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Hendry County News

Formerly Caloosa Belle Independent

SWEET FIELD TRIP



CHS FFA STUDENTS TOUR US SUGAR

CLEWISTON — On Friday, Dec. 13, FFA students from Clewiston High School got to take a tour the of US Sugar sugar mill. They loved learning about the hard work and passion that make Clewiston the Sweetest Town in America. [Photos courtesy Clewiston FFA]

SPEED LIMITS

Speed cameras placed in school zones in Hendry Co.

By Richard Marion
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

CLEWISTON- New speed cameras are in place in Hendry County School zones.

In December, the Hendry County School Board received a presentation from Altumint regional sales manager Lorraine Johnson on benefits of the cameras and why they'd make school

• See **Speed Cameras** on page 2

FLYOVER



LABELLE -- A fly over by a formation of planes added excitement to the Swamp Cabbage Festival Parade on Feb. 24, 2024. [Photo by Katrina Elsen/ Caloosa Belle Independent]

Air show proposed for LaBelle SCF

By Katrina Elsen
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

LABELLE — Hendry County Commissioners enthusiastically welcome the idea to add an air show to the Swamp Cabbage Festival celebrations.

Last year, spectators at the Swamp Cabbage Festival were thrilled to see a flyover at the start of the parade.

At the Dec. 10 commission meeting, Ken Wells addressed the board with

• See **Air Show** on page 2



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RV STORAGE

Clewiston City Commission discusses RV ordinance

By Cathy Womble
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

CLEWISTON — During the Dec. 16 meeting, the Clewiston City Commission discussed an ordinance addressing storage on private property. This is especially pertaining to RVs parked on private property.

Fire Chief Travis Reese addressed the council concerning the ordinance they have been working on for months. He said the technical review board was asked to take a look at the ordinance. They have had ongoing problems due to RVs parked in front yards.

There have also been occurrences of people living in RVs in backyards. He added that code enforcement cannot do anything about this unless they can see it from the front or side yard. "It's not like we can go in and inspect it," he said. "It is a problem.

This ordinance does not address that. I just wanted you to be aware of it."

He went on to say the Technical Review Committee suggests allowing RVs to be stored in the front yard, with a maximum of two. They can still put them in the back yard but now can also put them in the front.

Mayor Pittman said he would like to make sure the ordinance includes that the RV cannot exceed that person's property line. For example, the tongue cannot stick out over the sidewalk.

Reese specified that this ordinance does not address boats, hunting buggies, etc. That is a totally different ordinance.

The commission discussed ways to know the campers were being lived in. He said normally they find out during a fire call.

City Manager Danny Williams

said you can see lights coming from the backyard early in the morning. Then, you can report it so code enforcement can go look. However, code enforcement said they cannot go into back yards without permission or a warrant.

Several of the commission members said they were not happy with the language in the ordinance. They do not want two campers in the front yard. They want to clean the community up and make it look nice.

The fire chief said they did not want to be burdensome or make people feel penalized, but they are running into many instances where people are using them as cheap housing.

New commissioner James Pittman asked if a family member came in and wanted to park an RV in the driveway for a few days would it be legal. He was told that as the ordinance

stands now, the answer would be no.

The mayor asked that they make some changes to the ordinance and bring it back before the board.

Some of the changes they want to make include only one RV, cannot exceed property line in any direction, if in front yard, it must have an improved drive. The drive for the RV should be at least four feet from existing drives.

The chief said they also have the option of making decisions based on which neighborhood they are discussing. This would be better discussed in a workshop though.

After discussion, they decided to accept the ordinance with the changes. The vote was unanimous. The ordinance will come back to them later, and the commissioners will have a workshop to discuss further changes.

FROM THE COVER

Air Show

• From page 1

the idea for an airshow.

Wells, a pilot for American Airlines,

said he is a big promoter of aviation.

"Last year we decided to do a fly-in event. We were able to put a pretty cool event together," he said.

He asked to put on an air show as a compliment to the Swamp Cabbage Festival (SCF). Wells said his group has met with the SCF committee.

"We are working in accordance

with the FAA and our colleagues at the airport," he added.

He said they will need a fire engine and an ambulance at the airshow.

On Saturday a flyover arrival is planned at 10 a.m. Wells said the warbird flyover would not be part of the air show since it will be timed to happen at the start of the parade.

The airshow would start at 4:30 p.m. and end by 5:45 p.m. so it does

not conflict with the rodeo.

On Sunday, the air show would start at noon.

"We are currently working with a lot of private sponsors to make this happen," said Wells.

Hendry County Commissioner Ramon Iglesias said he would like to see an air show separate from the festival, because many people who are busy with the festival would enjoy going to an air show. He suggested

they hold air shows twice a year.

He said the show could draw in aviation enthusiasts from the coast. He said they could include activities for young people who are interested in aviation.

The board asked Wells to come back to their next meeting with details.

Speed Cameras

• From page 1

zones safer.

Speed cameras were

made legal in Florida when Governor Ron DeSantis signed HB 657 back in 2023. The law allows local governments in Florida to install camera-equipped radar detection devices in and around schools to target drivers driving ten miles per hour or more over the posted school zone speed limit.

The cameras went in place Dec.

12, followed by a 30-day period when drivers will receive warnings for driving more than 10 miles over the posted speed limit in the school zone. After that, drivers going 10 miles over the speed limit will receive a notice of violation with a \$100 fine.

Johnson presented data to the board gathered by the Governors Highway Safety Association that claimed that 54% of Florida drivers do not obey posted speed limits in school zones.

According to Johnson, data from Hendry County showed 3,318 violations in 24 hours. Johnson said the violations observed in Hendry County school zones occurred during the school day while the speed limit flashing lights were on.

Enforcement for the speed cameras will only apply to the times when school is in session and the flashing school zone lights are on.

"It's not a 'gotcha' program," said Johnson. "The whole point is to make

the community aware that it's here, and to slow traffic down."

Of the \$100 dollar fine, \$60 will go to the local municipality or county, \$12 to the school district, \$20 for the Florida Department of Revenue, \$5 for the school crossing guard program, and \$3 to FDLE. If the fine is not paid within 30 days, it becomes a uniform traffic citation, which means violators will get points on their license.

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HOLIDAY SPECIAL

Santa Express visits Clewiston

By Richard Marion
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

U.S. Sugar's Santa Express was back in December making trips at towns around Lake Okeechobee.

The company transformed their restored steam locomotive Sugar Express into the Santa Express, as Santa and Mrs. Claus traveled around the lake spreading holiday cheer.

The annual tradition sees representatives from U.S. Sugar, the United States Marine Corps and Toys for Tots joining efforts to deliver toys at several stops aboard the Sugar Express train. The Santa Express stopped in Glades, Hendry, Highlands, and Palm Beach counties where children of all ages got to meet

and speak with Mr. and Mrs. Claus. They also brought Santa letters he plans to check twice when he gets back to the North Pole.

"This is such a magical event and each year, so many children benefit from the generosity of U.S. Sugar and their employees," said Margaret England, MT4T Coordinator for Hendry County. "We are grateful for this partnership and to be able to bring toys and create lifelong memories.

The Santa Express has become a holiday tradition unique to Florida to benefit families across South Florida's sugarcane and vegetable farming region.



The Santa Express has become an annual tradition around Lake Okeechobee and in the Florida heartland. [Photo by Richard Marion/Lake Okeechobee News]

CALOOSAHATCHEE PARADE

LaBelle Christmas boat parade raises donations for Toys For Tots

By Richard Marion
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

LABELLE — The annual Christmas boat parade was held in LaBelle on Dec. 14 on the Caloosahatchee River, albeit somewhat smaller than in previous years.

The parade was smaller this year after the owners of the company that originally organized announced they were moving and could no longer run the parade. LaBelle resident Linda Clark-Corbitt volunteered to step up and help keep the parade going. Linda had been involved with the boat parade since 1999 and was happy to help support the parade. Specifically, she enjoyed the smiles it brought to local kids and the donations it brought in for Toys For Tots in Hendry County.

Linda's first time helping organize the parade was last year. Seven boats were in the parade last year, fully decked out with Christmas as they

sailed down the Caloosahatchee. This year, however, things became more difficult when her significant other was diagnosed with cancer.

Linda spent much of her time taking her partner to cancer treatments in LaBelle. But still managed to find time to recruit boats for the parade. She says she got nine boats to register for the event, but three called the day of to pull out due to the wind.

The parade donated toys to Toys For Tots and the second and third place winner in the parade donated their winnings back to the Toys for Tots organization as well.

Toys For Tots in Hendry County posted a public thank you to Linda on the group's Facebook page.

"Thank you Linda Clark-Corbitt for organizing the annual boat parade which ended with Santa's visit at the LaBelle dock at Barron Library," read the post. "The toys collected at this event will help bring the joy of

Christmas to less fortunate children in Hendry County."

Now at almost 75-years old, Linda says her time helping organize the parade is over and she's ready to

hand over the responsibilities. Linda says SW FL Heroes Foundation, a local nonprofit, has contacted her about taking over the reins of the event.



The annual Christmas boat parade in LaBelle helped gather donations for Toys For Tots. [Photo courtesy Toys For Tots in Hendry County]

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OPINION

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Green means GO!

By Reverend Elizabeth Nelson
GOOD SHEPHERD EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

Looking at old family pictures, the similarities are amazing. But why should that surprise us? After all, we are made in the image of God! Do you ever think about that and what that means?

There's a story of a woman sitting at a red light. The light turns green, but the driver of the car in front of her doesn't move.

The woman started screaming and yelling, honking her horn.

When the car finally moves, it's too late to miss the next red light!

The woman continues ranting, and she hears a tap on her window. "License and registration, please, ma'am." The angry woman sneers at the officer and complies. The officer checks and confirms that the angry woman behind the wheel is the vehicle's owner.

So, the woman says in a confrontational way, "So, officer, what is the problem?"

"Well, ma'am, I've been behind you for some time and read all your car stickers... I Love

Jesus... My Boss is a Jewish Carpenter... Follow me to Sunday School. When I saw you launch into a screaming rage, I thought the car was stolen!"

If we are made in the image and likeness of God, we need to show it. When life's situations take a toll, draw on the grace given to us, no matter the situation or problem. Isn't it better to reflect a loving God, than a crazy person?? For the record, when it comes to people not moving when the light turns green... I'm still working on that!!

ADOPT A PET



CALOOSA HUMANE SOCIETY SEEKS FOREVER HOMES FOR PETS

The Caloosa Humane Society has a mix of adorable dogs and cats who are in need of loving families! Come find your fur baby! The Caloosa Humane Society, Inc. is a not-for-profit, 501 (c) (3) status organization that receives no federal, state, or local funding and relies on donations, bequests and fundraising events. The shelter, 1200 Pratt Blvd in LaBelle is open Tuesday-Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information call 863-675-0997. [Photos courtesy of Caloosa Humane Society]



Hendry County News

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Hendry County's Hometown Paper

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INDEPENDENT
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Montura Christmas Festival was a success

By Heidy Posadas
IGLESIA VIDA NUEVA

CLEWISTON — On Saturday, Dec. 7, Iglesia Vida Nueva had our yearly Christmas Festival at the Montura Ranch Clubhouse!

Over 300 children came and enjoyed free food, games, bounce houses and toys. We couldn't have done this without our church team and our amazing sponsors: The Howard E Hill Foundation, U.S. Sugar, the Central County Water

Control District and their team, and Feeding with Hope.

We thank them for always believing in our cause and supporting us with this huge project, also a special shout out to the Spanish Club from Clewiston High School for joining our volunteers, you guys were amazing!

Above all we give all the glory to God, the reason we do everything we do.



The Christmas Festival princesses gave out toys and shared a little bit of their magic. [Photo courtesy Iglesia Vida Nueva]



Children tested their skills at rock climbing. [Photo by Heidy Posadas & Josue Pérez González]



Children had a blast on the tire swing at the Christmas Festival. [Photo by Heidy Posadas & Josue Pérez González]

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NEW YEAR: NEW LAWS

2025 brings new laws for Floridians

By Richard Marion

HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

OKEECHOBEE- On Jan. 1, a slew of new laws are going into effect in the state of Florida, including a law restricting the access of social media sites for children under the age of 13.

The law, House Bill 3, was signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis in March 2024. It bans social media accounts for children 13 and younger and requires parental permission for 14- and 15-year-olds. It also requires social media companies to terminate any account of an account holder younger than 14 years of age and provide 90 days to dispute the termination.

Social media companies will also be required to permanently delete all information related to these terminated accounts unless “there are legal requirements to maintain such information.”

How exactly will the enforcement of the law work if there are children under the age of 13 on a social media site? The law states that “knowing or reckless” violations could lead to the attorney general’s office filing lawsuits against platforms. Social media sites could also face lawsuits filed on behalf of minors. According to the law, the attorney general’s office will “not find willful disregard of a person’s age has occurred if a social media platform establishes it has utilized a reasonable age verification method.”

Parents will have the option to consent for their 14- and 15-year-old children to have access to social-media platforms though what the bill describes as “reasonable parental verification”. The law defines the reasonable parental verification as “any method that is reasonably calculated at determining that a person is a parent of a child that also verifies the age and identity of that parent by commercially reasonable means.”

That could see social media sites requesting from children the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of parents and then contacting the people whose names were provided by the children to seek information and confirmation. The bill reads that any reasonable method regularly used by the government or business to verify parents’ identities and ages may be utilized.

The law was set to take effect on Jan. 1, 2025, however a lawsuit was filed against the bill on grounds that it violates the first amendment. Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody has asked the United States Supreme Court to issue a stay of the lawsuit, which will allow the law to go into effect.

Other laws that go into effect in 2025:

Public camping and public sleeping

A new Florida law goes into effect in 2025 that prohibits counties and



Gov. Ron DeSantis signs Senate Bill 184. [Photo courtesy of the Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis]

municipalities from allowing public sleeping or public camping on public property, such as sidewalks. The bill allows a resident, local business owner or the Florida Attorney General to bring a civil action against a county or municipality for allowing unlawful sleeping or camping on public property.

Okeechobee County passed an ordinance banning sleeping or camping in county parks in October 2024 in advance of the law.

Tracking devices

A new law that went into effect back in October allows law enforcement to go after criminals who unlawfully track other individuals by expanding the scope of prohibited conduct to capture those individuals by placing Apple AirTags or similar devices in people’s cars, purses, or

anywhere else on their property.

Additionally, the bill increases the penalty for a violation from a second-degree misdemeanor to a third-degree felony. Parents, caregivers and law enforcement are still able to use tracking devices for lawful purposes.

Impeding, threatening, or harassing first responders

Senate Bill 184 makes it unlawful for a person, after receiving a verbal warning from a first responder, to violate the warning or remain within 25 feet with the intent to impede or interfere with the first responder’s ability to perform such duty, threaten the first responder with physical harm, or harass the first responder.

Protection of specified adults from financial scams

Senate Bill 556 is designed to provide additional protections for vulnerable adults or adults 65 years or older who may be victims of suspected financial exploitation. It will allow banks to delay completing certain transactions if there is a belief of potential fraud. It will allow banks to delay distributing money if employees think seniors or vulnerable adults are getting financially exploited. The bill also gives banks legal immunity if they act in “good faith” in delaying a payment.



Beatrice Jewel Ford,

age 93, of LaBelle, passed away December

1, 2024 in LaBelle. She was born January 9, 1931 in (Hendry County), FL, to the late (Edward Cockram) and the late Georgia B Hand. Beatrice was a longtime resident of LaBelle. She is survived by her sisters: Ann Williams of LaBelle and Judi Guy Neely of Houston,

TX, children: Joan (Cecil) Music of LaBelle and Billy (Grace) Ford of Murphy, NC, five grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren and two great-great Grandchildren. Beatrice was preceded in death by her husband; Earnel Charlie Ford in 2014 and son: Earnel Charlie Ford, Jr. in

1971. Graveside service will take place on Friday, December 6, 2024 at 11:00 in Fort Denaud Cemetery where Pastor Mitchell Wills will officiate. The family of Beatrice will greet friends and family from 10:00 a.m. until service time at the cemetery.

Hendry County News showcases a user-friendly platform at <https://www.LakeONews.com/obituaries/>. This platform features paid obituaries as well as memorials to celebrate your loved one’s precious life. Once posted, the obituary goes live on the site of your choosing, and our obituaries are picked up by Google alerts.

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If you live in a CenturyLink service area, visit <https://www.centurylink.com/aboutus/community/community-development/lifeline.html> for additional information about applying for these programs or call 1-800-201-4099 with questions.



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EDUCATION

FUNDRAISING



WESTSIDE STUDENTS RAISES MONEY FOR TOYS FOR TOTS

CLEWISTON — On Friday, Dec. 6, Westside Elementary School gave a special shoutout to student Vannah Waldon. Vannah's lemonade stand raised \$168, which she used to buy toys to donate to the Toys for Tots toy drive. Vannah's generosity is spreading holiday cheer! [Photo courtesy Westside Elementary]

CHRISTMAS CONCERT



EASTSIDE STUDENTS PERFORM CHRISTMAS CONCERT

CLEWISTON — On Monday, Dec. 16, students at Eastside Elementary School put on an outstanding Christmas concert. The Eastside Wildcats have so much talent! [Photo courtesy Eastside Elementary]

CAROLS



UEES EAGLES AMAZING IN WINTER CONCERT

LABELLE — Upthegrove Elementary Eagles were amazing at the Winter Concert on Dec. 12. For more photos, visit facebook.com/UESEagles [Photo courtesy Upthegrove Elementary School]

MUSIC



WGS PRESENTS STUDENT MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

LABELLE — West Glades School presented "Winter Night of the Arts" featuring student musical performances followed by a fun student art show themed "Under the Sea" on Dec. 9 at WGS. For more photos, visit facebook.com/WestGladesSchool [Photo courtesy West Glades School]



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TRAFFIC STATISTICS

Nine people killed on Hendry County roads in 2024

By Katrina Elsen
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

Nine people died in traffic accidents in Hendry County in 2024, according to the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) data.

According to FHP, there were 537 total crashes in Hendry County. Eight of those crashes had fatalities.

In 2024, 213 crashes in Hendry County resulted in injuries with a total of 339 people injured.

There were five bicycle crashes with no fatalities.

Of the 13 motorcycle crashes, three resulted in deaths.

None of the eight pedestrian crashes resulted in fatalities.

Hendry County had 79 hit and run crashes in 2024, with 12 people injured and no fatalities.

FHP investigated 11.55% of the crashes (62 accidents). Hendry County Sheriff's Office investigated 75.23% of the crashes (404). Clewiston Police Department investigated 13.22% of the crashes (71).

There were 126 crashes in Glades County for the year. Six fatal crashes resulted in eight deaths. The county had 54 crashes involving injuries with 86 people injured.

There was one bicycle crash and no fatalities. The county had five motorcycle crashes for the year with no fatalities.

There was one pedestrian crash; it was fatal.

Glades County reported 15 hit and run crashes with one person killed and five people injured.

Glades County Sheriff's Office investigated 55.56% of the accidents (70 crashes); FHP investigated 41.27% of the accidents (52 crashes); and, Seminole Police Department investigated 3.17% (4 crashes).

Statewide, there were 368,937 vehicle crashes in 2024, according to FHP. This included 2,715 fatal crashes which took 2,903 lives. Statewide, there were 155,869 crashes with injuries, and 238,446 people injured.

Of the total 9,005 bicycle crashes, there were 179 fatalities.

Florida had a total of 9,114 motorcycle crashes with 542 fatalities. The state had 10,085 Total pedestrian crashes which claimed 633 lives.

In the 94,511 hit and run crashes in Florida in 2024, 227 people were killed and 19,660 injured.

Statewide, Florida Highway Patrol investigated 27.96% of the accidents; Sheriff's Departments handled 32.49% of the accidents; police departments investigated 39.34% of the accidents; and other agencies investigated 0.21% of the accidents.

SONG & DANCE



LES MUSIC DEPT. PRESENTS MUSIC AND DANCING

LABELLE — The LaBelle Elementary School (LES) Music Department presented two magical evenings of beautiful music and dancing during the "Let It Snow" Winter Concerts. LES thanks Mrs. Rodriguez, prek teachers, staff, and parents who helped make these events a success! For more photos, visit facebook.com/LaBelleElementary [Photo courtesy LaBelle Elementary School]

CLEWISTON CITY COMMISSION

Pittman to continue as mayor

By Cathy Womble
HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

CLEWISTON — During the Dec. 16 meeting of the Clewiston City Commission, James Pittman was nominated and unanimously voted in as mayor. Pittman has been serving as mayor since 2020.

Hillary Hyslope was nominated and unanimously voted in as vice-mayor.

Also, during the meeting, the council discussed a personnel manual they have been revamping for the city. They said it has been a long process. Parks and Recreation/Human Resources Director Ashly Sergeant said she has spent a lot of time working on the manual. She started with the old manual and removed some unnecessary things. She said there were six pages of definitions, and most were of common things that

everyone knew the definition. She explained the old manual was much bigger, but the new one was more compact. She asked the commissioners to read the new manual and give her some feedback so she can make any changes they request. "We took out a lot of things that did not seem necessary," she said. It was very repetitive. She said she took out a lot of things she felt did not pertain to a city government. She said the copies she gave them were drafts and is open to feedback.

In other business, City Attorney Dylan Brandenburg told the commissioners that a recent vote on whether to unionize was held. 10 employees were eligible to vote. Nine exercised that right, and seven voted in favor. He said once the vote is certified, they will hold a meeting. It can take anywhere from one to six months, he said.

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FISHING

Schirling and Nagdeman are 2024 RMMC Series champions

SPECIAL TO HENDRY COUNTY NEWS

CLEWISTON — The 2024 Roland Martine Marine Center Series Championship presented by HUK is kind of a big deal. Top prize was \$40,000.

When the final bag was weighed on the afternoon of Dec. 15, 2024 in Clewiston, the team of Chris Schirling and Alex Nagdeman had 40,000 reasons to celebrate this holiday season.

They did it the hard way by rebounding after the first day with just 11.48 pounds that had them in 37th place. With the biggest bag of the tournament of 23.32 pounds on day two, their two-day total of 34.80 pounds put them at the top of the leaderboard and earned them the winning Crystal, Champion's Rings and the check for \$40,000.

"It was rough on day one," Schirling said. "But we didn't change nothing and went to the same area again on day two. We actually fished there last year in last year's Classic. We thought we had a chance there last year but kind of blew it. So it was awesome to get the win there this year."

By more than doubling their

first-day weight on day two, they put it all together for the win. That was made possible by the second biggest bass of the tournament of 8.49 pounds caught by Nagdeman on Sunday.

"It was on a Chatterbait in Gold Shiner" admitted Nagdeman. "I actually switched trailers on Sunday and that seemed to make all the difference."

"That must have been the difference because two monsters chomped on it today," said Schirling. "It's the new Bruiser Baits Sidekick that's only been out a few months."

"The timing was right," said Nagdeman. "Yesterday (Saturday) they weren't really coming in but we saw the right signs on the fish. Today, first fish we caught was beautiful with a white belly, so we thought, 'It's coming.'"

That was what it took to collect the biggest payday in Roland Martin Marine Center Series history. And they had to jump over some of the biggest sticks on the trail to get there.

In second place, just a pound and a quarter back, the power-team of

Jared McMillan and Dillon McMillan almost stole the show. But they came up just a tad shy with a Total weight of 33.48 pounds that earned them a very respectable payday of \$10,000.

Rounding out the top three was the team of Chuck Webb and Chris Wright that brought a total of 33.30 pounds to the stage in two days and put \$5,000 in their stockings.

As the highest paying team tournament trail in Florida, the payouts continued deep into the 145 boat field for the Championship.

Adding to their 1st Place check for \$40,000, Chris Schirling picked up another \$250 from Mercury as the highest fishing Mercury owner, while partner Alex Nagdeman collected \$500 from U.S. Sugar for the Big Bass on day two. The team also collected \$550 from Bruiser Baits in product and cash for the Mega Bag of the event. U.S. Sugar awarded another \$500 to Drew Wanczak for the Big Bass on day one. The 2nd Big Bass on day 1 came to Don Demott with Bill Fox getting the 2nd Big Bass on day 2 and earning them each



CLEWISTON — The team of Chris Schirling and Alex Nagdeman had 40,000 reasons to celebrate this holiday season. [Courtesy photo]

\$100 Gambler Bucks.

Tavyn Heisler collected \$100 from the Roland Martin Marina as the highest finishing Youth Angler. The highest finishing Female Angler earned Jenna Vlaar \$100 from Mary Ann Martin. And winning big for going small, the team of Mike Venditto and Jack Arcuri turned the smallest limit of 4.15 pounds into \$500 from AV Inspection.

CLEWISTON THINGS TO DO

Library hosts events

CLEWISTON — The Clewiston Library will host the following events in December: The Teen Manga Club meets on **Mondays** via Zoom at 3:30 p.m. On **Tuesdays** Mats for the Cats is from 10 a.m. to noon and the Gaming Club meets at 3:30 p.m. Ages 7-13. On **Thursdays** at 3:30 p.m. there will be an activity. Either a game or crafting. Book Club is on the **third Wednesday** of the month from 2 to 5:15 p.m. The Anime Club meets on the **third Friday** of the month at 3:30 p.m. Ages 9-13. The library will be closed for the holiday on Wednesday, Jan. 1.

La Leche to hold meet-ups

CLEWISTON — La Leche meets on the **second Monday** of the month at Montura Ranch Estates Park, 106 Ave. Del Club, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Virtual Meet-Up is held the third Tuesday from 3 to 7 p.m., call or email for the Google Meet link. For information, visit <https://www.lllflorida.com/Hendry> or email Maria.LLLHendryCounty@gmail.com or call 863-612-6264.

Do you need a ride?

HENDRY COUNTY — Ride the Clew-Belle public transporta-

tion service, serving Glades and Hendry Counties. Available Monday through Friday, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Seniors (55+) and children under 18 ride for less. To schedule a ride, contact STREAM at 1-877-935-4487. You can also schedule a ride and view schedules and pick-up locations by visiting heartlandrides.org/. If you need further assistance, call 863-612-4707.

Neighborhood watch

CLEWISTON — The Clewiston Police Department is looking for your input on starting a Neighbor-

hood Watch Program. If you have an interest in partnering with the police department and have spare time to get involved, please let us know by emailing Police Chief Tom Lewis at thomas.lewis@clewiston-fl.gov.

Register for Little League

CLEWISTON — Registration is open for Clewiston Little League. Last day to register is Feb. 1. See the link of the City of Clewiston Recreation Department page on Facebook.

Brevard Zoo offers variety of adventures

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Flamingos are among the exhibits at the Brevard Zoo. [Photo by Katrina Elsken]



Zoo visitors can kayak through some of the animal habitats at the Brevard Zoo. [Photo courtesy Brevard Zoo]



Brevard Zoo offers a zip line experience. [Photo courtesy Brevard Zoo]



The White Rhino isn't named for its color. The name comes from the Afrikaans word "weit" which means "wide" and refers to the animal's mouth. [Phot by Katrina Elsken]

The "Paws On" play area offers attractions for the youngest members of the family. Children of all ages are invited to cool off in up to 18 inches of water in the Indian River Play Lagoon, which includes a "dump tank," a mangrove area and a bubbling manatee sculpture. In the Paws On barnyard,

visitors can meet goats, alpacas, chickens and a giant tortoise up close.

Massive windows allow a view into a 20,000-gallon tank aquarium housing stingrays, sheepshead, tarpon, mullet and other local fish species.

The zoo also offers a popular train ride the whole family can enjoy.

For more information, go online to brevardzoo.org

SPECIAL TO HENDRY COUNTY NEWS & LAKE OKEECHOBEE NEWS

MELBOURNE – Want a little adventure with your family's next visit to a zoo?

The Brevard Zoo, 9225 N. Wickham Road in Melbourne, lets visitors zip line above the trees or kayak through habitat where giraffes and zebras roam.

The zoo is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last admission is 3:30 p.m. Visitors can stroll along board walks through areas such as Expedition Africa, Lands of Change, Wild Florida, Caribbean Trail and Rainforest Revealed.

Want a little more excitement? Try one of the Adventure Courses.

The Treetop Trek Chutes & Ladder course includes 22 fun elements and two zip lines. Participants must be at least 36 inches tall. Maximum weight limit is 250 pounds. Children age 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Those under age 18 must have a waiver signed by a parent or guardian.

The Canopy Walk is a self-guided rope course adventure from a unique perspective high in the trees.

The Challenge Reloaded course includes 17 elements and five ziplines.

The zoo offers two options for kayaking. Enjoy a guided tour that takes you past giraffes, rhinos, lemurs and more in the Expedition Africa area. Or take a self-guided kayak paddle through the Wild Florida Wetlands to view Florida wildlife.



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**Congratulations to
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Melody Marin



LABELLE THINGS TO DO

Barron Library events

LABELLE — Barron Library, 461 N Main St, will hold the following events: The Spanish Class will meet on Thursday, **Dec. 16** at 5-7 p.m. On Monday, **Jan. 20**, the Chess Club will meet at 5-6:30 p.m. and the Spanish Class will meet a 5:30 to 7 p.m. On Tuesday, **Jan. 21 & 28** Story-Time will start at 11:30 a.m. Sewing Club meets on Wednesday, Jan 22 & 29 from 4-6 p.m. Spanish Class meets on Thursdays, Jan. 23 & 30 at 5-7 p.m. On Jan. 27 the Spanish Club meets at 5:30-7 p.m. and the Chess Club meets at 5-6:30 p.m. On Jan. 29 Craftnoon will be held at 3:30-4:30 p.m. and the Sewing Club at 4-6 p.m. For information, call 863-675-0833.

Smoke Under the Oaks planned

Smoke Under the Oaks Rib Fest will be held on Saturday, **Jan 18**, at Barron Park, 1559 De Soto Ave., at 11 a.m. If you are interested in being a vendor or a Rib Team visit downtownlabelle.com. For information, call 863-225-2749.

Get your tickets for 2025 Farm Tour

LABELLE — City Farm Tour Council and UF/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service, 1085 Pratt Blvd, will hold its 48th Farm Tour of the Hendry County agricultural industry on Saturday, **Feb. 1** from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. This year's tour will feature a variety of interesting stops at some of Florida's most sophisticated agricultural operations including vegetable transplant and ornamental nurseries, citrus, sugarcane, and vegetable production, as well as one of the largest beef cattle ranches in the state. For information and tickets, visit Evenbrite.com and search Hendry County.

Attend Elvis tribute at FCT

LABELLE — Firehouse Community Theatre, 241 N. Bridge St., presents *Elvis: The Birth of Rock N Roll*, featuring Matt Stone as Elvis, on Saturday, **Jan. 25**, at 7 p.m. Then on Sunday, **Jan. 26**, attend *Elvis: From Memphis to Vegas* at 2 p.m. Tickets for each show are \$30. Get tickets by calling the ticket hotline at 863-675-3066. Leave a message and someone will call you back.

VFW flea market is open on Saturdays

LABELLE — The VFW flea market is open every **Saturday**, rain or shine, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. located between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Miller Avenue, near the Shell gas station on Route 80.

Legion plans events

LABELLE — American Legion Post 130 is located at 699 W Hickpochee Ave., across from the Shell Station. For info, call 863-675-8300. Upcoming events include the following. Pizza & hot dogs available – all day: **Sunday - Thursday** 11 a.m. till close and **Fridays and Saturday** 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Happy Hour is held on Monday - Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday Fish Fry nights is held from 5-7 p.m. Karaoke begins at 7 p.m. Friday & Saturdays, Karaoke in lounge beginning at 7 p.m.

VFW Post 10100 hosts events

LABELLE — The LaBelle VFW, 20 Veterans Way (Hwy. 29 next to rodeo grounds), plans the following events: Every **Saturday night** there will be entertainment. Every **Saturday**, best burgers in town. Serving from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Every **Wednesday**, Euchre cards at 5 p.m. First and third **Friday**, jam session begins at 6 p.m. Every **Sunday**, biscuits and gravy made

by Jennifer. Serving begins at 9 a.m. Second and fourth Friday, free juke box from 6 to 8 p.m. For info, call 863-675-8008.

La Leche to hold Meet-Ups every month

La Leche will hold Meet-Ups on the second **Mondays** of the month at Barron Park, 1559 De Soto Ave., from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Virtual Meet-Up is held the third **Tuesday** from 3 to 7 p.m., call or email for the Google Meet link. For information, visit lll-florida.com/Hendry or email Maria. LLLHendryCounty@gmail.com or call 863-612-6264.

Garden Club meets

LaBelle Garden Club meets the fourth **Monday** of the month at 7 p.m. at the Dallas Townsend Center at 1085 Pratt Blvd - across from the Health Department. Anyone can bring any plant or garden produce to exchange or share. Bring any plants that need identifying, any questions or local features happening. If anyone wants to share a treat for light refreshments, it's always welcome! For more information please call or text Nikki 239-564-2005.

Church offers grief support group

Caloosa Baptist Church, 550 W. Hickpochee Ave. holds GriefShare support group meetings. To register, call or text Cindy at 863-673-3855.

Transportation for veterans available

Transportation is available for to and from the Affairs Medical Center in West Palm Beach and the VA clinic in Cape Coral. Vans can only transport two at a time and they must sit in the back seats. Veterans must wear mask at all times while in the van, the service cannot transport

wheelchairs . Van scheduling number 863-675-5255. Disabled American Van Transport to West Palm Beach VAMC on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, leaving at 5:30 a.m. return 11 a.m. Disabled American Van Transport to Lee County (Cape Coral Clinic) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday leaving at 5:30 a.m. return 11 a.m.

Assembly of God Church services

LABELLE — LaBelle Assembly of God, 139 Fraser Ave, holds a service on **Sundays** at 9:45 am. and a worship service at 11 a.m. Bible Study is held on **Wednesdays** at 7 p.m. Community Ladies Bible Study is held on **Fridays** at noon. For information, call The church has a ramp and a wheel chair - and if you need assistance, call 863-675-0900 to leave a message.

AA meets in LaBelle

Alcoholics Anonymous meets in LaBelle at the following locations.
 ♦ Hispanos de LaBelle, 462 E. Cowboy Way, meets on **Sundays** at 9 a.m. and **Mondays and Fridays** at 8 p.m. (Spanish)
 ♦ Good Shepherd Church, 1098 Collingswood Pkwy., Port LaBelle Group meets on **Sundays** at 7 p.m., hosts a discussion meeting on **Fridays** at 7 p.m, and "As Bill Sees it" on **Saturdays** at 9 a.m.
 ♦ First Christian Church, 138 Ford Ave., LaBelle Group holds "12&12" meeting on **Tuesdays** at 7 p.m., a discussion meeting on **Thursdays** at 7 p.m., and an Early Bird meeting on **Wednesdays** at 7 a.m.

The AA 24-hour phone line is: 239-275-5111.

For more information about AA meetings, go online to <https://www.aa.org/>

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Public Notice

NOTICE OF MEETINGS FISCAL YEAR 2024 – 2025 CENTRAL COUNTY WATER CONTROL DISTRICT

PLEASE BE ADVISED THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE CENTRAL COUNTY WATER CONTROL DISTRICT ("THE DISTRICT"), HENDRY COUNTY, FLORIDA WILL BE HELD ON THE FOLLOWING DATES AT 7:00 PM EST OR AS SOON THEREAFTER AS DEEMED APPROPRIATE TO CONDUCT THE BUSINESS OF THE DISTRICT AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE, 475 S. CABBAGE PALM STREET, CLEWISTON, FLORIDA 33470.

JANUARY 22, 2025, AT 7:00 PM	JULY 23, 2025, AT 7:00 PM
FEBRUARY 26, 2025, AT 7:00 PM	AUGUST 26, 2025, FINAL BUDGET WORKSHOP AT 7:00 PM
MARCH 26, 2025, AT 7:00 PM	AUGUST 27, 2025 – FINAL BUDGET
APRIL 23, 2025, AT 7:00 PM	SEPTEMBER 24, 2025, AT 7:00 PM
MAY 28, 2025, AT 7:00 PM	OCTOBER 18, 2025 - LANDOWNERS' ANNUAL MEETING AT 3:00 PM AT CLUBHOUSE
JUNE 24, 2025, BUDGET WORKSHOP AT 7:00 PM	NOVEMBER 12, 2025, AT 7:00 PM
JUNE 25, 2025, AT 7:00 PM	DECEMBER 10, 2025, AT 7:00 PM
JULY 22, 2025, BUDGET WORKSHOP AT 7:00 PM	

THIS NOTICE FURTHER ADVISES THAT IF A PERSON DECIDES TO APPEAL ANY DECISION MADE BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE DISTRICT, WITH RESPECT TO ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT THESE MEETINGS, YOU WILL NEED A RECORD OF THE MEETING, WHICH INCLUDES THE TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE UPON WHICH ANY APPEAL IS BASED.

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MAY CONDUCT ANY OTHER SPECIAL MEETINGS OR WORKSHOPS AS REQUIRED. SPECIAL MEETINGS OR WORKSHOPS WILL BE ADVERTISED SEVEN (7) DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETINGS.

ANY INTERESTED PARTY DESIRING TO APPEAR BEFORE THE BOARD MAY DO SO ON THE DATES AND PLACE LISTED ABOVE.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, IF YOU REQUIRE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE OR SERVICES, PLEASE CONTACT THE DISTRICT OFFICE AT (863) 983-5797 NO LESS THAN SEVEN (7) DAYS PRIOR TO THE ABOVE STATED MEETINGS.
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SATURDAY, JAN 18 - JUDGING BEGINS AT 12PM

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EVENT SPONSORS

Riverside
The heart of the river



LaBelle
Brewing Co.



13TH ANNUAL LABELLE RIB COOK-OFF

DEDICATED TO THE "OG" ELDRIDGE BEDINGFIELD
SMOKE UNDER THE OAKS ORIGINAL GRILLER &
FOUNDING MEMBER OF GRILLS GONE WILD

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 2025
OPENING CEREMONY AT 10:30AM
PRIZES AWARDED AT 3:30PM

BARRON PARK
1559 DESOTO AVE
LABELLE, FL

DOWNTOWN LABELLE
FREE ADMISSION
TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

TASTE-TEST ENTRY & VOTE
FOR THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

1 RIB = \$3
5 RIBS = \$15
10 RIBS = \$29

MUST PURCHASE A MINIMUM OF 5 RIBS FOR A PEOPLE'S CHOICE TICKET
PURCHASE TICKETS DAY OF EVENT

TASTING BEGINS AT 11:00AM



FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

OPENING CEREMONY - OPERATION VET HELP
ARTS & CRAFTS VENDORS
LIVE DJ - MOORE 2 MUSIC
LIVE MUSIC - THE WALKER EXPERIENCE
INFLATABLES FOR THE KIDS

