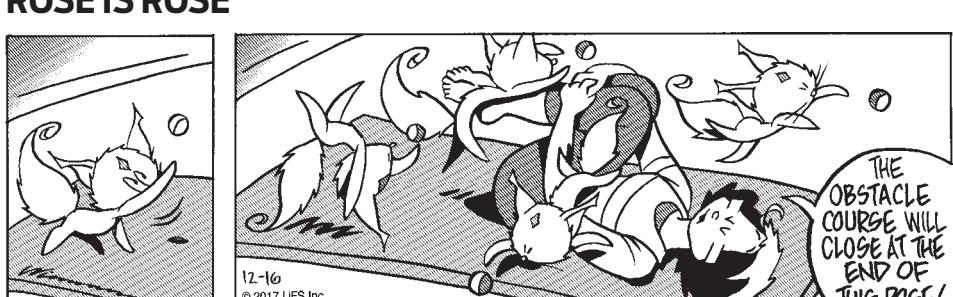
B.C.



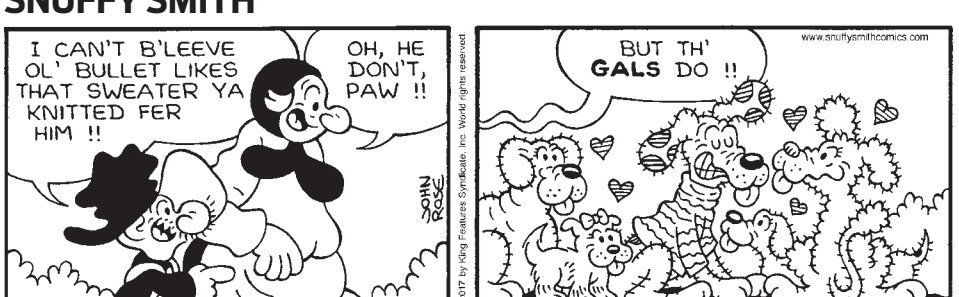
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



ROSE IS ROSE



SNUFFY SMITH



CLASSIC PEANUTS



DIVERSIONS

Stepson snubbed by family's habit of selective gift-giving

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I were together for eight years before we married a year ago. He has a kid from a previous marriage who just turned 11. The boy has been a part of my life since he was 3. But it wasn't until his father and I were married that my parents began sending him Christmas presents. They don't usually send him birthday gifts.

My husband and I had our own child seven months ago. Now they're sending a ton of Christmas presents for my biological son, but only a few token gifts for my stepson. My sister didn't bother buying anything for my stepson or my husband. When I pointed it out to her, she ignored me.

I don't think it's fair that they exclude my stepson. My sister has two girls and I bought gifts for everyone -- including her husband -- although money was tight. Now I wish I could take everything back. How can I get them to

JEANNE PHILLIPS

DEAR ABBY



not shortchange my stepson? Or should I just tell them not to bother sending anyone gifts? -- **OUTCAST IN MONTANA**

DEAR OUTCAST: It appears your husband may have a less-than-ideal relationship with your mother and your sister. Before taking any action, discuss this with your husband. If he agrees, then you are within your rights to tell them the way they are treating your husband and stepson is hurtful. Say that if it can't be corrected, you prefer gifts no longer be exchanged because the discrimination is blatant and not what these holidays are supposed to be about.

DEAR ABBY: I'm a 12-year-old girl in seventh grade. I have this crush and we're friends. I

finally got up the courage to tell him I liked him, and he has said nothing about it for the past two days. My best friend, Sara, tried to ask him why twice at lunch, but he left every time she tried to bring it up.

I know we're only in middle school, but I'm ready. Should Sara and I confront him together or give him time? I can't do it without Sara because then I would probably run. What should I do? -- **GIRL WITH A CRUSH**

DEAR GIRL WITH A CRUSH: Twelve-year-old girls in seventh grade may be ready for crushes, but 12-year-old boys in seventh grade may not be. You have already gotten your message across to him. Forget confronting him and do not involve your friend Sara, or he will run in the opposite direction the minute he sees you coming.

Be patient. It may take some time, but he will develop an interest in girls eventually. And

when he does, you do NOT want him to remember you as the one who embarrassed him in public.

DEAR ABBY: How do I treat someone with respect whom I do NOT respect and who does not respect me? I try to treat everyone courteously; however, it's tough to do when often the respect only flows one way. -- **UNSURE IN CALIFORNIA**

DEAR UNSURE: Here's how. First, keep your distance, if that's possible. And then refrain from showing your disdain by using basic good manners whenever you are forced to be in the person's presence.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

» BRIDGE

Maximizing your chances

East dealer.

Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH
 ♠ K 10 7
 ♥ K 9 2
 ♦ 5 4 3
 ♣ K 10 8 3

WEST
 ♠ 9 8 5 2
 ♥ Q 5 4
 ♦ J 10 9 7 2
 ♣ 6

EAST
 ♠ Q J 3
 ♥ 10 8 7 6
 ♦ A K Q 6
 ♣ 5 4

SOUTH
 ♠ A 6 4
 ♥ A J 3
 ♦ 8
 ♣ A Q J 9 7 2

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
1♦	2♣	2♦	3♣
Pass	5♣		

Opening lead—jack of diamonds.

Let's say you have a 50 percent chance of making a contract if you adopt a certain line of play. This is surely not the worst of odds, but, if you are a perfectionist, you should not settle for a mere 50-50 chance of success. Instead, you should look for some other approach that might raise your chances to 75 percent, or even 100 percent, if possible.

The opportunity to apply this principle occurs time and time again. The general idea is that if declarer cannot attain the 100 percent chance he'd like to have, he should look for the next best thing to it.

For example, if you're declarer at five clubs in this hand, you see you must lose a diamond, almost surely a spade and possibly a heart. What you would like to do is to minimize the chance of losing a trick in hearts, where an ordinary finesse offers only a 50 percent chance of succeeding.

By far your best hope for achieving this goal is to try to set up an endplay. So after ruffing a diamond continuation at trick two, you cross to dummy with a trump and ruff dummy's last diamond. You then draw a second round of trumps and play the A-K and another spade.

You don't know which opponent will win the third spade, but you hope it is West. If so, you are sure of making the contract whether he returns a heart or gives you a ruff-and-discard.

In the actual hand, East wins the third spade, which is not ideal but much better than relying on a straight finesse. When he returns a low heart, you play low, which traps West's queen and puts you on easy street.

Note that even after East wins the third spade, you go down only when West started with both the queen and ten of hearts — just a 1-in-4 possibility. This is certainly better than taking the straightforward heart finesse by leading to the jack, which has about an even-money chance of losing, and would cost you the contract in the actual deal.

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» HOROSCOPES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR SATURDAY, DEC. 16, 2017:

This year you express a unique kind of creativity. Others often seek you out for advice or for help sleuthing through problems. You find interesting ways of resolving the seemingly unresolvable. If you are single, you could meet many different potential suitors. Know that Mr. or Ms. Right could be right around the corner! If you are attached, the two of you happily hop around to different sets of friends with totally diverse interests. You might decide to plan on taking a series of courses together. A fellow SAGITTARIUS adds more excitement to your life!

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19) A thought is likely to go from a fantasy to a materialized concept. You will enjoy the surprises you encounter along the way. You get into what is happening, despite any obstacles that get in your way. Time will reflect the legitimacy of your idea.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20) Relate on a personal level. Your ability to get your point across to others might not be as powerful as you

would like. State the same core message, perhaps in a different way, in order to help convey your message. Refuse to get uptight.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20) Communication might be off. Even with the best intentions and a willingness to go over what you are thinking several times, you might not be able to get your message across. Worry less about this glitch for now, and try again another time.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22) You like being the cook, the baker and the decorator. Though you might want to complain at times, don't. Know that there are alternatives to your lifestyle and choices. Consider playing out the next holiday season differently.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22) You'll want to pull back a bit in order to review an emotional situation. Events seem to occur at a pace that takes your breath away. It might seem as if you are putting out all kinds of fires today. Don't fight the inevitable; just go with the flow.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22) A responsibility calls

JACQUELINE BIGAR

BIGAR'S STARS



that could force a change of plans. You might not feel as if you have a choice. You would like to kick back and get into the holiday spirit after a gift-wrapping frenzy and perhaps a lengthy nap. Make a to-do list, if need be.

LIBRA (SEPT. 23-OCT. 22) You might want to change your choices. This is a workable plan, as long as you don't upset the applecart for several loved ones. Choose to stay on course, and know that everything will work out in your favor.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21) You will opt to do some last-minute holiday shopping, whether it be for food or for whatever else you might need. If you are in the process of completing your gift list, you might find online buying easier and less of a hassle.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-

DEC. 21) Take the lead. You have a lot to do, but you'll help motivate others to pitch in too. You won't mind having a few people join you on your various last-minute errands. You could be very interested in what they share with you.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19) You could be overly worried about shopping, gift wrapping and everything else that is important in making your holiday run smoothly. Play it low-key today, especially if you want to keep a big surprise under wraps.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18) A friend proves to be a major distraction. You often grumble about this person, but if you are honest with yourself, you enjoy being around him or her. As long as this person is around, try to make the most of the moment.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20) You are likely to make important choices for you as well as a loved one. You might prefer to be with just this person and no one else. Reach out to a friend at a distance whom you don't often get to see. You will enjoy the conversation the two of you have.

» TODAY IN HISTORY

TODAY IS SATURDAY, DEC. 16, the 350th day of 2017. There are 15 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On Dec. 16, 1773, the Boston Tea Party took place as American colonists boarded a British ship and dumped more than 300 chests of tea into

Boston Harbor to protest tea taxes.

ON THIS DATE:
 In 1944, the World War II Battle of the Bulge began as German forces launched a surprise attack against Allied forces through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and Luxembourg (the Allies were eventually able to turn the

Germans back).

In 1960, 134 people were killed when a United Air Lines DC-8 and a TWA Super Constellation collided over New York City.

In 1976, the government halted its swine flu vaccination program following reports of paralysis apparently linked to the vaccine.

In 1985, at services in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, President Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, offered condolences to families of 248 soldiers killed in the crash of a chartered plane in Newfoundland.

In 1991, the U.N. General Assembly rescinded its 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism by a vote of 111-25.

WORD SCRIMMAGE™

BY JUDD HAMBRICK © 2017 UFS / Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication for UFS

1st DOWN
 U₃ E₁ T₂ L₂ F₇ L₂ N₂

2nd DOWN
 L₂ L₂ B₆ E₁ E₁ I₂

3rd DOWN
 Y₇ A₂ O₂ L₂ B₆ O₂ R₂

4th DOWN
 N₂ S₂ R₂ L₂ I₂ O₂ T₂

TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN JUDD'S TOTAL = 221
 AVERAGE GAME 140-150 PTS

Directions: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters on each yardline. Add points to each word or letter using scoring directions. Seven-letter words get a 60-point bonus. All words can be found in Webster's New World College Dictionary.

12-16-17 **JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW**

Sudoku ★★★★★ 4puz.com

		7 6			4
8		7			6
5	9 3			1	7
7				9	2
			8 6 9		
4	1				8
6	3		2 8		5
2			3		1
	5		6 4		

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

WORD SCRIMMAGE™ SOLUTION BY JUDD HAMBRICK

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1st DOWN = 117
 A₂ M₆ E₁ N₂ T₂ I₂ A₂

2nd DOWN = 138
 A₂ I₂ R₂ S₂ I₂ C₆ K₂

3rd DOWN = 81
 V₇ A₂ M₆ P₆

4th DOWN = 115
 F₇ A₂ S₂ H₇ I₂ N₂ G₃

AVERAGE GAME 290-300 PTS JUDD'S TOTAL = 451

12-15-17

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

9	6	8	7	5	2	4	3	1
2	3	1	4	6	9	8	7	5
4	7	5	3	8	1	6	9	2
8	1	3	2	9	5	7	4	6
7	5	4	8	3	6	1	2	9
6	2	9	1	4	7	5	8	3
3	8	6	5	2	4	9	1	7
5	4	7	9	1	3	2	6	8
1	9	2	6	7	8	3	5	4

How to play: Fill in the blank squares with the numbers 1 through 9 so that each horizontal row, vertical column and nine-square sub-grid contains no repeated numbers.

Puzzles range in difficulty from one to six stars.

The solution to today's puzzle will be in tomorrow's paper.

» CRYPTOQUOTE

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-16 CRYPTOQUOTE

OIZPPZE BP CGZ PZUPFJ XGBYG

ZJKUKZP CGZ XGFIZ XFMIE BJ

U YFJPLBMUYR FD IFNZ.

— GUTBICFJ XMBKGC TUOBZ
 Yesterday's Cryptoquote: REACH HIGH, FOR STARS LIE HIDDEN IN YOUR SOUL. DREAM DEEP, FOR EVERY DREAM PRECEDES THE GOAL.
 — PAMELA VAULL STARR

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You can't beat a wreath for simplicity, drama and beauty. [DREAMSTIME/TNS]

Style at Home: Saved by the incredible wreath

By Mary Carol Garrity
Tribune News Service

I will never forget the year it felt like Christmas passed over the Garrity home. We had just opened Nell Hill's Briarcliff, and I was working a million hours a week. I didn't have a spare second to decorate our home for the season. Since I am surrounded by so much Christmas decor every day, I didn't think I would mind not having my home decorated. Turns out, I did. A lot. On Christmas morning, our house felt depressing, with no tree, nothing on the mantel, no holiday table set for guests.

So, Scarlett O'Hara style, I lifted my fist to heaven and vowed, "As God as my witness, I will never forget to decorate for Christmas again!" (I might

add, that it was Dan's all-time favorite Christmas. No decor to put up or take down. Easy-peasy.)

This holiday season, if you are low on time or desire to decorate your home, I have a great solution for you: wreaths, the ultimate last-minute miracle workers. Hanging a few wreaths in strategic spots in your home takes only minutes, yet pays huge dividends, instantly sliding you to the top of the happy scale.

Every year, I call on wreaths to work their superpowers in my home, making holiday magic with minimal work on my part. In fact, I use seasonally themed wreaths on my front door all year long.

You can't beat a wreath for simplicity, drama and beauty. No matter what your style, from

minimalist to glamorous, you will find wreaths that bring your look to life. And, you can add them everywhere in your home. Hang one from a bookcase or armoire. Suspend one in front of a mirror or artwork. Decorate each window with a wreath tied up with a holiday ribbon. Instead of attempting to tie the perfect bow, take two ribbons and make a loop, then zip tie it in place. Then, zip tie it to the wreath.

My big sister is coming to spend the holidays with us this year, staying in the cottage next door. I want to make the cottage warm and welcoming for Judy. Hello, wreaths! To add some cheer to the bar, I dressed it up with a magnolia wreath. Time invested? About five minutes.

Getting the job done at home

By Audrey Hoffer
Special to
The Washington Post

Working from home has become as ordinary as having a job in the first place. No one blinks at a request to go remote part time, because traditional separations between work and home are softening.

But what if you must live and work under the same roof full time? If you need a work surface the size of ping-pong table, or you need running water, or your boss at the headquarters out of town just plain doesn't want to pay rent for your office anymore? How do you meld your working space with your home?

Jerry Zremski, bureau chief for the Buffalo News and a former National Press Club president, confronted this reality.

"For years, we had a two-reporter, plus intern, bureau in the National Press Building, but in March 2010, I started working at home. My employers felt it made financial sense," he said, sitting behind his spacious white desk.

"It was a big sacrifice. This was a guest bedroom," he said gesturing around the 10-by-12-foot bright and airy room. "Now I give up my bedroom for guests."

Years ago, Zremski renovated his two-bedroom Washington condo in Logan Circle. So he brought back Natalya Mumzhiu with NM Design Studio and asked her to rethink the second bedroom.

"I wanted it to look like an office, because if it was just me and my laptop at the kitchen table, it wouldn't feel like work," he said.

"I also work from home and know how important it is to have a pleasant, organized and professional space," Mumzhiu said.

She placed the desk perpendicular to the windows "so he could look outside all the time with just a turn of

his head," she said.

She made a desk from an Ikea kitchen countertop and set it over three file cabinets. She built wood shelves onto the walls and covered cabinets with frosted glass doors.

"Glass creates a peaceful atmosphere and tricks the eye, making the space look bigger than it really is," she said.

"This is an office 100 percent. If you looked just at this room, you'd see an office and never guess it was in a condo," he said.

Artist Larry Kirkland designs monumental site-specific installations for institutions around the world. His 40-foot-high bronze doors, etched in Latin verse from the first page of Genesis in the Gutenberg Bible, form the entrance to the new Museum of the Bible in Washington.

He conceives these works in a light-filled double garage-sized studio — designed by architect Michael Lee Beidler — that joins his Washington house with translucent glass pocket doors. "So I keep the light between the two spaces," Kirkland said.

The rectangular studio is bookended by walls of paned windows and doors that face a porch on one side and a yard on the other.

"The space is magnificent for my private working world and our home life," he said.

Kirkland lives with his partner, Brendan Doyle. "We transform it for dinner parties and holiday meals. We had Brendan's retirement party here. That was the bar," he said, pointing to the drafting table piled with drawings and books.

A huge eggshell-colored metal layout table on wheels dominates the space and is Kirkland's primary working area. They roll it onto the porch for their 30-person Thanksgiving dinner. Now it's covered with pieces of the bronze doors, slabs of engraved granite and a

model for an addition to the D.C. Superior Court.

The giant 9-foot-high, 18-foot-long wall behind the layout table "is my pin-up wall. In the future, when we sell the house — I know we won't live here forever — a family can open up the space with a fireplace or windows," Kirkland said.

Roommates, partners, even spouses can sometimes be problematic. "I think if one works at home, you have to separate your places and be disciplined. Now that Brendan is home more often, he'll barge in and say, 'Let's have lunch.' But I don't want lunch. My idea of lunch is to stand at the kitchen sink, eat half a sandwich and not dirty any utensils so I don't have to worry about cleaning up."

Edmond van der Bijl, an entrepreneur, innovator and artist who paints, sculpts and creates video, also contends with family at home.

Occasionally, he rents a studio, but mostly he works from the Washington house he shares with his wife, Arianna, and two small children.

"I try to set up a little corner in a room that's dedicated to me, where I can lock the door. But it's not a private office or a cocoon. People walk through," he said.

"As we speak, I can hear my son crying, and it's killing me. Parenthood makes your life less comfortable, but artistry isn't about being comfortable. It's about stretching your creativity and powers of observation and getting comfortable with things not being perfect."

Ann Lauer works in the basement of her Baltimore house. "I require a lot of tools — chisels, razor knives, awls — plus water, rolls of cane, rush, cord, rattan and wicker. It's messy, so it's perfect to work down there," she said. Lauer has been weaving, caning and repairing antique chairs for 40 years.

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Built-in bookcases help define some of the space in artist Larry Kirkland's home office/studio. [KATHERINE FREY/THE WASHINGTON POST]

<p>OPEN AND SPACIOUS floor plan with amazing upgrades. 2 bed 2 bath home. Upgraded kitchen cabinets, corian counters and newer appliances. Enclosed lanai/ Florida room. \$250's. G4849373</p>	<p>VIEW OF LAKE LESSMAN! Split floor plan. 2 Owner's suites with Den. Corian counters & closet pantry in kitchen. 2 car garage w/ attic & service door. Beautiful landscaping. 27 X 13 LANAI OVERLOOKS LAKE! 250's G4844801</p>	<p>COZY 2 bed 2 bath, 5X10 foyer leads into the formal living room and dining. Florida room with 2 additional sliding doors to the owners suite. BBQ patio perfect for entertaining! Perfectly landscaped. \$180's G4847139</p>	<p>SPECTACULAR VIEWS! Two owners suites and office. Open and bright. Spacious walk in closets. Large Lanai to enjoy a perfect sunset. \$300's G4848507</p>
<p>SECLUSION AT IT'S BEST! 3/2. Kitchen has Dorian counters, 42" cabinets & breakfast bar. Tile floors in wet areas. Amazing Lanai with ADDITIONAL SCREEN ROOM. 210's G4842164</p>	<p>GORGEOUS! 3/2.5 with Den. Kitchen has island, new granite counters & newer appliances. Roof updated in 2017. A/C updated in 2012. 2.5 car garage. LANAI PROVIDES VIEW OF GARDEN! 280's G4845224</p>	<p>STUNNING, SECLUDED! 2/2. Split floor plan. Den/3rd bedroom. Kitchen Island & Formal Dining Room. Gorgeous tile. Wet bar. Lots of storage. Many more extras. French door lead to 39 X 14 LANAI! 280's G4843621</p>	<p>IDEAL LOCATION in Mount Dora for a stand alone operation. This 2 story home has been renovated with wood floors and plenty of space, detached garage w/ block storage building. \$270's G4846850</p>

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