



## Visit to the Holy Land

Community Church of Keystone Heights Senior Pastor Ray Peters took a group of 11 people to Jerusalem. – Page 11

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VOL. 8 NO. 4 THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2021

# Nitro Rallycross headed to The FIRM

Season-finale attracts the world's best rallycross drivers to Keystone Heights Airport

By Don Coble  
don@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Nitro Rallycross, the brainchild of action sports star Travis Pastrana, will bring its high-flying, high-speed thrill ride to the Florida International Rally and Motorsports Park at the Keystone Heights Airport on Dec. 4-5.

The popular racing series is a mixture of cars, motocross and adrenaline. Portions of The FIRM's road course, skidpad and the off-road course will be transformed into a trail that features dirt, pavement and jumps for the season-finale.

Although races will be televised live on the Peacock network, local and racing officials said nothing compares to the smells, sights and sounds of 600-horsepower supercars running side-by-side.

"It is so awesome to see the momentum building for Nitro Rallycross," said Pastrana, global motorsports icon and the driving force behind this racing revolution. "The reaction from teams has been fantastic. We've already confirmed more supercar entrants than ever before in an NRX event. Building four all new, unique and crazy tracks for this year to go along with Utah Motorsports Campus is something all of us have been working toward for years. It's going to be round after round of new challenges and

SEE NITRO, 10



Some of the world's top Rallycross drivers, including Travis Pastrana and Scott Speed will converge to The Florida International Rallycross and Motorsports Park for the season-finale race of the Nitro Rallycross season on Dec. 4-5.

## Nitro Rallycross facts

**Where:** The Florida International Rally and Motorsports Park at the Keystone Airport.

**When:** Dec. 4-5.

**Two-day tickets:** Standing room only general admission (\$36 each), grandstand general admission (\$50), VIP general admission (\$139). RV parking with 45-foot space and no



hook-ups also is available. Available at ticketmaster.com.

**Parking:** free at non-RV lots.

**Race format:** Saturday, Dec. 4 – solo qualifying

to determine seeding for Battle Qualifying; battle brackets; head-to-head tournament-style brackets, final pole position battle; Sunday – Heat races (two races with eight cars for five laps with four advancing to finals); semifinal races (two races with six cars for five laps with four advancing to finals); last-chance qualifying (one race with eight cars for five laps with top-two advancing to finals); finals (10 cars with one winner).



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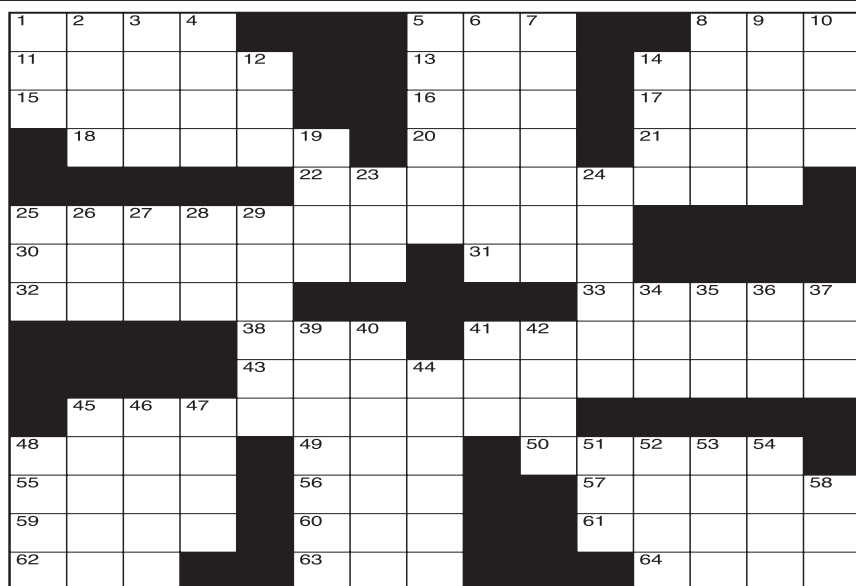


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# Crossword Puzzle



## CLUES ACROSS

1. Taxis
5. Mega energy unit (abbr.)
8. Single-strand break
11. Combinations of countries
13. Cutting tool
14. Small bay in Gulf of Maine
15. Actress Lathan
16. Chatter incessantly
17. Energy, style and enthusiasm
18. Simple shoe
20. Woman (French)
21. Abnormal rattling sound
22. Able to change
25. Future butterfly
30. Used in cooking and medicine
31. A street for nightmares
32. French modernist painter
33. Dishonors
38. Integrated data processing
41. Frameworks
43. Apply new materials
45. Where merch is displayed
48. American figure skater Lipinski
49. Cycles per second
50. Oohed and
55. Dark olive black
56. Peyton's little brother
57. Plant in the bean family
59. A wife: \_\_\_\_\_ covert
60. Born of \_\_\_\_\_
61. Arranges balls on the pool table
62. Title of Italian monk
63. Tooth caregiver
64. American feminist poet

## CLUES DOWN

1. Dan Rather's old network
2. Expression of sorrow or pity
3. \_\_\_\_\_ fide (Latin)
4. Sign of healing
5. Warm-blooded vertebrate
6. Model
7. Of or relating to plants
8. Plant of the heath family
9. Where to weigh something
10. Internal structure
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Paulo, city
14. South Slavic person
19. A way to record
23. Have already done
24. As much as one can hold
25. Auburn legend Newton
26. Comedienne Gasteyer
27. Beloved dog Rin Tin Tin \_\_\_\_\_
28. Midway between east and southeast
29. Call it a career
34. Former CIA
35. American time
36. Confederate general
37. Soviet Socialist Republic
39. Travel downward
40. Made red-blue
41. Vietnamese revolutionary Le Duc
42. Capital of Italy
44. Small bunches of flowers
45. Calvary sword
46. A distinctive, pleasant odor
47. A well-defined track or path
48. Cereal used to make flour
51. Retrospective analysis (abbr.)
52. Grayish white
53. Engrave
54. Famed men's basketball program
58. Midway between south and southeast



Members of the General Roy S. Geiger Marine Corps League Detachment 1047 present the colors at Tuesday's BCC meeting.

## Clay County Commissioners officials salute veterans

By Nick Blank  
[nick@claytodayonline.com](mailto:nick@claytodayonline.com)

GREEN COVE SPRINGS — To kick off a board meeting Tuesday, the Clay County Board of County Commissioners held a Veterans Day ceremony recognizing service members within the organization, the county and country.

U.S. Army veteran Michael Rogers, a Middleburg High graduate, led the Pledge of Allegiance. He spent 26 years in the service, receiving numerous medals and decorations. His last assignment was at Camp Blanding.

Rogers said Clay County has continued to recognize its veterans. He listed multiple family members of his who served in places like Pearl Harbor or Normandy, and now he has a daughter in the U.S. Air Force.

"This county has so much to offer as far as military history and heraldry, I would ask you to continue to do what you do, whether it's naming parks or things of that nature," Rogers addressed the commission.

While the Clay County Sheriff's Office's Michelle Reaves sang the National Anthem, pictures of several county employees who served in the military were shown in the commission room.

BCC Chairman Mike Cella said Veterans

Day is a day to commemorate, remember and recognize veterans' sacrifices, including the more than 30,000 veterans living in Clay County. Cella also introduced Veterans Services Officer Keith Brandon Tuesday night.

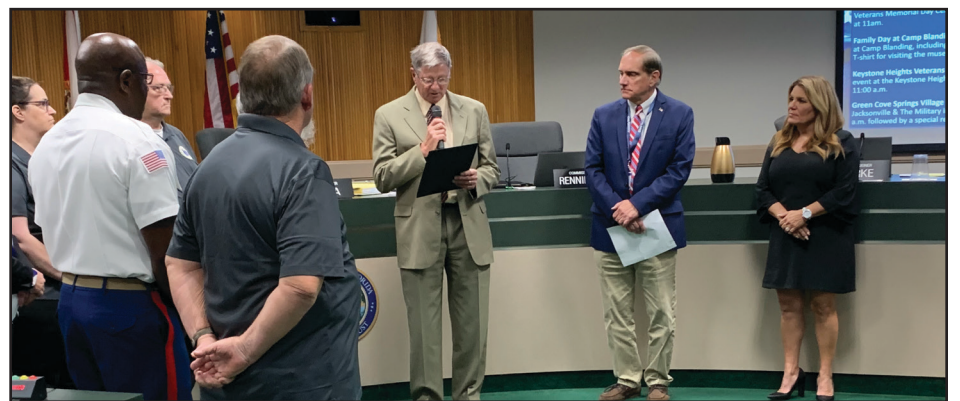
"Thank you all on behalf of those of us on the board, the residents on Clay County and this country that we love," Cella said. "We appreciate your service."

The colors were presented and posted by the General Roy S. Geiger Marine Corps League Detachment 1047. Commissioner Jim Renninger served in the U.S. Navy and he read the council's Veterans Day proclamation.

"I want to thank you all for being here today and thank you for your service," Renninger said.

Harry Silvers, who is the president of the county's Veterans Council, encouraged increasing the organization's membership after the proclamation was read. Meetings are at 2 p.m. the first Wednesday of every month at American Legion Post 250, 3939 County Road 218.

"You don't have to be high up [in the military], every veteran qualifies," Silvers said. "We want people to come to this and put in your input for what we need in this county."



County Commissioner Jim Renninger reads the BCC's Veterans Day proclamation at a meeting Tuesday.



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## Back where I belong: Nick Blank returns to Keystone Herald

By Nick Blank  
nick@claytodayonline.com

**R**eporters get letters on occasion, but packages are rare. I started with the Clay Today and the Keystone Heights Herald the summer of 2018 and I received a heavy brown parcel shortly after I churned out my first set of stories. I joked with the office staff that we should have a metal detector and make sure it's safe.

However, the package contained a copy of esteemed journalist Seymour Hersch's 2018 memoir "Reporter."

Hersch is journalism royalty for his work with the New Yorker and the New York Times, covering everything from the Kennedy family, the scandals of Nixon and Kissinger or exposing the My Lai Massacre, for which he won a Pulitzer Prize in 1970.

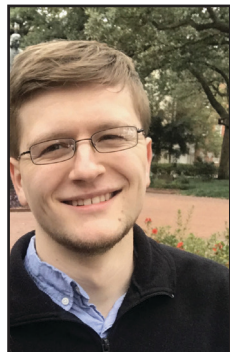
In "Reporter," one of the key themes is how much journalism has changed. Hersch complains, rightly, that the availability of information via social media and cable TV news cycle has damaged the country's dialogue when it comes to politics or cultural issues. He also foresees the torrent of misinformation present during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"For lack of time, money, or skilled staff, we are besieged with 'he said, she said' stories in which the reporter is little more than a parrot," Hersch wrote. "I always thought it was a newspaper's mission to search out the truth and not merely report on the dispute."

I thank the reader who mailed me "Reporter" and it set the tone for a rewarding 15-month stint at the Clay Today between 2018 and 2019. I covered the rampant growth, transportation challenges and day-to-day exploits of municipalities. I wrote several features about business owners and notable residents, covered a murder trial, the travails of a wolf sanctuary and a missing horse.

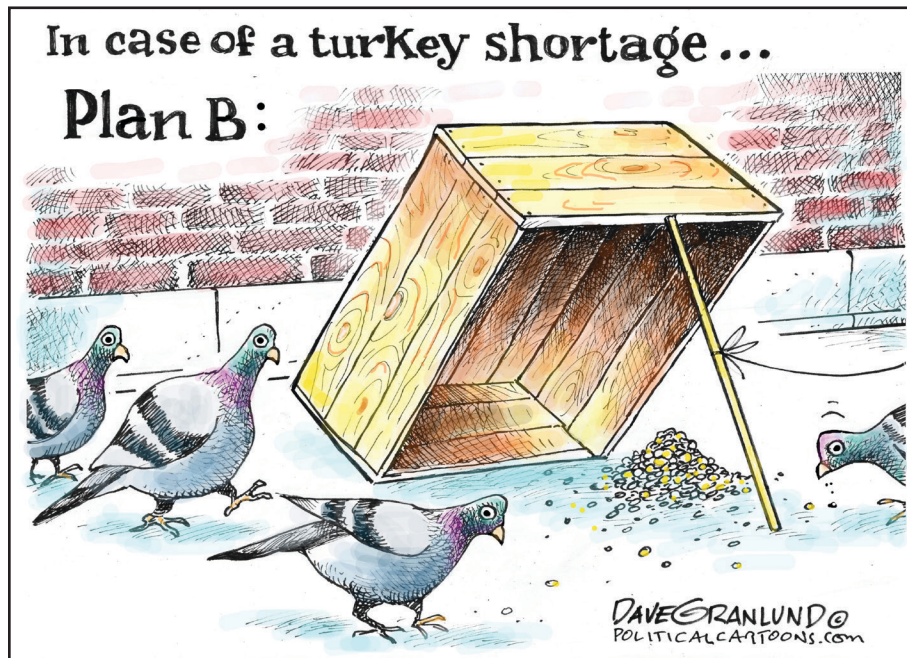
I come from an Air Force family and I lived in the Panhandle, England and New Mexico. I had family in the St. Augustine area, so I attended the University of North Florida. At UNF, I was a nutrition major until I had to give a 15-minute speech on the Golden Delicious apple. Then I pivoted to journalism and I've had stints with the Palatka Daily News, St. Augustine Record and the aforementioned time at the Clay Today.

At the local newspaper level, we comb



Nick Blank

SEE NICK, 5



## Kyle Larson finishes first after getting a second chance

By Don Coble  
Managing Editor

**K**yle Larson is a deserving NASCAR champion. Few have been more dominant in a brutally long 10-month season. Ten victories and 2,581 laps led – the most since the inception of the 36-race season – are important footnotes in a championship that will be defined by so much more than a fast car.

A perfect pit stop at the Phoenix Raceway Sunday catapulted Larson from fourth to first with 28 laps remaining. With that advantage, he did what he's done all year – run away from the field. Sunday's win said a lot about racing and race. And while he's never deflected blame for making a racial slur during a live stream of a virtual race last year, he's worked tirelessly since to be a better person.

Banished by NASCAR after only four races in 2020, Larson earned a second chance by growing past his indiscretion, and he did it with the backdrop of one of the most difficult times in American history when racial and cultural divisions ran deep.

Larson put himself above all that. He started a foundation to help families in need. He wanted to become a role model for children from all different backgrounds. His "Drive for 5" program started with \$500,000 of his own money, and he vowed to chip in \$5 for every lap led and \$5,000 for every top-10 finish. That added up to \$612,905.



Don Coble



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTIAN PETERSON/GETTY IMAGES  
Kyle Larson, driver of the No. 5 HendrickCars.com Chevrolet, celebrates with the checkered flag after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Championship at Phoenix Raceway on Nov. 7.

In addition, Larson became a volunteer with the Urban Youth Racing School, which encourages STEM-related careers for children in the Philadelphia area.

But most important, Larson taught everyone there is value in redemption. Hundreds of families and children now are served because Larson chose to mature emotionally and spiritually.

SEE LARSON, 5

## Word OF THE MONTH

Word of the Week is a feature that aims to help readers boost their vocabulary in a meaningful way that has practical application. Each week, our editorial staff presents a word, its definition and its use in a sentence.

**Suborn:** (suh-BORN) a verb that means to convince somebody to do something illegal.

*"The next-door neighbor agreed to suborn the police by providing an alibi for his friend."*

## THIS MONTH in History

### Five years ago, 2016

- Addison Davis gets 74.4% of the vote to easily become the new Superintendent of Schools.
- Orange Park officials meet with transportation authorities and the Clay County Economic Development Corp. to discuss how the First Coast Expressway will affect traffic in their town.
- The Charles "Mickey" Fields Academy Wing is dedicated at Orange Park High.

### 10 years ago, 2011

- Fraternal twins Erich and Christian Keplinger of Ridgeview High won the Bonnie Plants cabbage-growing competition.
- Haven Hospice volunteer Betty Zowarka of Keystone Heights was awarded the Volunteers are the Foundation of Hospice Award for Organizational Support.
- A group of 30 students pick up an estimated 18,000 cigarette butts on River Road and Kingsley Avenue in Orange Park.

### 20 years ago, 2001

- The Clay County Planning Commission votes to approve changes to the Lake Asbury master plan to include a developed land-use category as a compromise to both residents and developers.
- The Orange Park Town Council votes to allow residents to not identify themselves if they file a complaint against the code enforcement department.
- Fire guts the Blue Water Bay restaurant in Melrose.

### 30 years ago, 1991

- Parents at Clay Hill, Green Cove Springs, Ridgeview and Charles E. Bennett elementaries vote in favor of year-round schooling.

SEE HISTORY, 5

### Send us a letter ...

We'd like to hear from you. Perhaps you are concerned about the county commission, the school board or your city council or commission, sit down and take a few moments to write us

a letter. All we ask is that you keep it civil, no name-calling and write no more than 600 words. All we ask is that you stick to local issues, be clear and make a point. We reserve the right to edit for AP Stylebook errors, grammar and spelling. In your

email, type Letter to the Editor in your subject and send it to Managing Editor Don Coble at don@claytodayonline.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

### Opinions ...

The views and opinions expressed on this page are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Clay Today.



# Larson

from page 4

Now his message will be delivered from the championship pulpit.

“Eighteen months ago, I didn’t think that I was ever going to be in a Cup car again. Strapping in for the Daytona 500 didn’t even seem real, let alone winning the championship,” he said.

“No, it’s definitely been a journey, a roller coaster. But I’m very thankful for my second chance and every opportunity I’ve been given in these last 18 months.

Life is a crazy thing, and you’ve just got to stay positive through it all, and everything will hopefully work out for you.”

The enormity of his comeback hit him before the race started. He cried before driver introductions, during the pre-race ride-around and during his warm-up laps. By the time he crossed the finish line, he was a mess.

“With the pressure of this race and everything that was on the line, to win this championship – every one of these fans made me feel it,” he said. “I was trying to tell myself to just chill out, stop tearing up. I make fun of my dad all the time for crying, and I’m worse than he is.

“But [Sunday] was more tears than normal, I think, just because of the significance of the event, of the journey that it took to get here.”

Larson was lucky. Most, no matter how talented, don’t get a do-over. Car owner Rick Hendrick was one of the few with the resources, compassion and influence to bring Larson back. Hendrick found sponsorship for 12 of 36 regular-season races, so he filled the void by putting his own HendrickCars.com sponsorship stickers on the car.

“I never thought I was taking a risk. I mean, I know how good he is,” Hendrick said. “I’m just fortunate we were able to get him, and man, what a wheelman he is. Ten races won, 11 with the all-star race. It’s unbelievable.”

The championship is just a part of the celebration. He watched Larson grow into a person who inspired change and growth. He watched him become a winner – both on and off the track.

“You know, the more I was around Kyle, the more I appreciated the kind of person he was in and all the things he was doing out in charity,” Hendrick said. “I think last week or the week before, he visited three food banks and gave out a ton of money.

“I got to know the person. I knew the racer but got to spending time with him and his family and how dedicated he was to doing the right thing. He’s done everything he could to get back into the sport and [being] something we’re all proud of – and he’s proud of. He’s been more talented than I thought he was, and he’s been an unbelievable person. He’s got a big heart, and he’s done a lot of things that nobody in here knows about. He doesn’t try to get publicity, and he’s just a good human being, and he’s got a tremendous amount of talent.”

An inordinate amount of talent.

During his break from NASCAR, he won 46 dirt races, including the prestigious Chili Bowl. Tony Stewart, who knows what it takes to be a champion, has been Larson’s biggest fan. On Sunday, he called Larson the “best race car driver I’ve ever seen.”

And a deserving NASCAR champion.

# Nick

from page xx

through documents and sit through four-hour meetings so the reader doesn’t have to. You can see how stories develop over weeks and months with a newspaper rather than 30-second sound bites whenever the Jacksonville news stations feel like driving over the Buckman Bridge. It’s the journalist’s job to uncover stories that can possibly change lives and laws and ultimately to answer the fundamental questions of “Why is the story important and how does it affect you?”

Clay County, thanks for having me back. Got a tip? My email is [nick@claytodayonline.com](mailto:nick@claytodayonline.com).

And if you send packages, let us

# History

from page 4

- Incumbent Dennis Frick and challenge Ted Coleman each receive 438 votes during the election for a seat on the Orange Park Town Council.
  - Swecom USA, a company that makes refrigerated containers, opens at Reynolds Industrial Park in Green Cove Springs.
- 40 years ago, 1981**
- The county rules that bright attention-garnering lighted signs on Bland Boulevard are against the law.
  - The City of Green Cove Springs agrees to sell the Rosemary Hill Landfill to Clay County for \$1,450 an acre and the promise the city can use the landfill for 10 years for free.
  - Residents tell the BCC they oppose having a locked gate with limited access on Bayard Road with local residents having the only keys.



STAFF PHOTO BY DON COBLE

## Poppies for Patriots

ORANGE PARK – Volunteers with the Orange Park Women’s Club turned discarded plastic soda bottles into poppies to commemorate Veteran’s Day. Poppies are a nationally recognized symbol of sacrifice for the men and women who’ve served in the U.S. military since World War I. The colorful poppy field was created at the women’s club at 130 Kingsley Ave.

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# Atlantic Logistics acknowledges veteran Jonathan Mosal as Director of Government Services

## For The Herald

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Atlantic Logistics, one of the nation's leaders in the fields of transportation, planning and supply chain with third-party logistics services, will recognize one of its own on Veteran's Day.

One year ago, the Keystone Heights company hired Jonathan "Jon" Mosal as Director of Government Services to grow its interests in U.S. government contracts and services, carriers, shippers, and IT communities. Mosal's lifetime professional career includes serving as a military veteran, defense contractor, and civilian employee for the U.S. Army, Navy and Marine Corps. He has expanded Atlantic Logistics' business in procuring transportation work through local, state, and federal relationships that benefit customers along with the programs and policies of the company. His social, legislative, and administrative ties have earned Mosal recognition as an essential team member. Atlantic Logistics honors him on Veteran's Day, Thursday, Nov. 11.



Jon Mosal

Prior to his employment with Atlantic Logistics, Mosal served for more than 30 years as a soldier and a civilian/military logistician. He advanced through a multitude of assignments from small-unit leadership to include company command interspersed with staff positions in transportation component commands, and at joint and service levels in transportation. Mosal began his military service with the Army National Guard and, while attending college, he entered the Simultaneous Membership Program with the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps. He was commissioned as an Infantry Officer through ROTC's Early Commissioning Program. Mosal earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Valley City State University in Valley City, North Dakota.

Upon graduation, he was assigned to the Transportation Corps and reported for service in Fort Eustis, Virginia. Mosal spent a significant part of his military career overseas with multiple assignments in Korea and Germany combined with advanced military training. "My interests and dedication to military and a life of civil service began with a strong family history in public service. This included my grandfather who served in the Army in World War I, and my father who also served in the Army between World War II and the Korean War," said Mosal. "Having

travelled extensively during my earlier career and while working and living in Korea, Germany and the U.S., I have truly enjoyed a wide variety of responsibilities," he said. Mosal added, "Through many separations during my own and my wife's career with the military, it is so nice to finally live together with our family in the Julington Creek area of Jacksonville."

"We are so proud to know Jon and benefit from his highly specialized field. He is a key member of Atlantic Logistics and joins 43 employees at the firm who depend on him for his expertise and knowledge in government," said Rob Hooper, the firm's founder and CEO. "We wish Jon, all military service members, and their families a very memorable Veteran's Day," he said.

Atlantic Logistics has an office at 150 S. Lawrence Blvd. in Keystone Heights.

Atlantic Logistics was founded 20 years ago and experienced record growth in 2020, moving 24,900 loads and generating \$24.5 million in total revenue. Utilizing the industry's latest technologies such as load-tracking, digital freight matching, and transportation management software, the company is prospering. Professional partners including Trucker Tools and McLeod Software have maximized Atlantic Logistics resources to meet continued expansion into 2021, and beyond.



## Atlantic Logistics collecting for Toys for Tots

### For The Herald

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Atlantic Logistics is participating in this year's Marine "Toys for Tots" campaign. According to James Crichlow, the company's Marketing and Communications Director, the staff at Atlantic Logistics is proud to participate in the campaign with Clay County Florida Marine Corps League to help local children enjoy a gift at Christmas.

SEE TOYS, 8

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**Fixed Base Operations  
Administration Building opens at  
Keystone Heights Airport**

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – City and county officials celebrated the grand opening and ribbon-cutting of the new Keystone Heights Airport Authority Fixed Base Operations/Administration Building. The \$1.2 million project started on April 30, 2019, and the new building includes a pilot's lounge and a larger conference room, and it was fully-funded by the Department of Transportation. The building is a few thousand feet away from the current FBO and the new property is 4,450 square feet. During the groundbreaking, Airport Board Chairman David Kirkland joked the event may have been the second groundbreaking at the airport since the U.S. Army began its operations in the 1940s. It was given to the city of Keystone Heights in 1947.



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## Toys

from page 6

The logistics company office at 150 S. Lawrence Blvd., is seeking members of the community to donate new and unwrapped toys for infants to children 16 years of age. The local toy campaign collection at Atlantic Logistics in Clay County runs Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. until Tuesday, Dec. 21.

Last year, the local impact of the charitable giving program in Clay County included 15,745 toys distributed and 5,780 children supported. Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public charity is the fundraising, funding and support organization for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program. The Foundation was created at the behest of the U. S. Marine Corps and provides support in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commander, Marine Forces Reserve, who directs the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program. The Foundation has supported Toys for Tots since 1991.



"We love this time of year and we're here to step up and help area families. Everyone in our office feels so connected to our neighbors, and we really want to do more for the community this holiday season. Hosting Toys for Tots feels good to us."

— Amanda Thacker, Atlantic Logistics Keystone Branch Manager

Nationwide, Toys for Tots campaigns are conducted annually in more than 500 communities in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. There are more than 20,000 Marines, Marine Corps League members, veteran Marines and volunteers involved in the annual campaign. The mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year, and distribute

toys as Christmas gifts to needy children in the community in which the campaign is conducted.

"We love this time of year and we're here to step up and help area families," said Amanda Thacker, Atlantic Logistics Keystone Branch Manager. "Everyone in our office feels so connected to our neighbors, and we really want to do more for the community this holiday season. Hosting Toys for Tots feels good to us," she said.

"Atlantic Logistics is proud to actively participate in programs to support the development of one of our nation's most valuable resources with children and families in need," said CEO Rob Hooper, Jr. "It's one of our company's tenets to share our thanks, and what better time than the Christmas season to distribute blessings of gifts for kids."

At Christmas, "Toys for Tots" coordinators, with the assistance of local social welfare agencies, church groups, volunteers, and other community agencies, distribute toys to needy children. Throughout the years, the Marines have also established close working relationships with businesses which are qualified to collect toys.

"The ultimate success of Toys for Tots depends on the support of the generosity of the community," said company Marketing and Communications Director James Crichlow. "We highly encourage our neighbors, friends and business associates to join us in supporting the United States Marines Corps Reserve and area kids through this celebrated and distinguished program." For more information, call Amanda Thacker at (904) 886-1109 or email [amanda@shipatlantic.com](mailto:amanda@shipatlantic.com).

*Wishing you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving!*

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## Fired Up

### Officials say new training facility could lower insurance costs

By Nick Blank  
[nick@claytodayonline.com](mailto:nick@claytodayonline.com)

CLAY COUNTY – Clay County Fire Rescue is hoping a firefighter-based training facility can bolster efficiency and lower fire insurance to county residents.

At a workshop last week, commissioners reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan, which passed at Tuesday's Board of County Commission meeting, that included a \$1.5 million burn building slated for the current fiscal year.

A site near Camp Blanding is being targeted. County Manager Howard Wanamaker said an agreement with the U.S. Army was still in the works and described the process to obtain the property as a heavy lift. However, Wanamaker said there would be opportunities to expand and the burn building could be used by other agencies around the state.

The area already has access to water and gas lines, he said.

"It would most likely be a combined use," Wanamaker said.

Assistant County Manager and Acting Fire Chief David Motes said the county currently acquires structures for controlled fire training activities. He said burn buildings, usually, towers, are tailored to specific scenarios with high temperatures and smoke.

"Burn buildings are state of the art and you can stop [the fire] if you have a bad situation," Motes said.

Commissioner Wayne Bolla asked about the need for the facility. Motes said





STAFF PHOTO BY JON CANTRELL

**Business group pumps support into Lake Area Bike Shop**

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – Members of the Keystone Lake Region Business Association met this past week at Lake Montgomery. Kimberly Morgan, Clay County Tourism Director gave an update on the upcoming Nitro Rallycross race to be held at the Keystone airport. New local business owner Pete Slaymaker with Lake Area Bike was the guest speaker. Slaymaker is shown with attending members of the KLRBA for a check presentation to his charity.

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## Nitro

from page 1

excitement.”

The race is expected to draw thousands of fans and bring about \$2 million to the Clay and Bradford county economies.

“The City of Keystone Heights is so very excited to see NRX holding such an incredible event right in our backyard,” said Keystone Heights Mayor Karen Lake. “On behalf of the City, we welcome you to our community and look forward to this great opportunity to host NRX and all those involved with the tour. We can’t wait to see all that NRX has to offer.”

In addition to Pastrana, the series features former NASCAR, Formula One and Summer X Games driver Scott Speed, the brother tandem of Timmy and Kevin Hansen.



“Hosting an event of this magnitude is monumental for our community. Rally racing is full of adventure and family fun, which is a perfect fit for Clay County and the North Florida region. We look forward to welcoming racing competitors and fans from all over the world in December.”

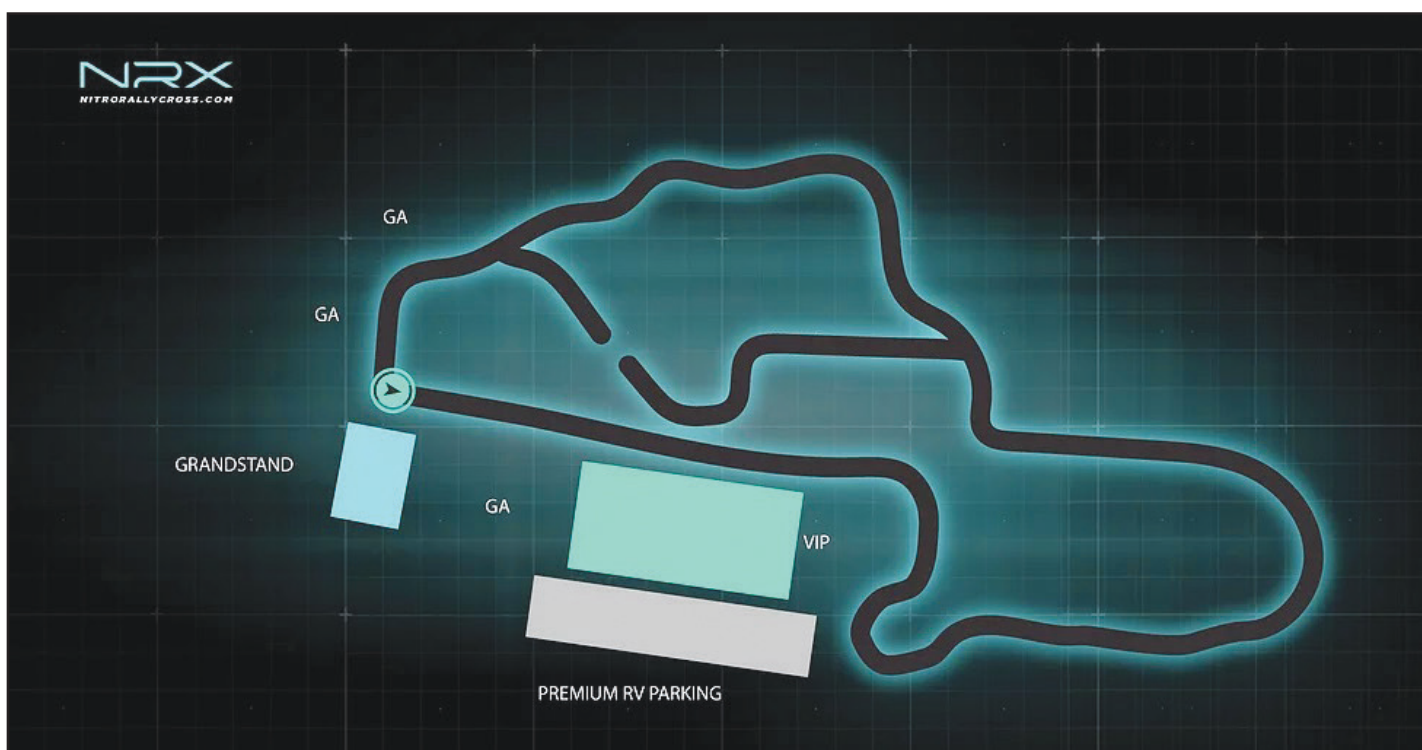
– Clay County Commission Chairman Mike Cella

“The FIRM is excited to be the Florida venue for the NRX North American tour,” said Larina Hintze, Vice President of The FIRM. “We share the same passion and goal to create a memorable experience for enthusiasts while providing some of the best technical driver training in the world. Nitro Rallycross program is creating an exciting motorsports event the entire family can take part. At The FIRM, ‘We Drive Passion’ and we appreciate NRX giving us the opportunity to share our combined passion through this family fun event at The FIRM.”

The event also brings a worldwide television audience through the NRX partnership with NBC and Peacock. In addition, to live broadcasts, a one-hour highlight show will air after each race on NBCSN.

Clay County will introduce a new program called Bandwango that is a new tool to connect visitors and local residents to an online passport where they can find deals for local attractions, shops and restaurants. More information on Bandwango can be found at [exploreclay.com](http://exploreclay.com).

“Hosting an event of this magnitude is monumental for our community,” said Clay County Commission Chairman Mike Cella. “Rally racing is full of adventure and family fun, which is a perfect fit for Clay County and the North Florida region. We look forward to welcoming racing competitors and fans from all over the world in December.”



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# Church of Keystone Heights group reflect visit to Holy Land

By Nick Blank  
nick@claytodayonline.com

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – It's difficult to travel to Israel at the moment, but a local church made the transformative journey happen earlier this month.

Community Church of Keystone Heights Senior Pastor Ray Peters took a group of 11 people to Jerusalem earlier this month for about 10 days. The trip was originally planned for April, 2020, about a month after the pandemic began.

"We had 40 people scheduled then COVID hit and you know the rest of the story," Peters said.

Christians make up most of tourism in Israel, Peters said. He said travelers had to be tested in the United States and Israel and also receive a vaccination. Peters said tourists were sparse compared to his previous visit to the country.

"There were a few groups there. Nothing like it was a few years ago," Peters said. "The people want tourists to return."

The list of sites Peters' group toured reads like a brochure straight from the Bible: the City of David, the Sea of Galilee, Nazareth and Bethlehem, the Church of Nativity,



Some members of the Community Church of Keystone Heights were baptized in the Jordan River, where Jesus was baptized.

Shepherd's Field, the Western Wall and the Garden Tomb.

"Basically, it was just us [at tourist sites]. It was a wonderful trip and definitely worth the hoops to travel to be a spiritual experience for everybody," Peters said. "[The City of David] is probably one of the sought-out excavation sites on planet Earth. We're liter-



Pastor Ray Peters prays at an empty Western Wall during the Community Church of Keystone Heights' trip to Israel.

ally going back thousands of years."

Peters is also Congressional Director for Christians United for Israel, an American-based organization supporting Israel. He called the trip a spiritual renewal and a place of harmony amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"You walk through Jerusalem, you see peace," Peters said. "You see Jews and Palestinians, Muslims and Christians side-by-side. It is not like the narrative we see on the news."


Mark Perryman, an elder at the church, said most of the sites are within walking dis-

tance of each other. The trip brings history alive, he said.

"You can stand there and see it all out there in front of you," Perryman said. "I'll never read scripture the same again because I've been there."


A highlight for Perryman was getting baptized in the Jordan River, where Jesus stood with John the Baptist. It was special walking where Jesus traveled, he said, such as the Pilgrimage Road or the old Gates of

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## New county Veteran's Service Officer hits ground to assist veterans

By Nick Blank  
nick@claytodayonline.com

GREEN COVE SPRINGS – A long career in the military and navigating the world of veterans' assistance brought new Clay County Veterans Service Officer Keith Brandon back to his home county of more than 20 years.

Hailing from Georgia, Brandon served 20 years in the U.S. Army. He retired to Clay County in 1998 and has had stints with veterans' organizations in Putnam County, Alachua County and the City of Jacksonville.

Brandon is credentialed with the Veterans Administration, Florida Department of Veterans Affairs and Disabled American Veterans for Compensation and Pension Claims. He is also a certified Military Veterans Benefits Counselor and a National Career Coach, according to a county press release.

The last three years in the army led him to prepare soldiers for deployment at Camp Blanding.

"I went, that sounds great to me, and I fell in love with the place," Brandon said. "You grow roots and stay."

It's normal for some veterans to go to Duval or Alachua counties for assistance, but now they can seek help locally at the VA Clinic in Middleburg or by visiting Brandon.

"You don't have to leave Clay County to find something we have right here," Brandon said.

A veterans' services officer can file

claims or direct veterans to resources. Whether the veteran is newly retired or has been retired for decades, Brandon said his goal is to let them know what benefits or educational opportunities they can receive.

"I want my fellow veterans to know I'm enthusiastic to be my own county's VSO and I'm motivated about being here. There's a whole lot of knowledge to give to veterans," he said. "The status of an injury can change. When vets come in here to see me, it's not just one time. I say if it gets worse come see me."

At the end of a service member's active duty, they complete a course about claiming benefits and adjusting to post-military life. Brandon said things fall through the cracks because leaving the military is a time-consuming process in itself.

"When they arrive back in their community, they get off the plane, come back to Clay County and think, 'Wow, what was it they said in class?'" Brandon said. "The first stop should be the veterans' services officer."

Board of County Commissioners Chairman Mike Cella said Brandon brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the county.

"... We are pleased to have him on board," Cella said. "We know he will provide an excellent level of service to local veterans and their dependents seeking assistance."

More than 30,000 veterans call Clay County home. Brandon notes he's the only veterans' services officer in Clay County, while Jacksonville has six.

"The biggest thing we're wanting to do now is proving the need for an additional VSO in the county," he said.

The county's Veterans Services Office can be reached at (904) 284-6326 or by email at Keith.brandon@claycountygov.com.



Keith Brandon



### Military families enjoy Keystone's YMCA Camp Immokalee

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – As a kickoff to November's Military Family Appreciation Month, parents and children ages 5-16 enjoyed taking part in summer camp activities, team builders, outdoor sports, and more at recently at Camp Immokalee's Military Family Camp Day. It was a fun day for First Coast YMCA to allow Military Families to spend quality time together and enjoy all that camp has to offer. Activities included: ziplining, canoeing /kayaking, learning how to shoot a rifle, a photo scavenger hunt, barn visits where families could feed the animals and take photos with/on a horse, archery and tie-dyeing shirts.



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The Tuesday after Thanksgiving has become known as Giving Tuesday, when people are encouraged to donate to charitable organizations. How can you maximize the effectiveness of your gifts – for the charity and for you?

First, ensure a charity is legitimate, with tax-exempt status. Also, do some research to determine if the charity is devoting most of its resources to its stated goal. An efficient charitable group will generally spend no more than 30% to 35% of its money on administrative costs.

Next, see if your employer will match your charitable gift. Many companies match employees' gifts on a dollar-for-dollar basis, and

some will go even further.

Finally, think about how you want to make your gift. If you give appreciated stocks, rather than cash, you may get a current tax deduction, assuming you itemize, and possibly avoid capital gains taxes you might incur in the future when you sell the stocks.

Giving Tuesday comes just once a year – but your charitable gifts can have lasting benefits.

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Holy  
from page 11

Jerusalem.

“It’s just incredible,” Perryman said.

For Perryman, there’s plenty more the group could have seen and he wants to return. A profound moment was residents telling the group, “Welcome home” when they arrived.

“I’ve been all over the world and I’d trade every trip for that,” Perryman said. “If it’s something you can make happen, make it happen at some point in your life.”

“You walk through Jerusalem, you see peace. You see Jews and Palestinians, Muslims and Christians side-by-side. It is not like the narrative we see on the news.”

– Community Church of Keystone Heights Senior Pastor Ray Peters

Community Church of Keystone Heights walk the streets of the Jerusalem earlier this month.



Fire  
from page 8

about 2% of departments in the country have an Insurance Services Office rating in Class 1, which is what CCFR aspires to. ISO ratings generally score how the preparedness fire departments have to handle fires in communities.

“[A burn building is] what stands between us and an ISO class 1. I know that’s aggressive,” Motes said. “That would make a significant reduction in people’s fire insurance in the county that are in areas with the hydrants.”

“That’s a good reason,” Bolla replied to Motes.

Commissioner James Renninger said officials must review the hazardous waste disposal costs to residents for out-of-county agencies to use facilities like a burn building. Motes said the region’s firefighters



cooperate when it comes to training, recalling how CCFR employees used to be bussed to Jacksonville to receive instruction.

Motes said the agency works closely with neighboring county fire depart-

ments.

“The departments that touch us, Putnam and Bradford counties, there’s some value gained in being able to train there together,” Motes said. “We work together.”

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**Tuesday, Nov. 9**

Lawrence W. Brown, 40, Keystone Heights, fraudulent use of credit card

**Monday, Nov. 8**

Emily A. Murphy, 37, Keystone Heights, simple domestic battery, simple assault

**Saturday, Nov. 6**

Elizabeth C. Cagle, 30, Keystone Heights, simple domestic battery

**Thursday, Nov. 4**

Michael R. McCarter, 23, Keystone Heights, possession-marijuana with intent to sell/manufacture/deliver, two counts felony possession-controlled substance, resist/obstruct/oppose law enforcement, alter/destroy/conceal/remove physical evidence, aggravated attempting to flee/elude law enforcement, driving with expired license tag

**Wednesday, Nov. 3**

Christopher A. Matus, 26, Keystone Heights, two counts possession-controlled substance, possession-drug paraphernalia

**Sunday, Oct. 31**

Kady L. Freeman, 29, Keystone Heights, two counts possession-controlled substance

**Saturday, Oct. 30**

Thomas C. Baker, 38, Keystone Heights, simple domestic battery

**Friday, Oct. 29**

Linda M. Buckler, 56, Keystone Heights, arson

**Tuesday, Oct. 26**

Leo C. Svitek, 50, Keystone Heights, simple domestic battery

**Sunday, Oct. 24**

Amy Tenorio, 34, Keystone Heights, assault/battery during burglary, vandalism

**Friday, Oct. 22**

Jake D. Warren, 28, Keystone Heights, simple battery

**Wednesday, Oct. 20**

Desiree A. Shingler, 34, Keystone Heights, grand theft

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**Tuesday, Oct. 19**  
Dontay T. Liggins, 33, Keystone Heights, aggravated battery

**Sunday, Oct. 17**  
James D. Rice, 43, Keystone Heights, felony domestic battery by strangulation

Police Briefs

Man faces drug, fleeing charges following traffic stop

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS – A man got more than a ticket during a traffic stop after a Clay County Sheriff’s Office detective found drugs inside his car.

Michael Rodney McCarter III, 23, of Keystone Heights, was charged on Nov. 5 with aggravated fleeing and eluding law enforcement, possession of more than 20 grams of marijuana, possession of oxycodone hydrochloride, possession of methamphetamine, tampering with evidence, resisting arrest, possession of drug paraphernalia and driving with a suspended license after he was stopped on Sept. 8 for driving with an expired license tag that was assigned to another car.

Following a short chase, McCarter parked on Spring Lake Village Road and ran away, according to the arrest report.

The deputy returned to the car and with assistance from K-9 Bull, was alerted of the likely presence of illegal drugs inside the car. A subsequent search led to the discovery of 154 grams of marijuana, two digital scales, a glass pipe and methamphetamine.

McCarter was arrested on an outstanding warrant from Bradford County. He was taken to the Clay County Jail on Nov. 5 and held with a \$62,021 bond after he was released from custody in Bradford County.



Michael McCarter

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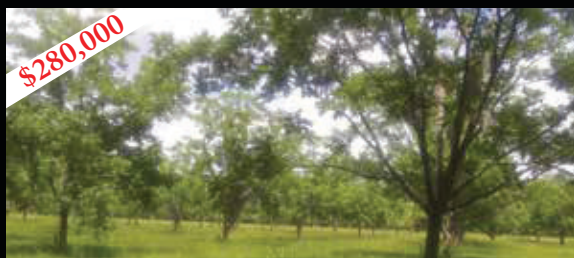
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# Indians perfect season ends; playoffs next

By Ray DiMonda  
Correspondent

GAINESVILLE - After nine straight wins over 10 weeks, the Keystone Heights High School football team had an opportunity to make Indian football program history by having a perfect season. In their season finale, on the road at P.K. Yonge in Gainesville, the Indians finally met an opponent they couldn't beat. The Indians figured out they found a way to beat themselves as the perfect season ended with a 33-14 loss Friday night.

"We are a ball control team. We slowly and methodically try to score," said Keystone Head Coach Chuck Dickinson. "We tackled poorly in the first half. We turned the ball over one time all year. Tonight, we turned the ball over four times."

With a heap of penalties and the turnovers, the Indians beat themselves as the Blue Wave stayed true to their script of an air heavy attack and ran up the first half score 27-0 on their way to a bruising 33-14 defeat of the Indians.

Things seemed to start off fine for Keystone Heights as they won the toss and as they like to do, took the ball first to try and deliver a gut punch with the first points. On the drive, the team drove the ball to the 20 yard line and faced a fourth down and five yards to go. Off a timeout, Dickinson dialed up a curveball with a Conner Guy pass over the middle that was incomplete, turning the ball over to the Blue Wave. The Blue Wave took the next 3:30 to work the ball 80 yards, highlighted by quarterback Aaron Small Jr. connecting with his go-to receivers Cameron Pedro and Jaren Hamilton, to go up 7-0. The Small-Pedro-Hamilton connection would wreak havoc all night.

The first half onslaught would continue



Keystone Heights quarterback Connor Guy lets fly with pass against P.K. Yonge.

each time the Bluewave had the ball. It wasn't fancy tricks, or misdirection. Just uncharacteristic Indian bad play that resurfaced over and over.

"We just had people missing tackles; we took bad angles and we missed," said Dickinson, who will open with Umatilla in the region 2-4A playoffs on November 12. "Our defense funnels things to one guy, and if he misses, it hurts you."

Keystone Heights had to overcome numerous self-inflicted wounds, like a snap that went several feet over punter Jeremy

Miller's head. Miller made an amazing recovery, found an inch of open real estate and was able to get a rugby kick off to move the ball.

Along with the four turnovers, the Indians fumbled and recovered the ball three times in the first half. Asked about the 15 to 30 mile per hour winds, constant rain, and brief downpours, Dickinson said "the weather really didn't cause the issues. We played in worse weather this season."

SEE INDIANS, 18

## Region 2-4A Playoff lineup

### Upper bracket

No. 1 Cocoa (8-1, 1st in 4A, 2020 lost to 4A champ Cardinal Gibbons 45-15 in state semifinal) (BYE)

No. 4 South Sumter (6-4, 19th in 4A, beat Palatka, Bradford, lost to Bolles 42-7 in region final) hosts No. 5 Hernando (6-4, 22nd in 4A)

### Nov. 19

Villages host winner Keystone Heights/Umatilla  
Cocoa hosts winner South Sumter/Hernando

### Nov. 26 Region championship

**Winner:** Keystone Hts., Umatilla, Villages vs. Cocoa, South Sumter Hernando

Region 1-4A playoff lineup (winner meets region 2 in state semi-final)

### Nov. 12

No. 1 South Walton (9-1, 10th in 4A, 2020 lost in region semifinal to Marianna 48-31) (BYE)

No. 4 Baldwin (6-3, 18th in 4A) hosts No. 5 Marianna (5-5, 24th in 4A, lost 32-9 to Gadsden County in region final)

No. 2 Bolles (6-2, 4th in 4A, 2020 runnerup, beat Villages, Fernandina Beach, South Sumter, Gadsden County before losing to Cardinal Gibbons in 4A final) (BYE)

No. 3 Andrew Jackson (7-3, 11th in 4A) hosts No. 6 Gadsden County (2-6, 8th in 4A, lost to Bolles in state semifinal 10-7)

### Nov. 19

Bolles hosts Jackson vs. Gadsden  
South Walton hosts Baldwin/Marianna

### Nov. 26

Region championship  
Bolles, Jackson, Gadsden winner vs. Baldwin, Marianna, South Walton winner

### Dec. 3

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# Indians

from page 17

At the half, the coaches harped on putting the first half in the rearview mirror and winning the second half. Whatever woes struck the team off the bus, were left in the first half as Keystone Heights looked like a different team in the second half. "We told the kids we have to keep doing what we do. Go out and pound the ball," said Dickinson.

The second half started good for the Indians as they stopped the Blue Wave and finally forced a punt. From their own 43 yard line, Keystone Heights would again hurt themselves by fumbling and turning the ball over. After the Blue Wave burning half the quarter off the clock, the Indians finally had another little victory as the ball went back to the Indians on downs. The teams would volley possessions, and while Keystone could not find the endzone, the Blue Wave were not scoring either. "In the second half, we did so much better. That is attributed to our offense. They were able to grind it out and get some yards, keeping our defense fresher." The hard work finally paid off when Kade Sanders slipped several tackles on the right side of the line and bulled his way into the endzone to put the first Indian points on the board with 6:07 left to play. Sanders had his number called again for the 2-point conversion to make the score 27-8.

Never laying down, the Indians continued to play wrecking ball and forced



CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS BY RAY DIMONDA  
Keystone Heights got the return of senior running back Kade Sanders in season finale that will enhance the Indians strong run game in their upcoming region playoffs.

a fumble and recovery on the first Blue Wave offensive play of the return drive. Pounding the ball, Keystone Heights running back Jackson Williams went to the other side of the Blue Wave defense, finding enough daylight on the left side to get the corner of the endzone, scoring at 2:45 left to play, 27-14. The pass attempt for two-point conversion was no good. Small would add another Blue Wave score on a single play quarterback keeper, 33-14.

"We'll look at this film for mistakes. We told our kids forget this game," said Dickinson. "We have a playoff game to play, and we have to get ready for that. We have a chance to make Keystone history. We never had a team win in a playoff game. I'm so proud the way they fought back after we told them in the second half, it's zero, zero, and we won the second half."



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# Stratton blasts to region XC title

**By Randy Lefko**  
*Sports Editor*

JACKSONVILLE - With a personal best time and the fifth best time in Florida this season, St. Johns Country Day School senior cross country runner Matthew Stratton made it very clear that his intentions for next week are to be aggressive.

Stratton, who has a second and third place finish at the Class 1A championships in the past two seasons, blasted the Region 1-1A course at the New World Golf course at Cecil Field with a 15 minute, five second runaway win Friday morning in cold, blustery race conditions.

"I went out in 4:47 which was about eight seconds faster than I had planned, but the weather was near perfect; cold, no humidity with just a mist of rain," said Stratton, who ranks fifth in Florida for 5K times in cross country behind Nease High's Rheinhardt Harrison's 14:45, run on the same course Stratton ripped his 15:05. "I figured while I was up front like that with noone around, I would let it go."

In the region 1-4A girls championship race, run Saturday morning in a downpour

at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, Oakleaf High junior Sierra Barrera finished 17th overall in 20:18.70 to finish as seventh individual qualifier. Top eight teams advance with three runners not on top eight teams given individual invites. Barrera finished 20th at last year's region race in 20:28.86 and missed her state ticket by one spot.

On Saturday, Olympia High freshman Emily Knople won in 19:07.70 with Buchholz taking the team title.

At the Region 1-1A race on Friday, Stratton passed the halfway point with a nearly 50 yard lead on the chase group which included Tallahassee Maclay's Clayton Knox and Pensacola Catholic's Jonathan Tutton whom Stratton went shoulder to shoulder with last year in the same region race. Note: In 2020, Stratton won the region race in 15:53 with Knox fifth at 16:57 and Tutton fourth at 16:42.90.

"I knew he (Knox) was there and Pensacola had a runner we knew about, so when I got a lead, I was going to keep it," said Stratton. "It's a whole new race from last year with all of us improving with the year of training. I was taking chances."



**CORRESPONDENT PHOTO FROM MACKENZIE GLENN/EPISCOPAL HS**  
Matthew Stratton, center blue, powers at start of region 1-1A race that he won handily in 15:05 to put himself as top contender to win Class 1A title on Friday in Tallahassee.



Keystone Heights runners take off at the region 1-2A race held Friday morning at Cecil Field's New World Golf course. Up front is Tyler Griffin, top Indian finisher.

After the halfway split solidified Stratton's confidence to win the race, he hit the mile to go mark near 13:30 and realized that his 15:10 on the same course a week ago was a possibility to improve.

"I wanted to go out my senior with a 14 minute time in one of my races," said Stratton. "I hit two miles at 13:30, did some quick calculations and started to pick up my pace. The crowd in the final finish 800 meters really helps."

Smashing through the finish line, Stratton knew he had gotten close, but was aware that he had left some fuel in the gas tank for next week's state championship attempt.

"The target has always been next week," said Stratton. "My dad (Greg Stratton, coach at SJCDs) gives me a lot of choice to race from the heart."

With Stratton the new champion, sophomore teammate Graham Myers may have put his name in the hat as the next great

runner out of Spartan land with a strong 16:18.80 fourth place finish behind Tutton and Knox, at 16:02.60 and 16:13.80.

"I wanted to get into that 16 minute range," said Myers. "I was kind of caught in a spot with space in front of me and space behind me."

With his two top runners in the top five, Greg Stratton breathed a moment of relief

**SEE RUN, 21**

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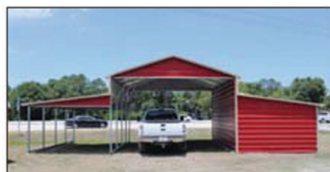
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Keystone Heights High's Alex Addington finished strong season with top team finish at region tournament.

## Addington tops Indian golfers at region

By Randy Lefko  
Sports Editor

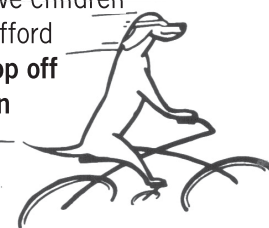
JACKSONVILLE - Keystone Heights High's boys and girls golf team flexed a bit of muscle at their respective region golf matches with golfers Alex Addington taking 19th in region 1-1A and junior Candace Jackson and her Lady Indians set to go on Tues., Nov. 2 in their region championship match at St. Johns Golf and Country Club. Jackson won her district title with a 78 score at Quail Heights Country Club last week.

Addington, top finisher for Keystone Heights throughout the regular season, pushed through with a 19th place finish at 7-over 79 at the Marsh Landing Country Club in a lineup of the top 19 all finishing in the 70s. Top finishers were Camden Goldknopf of Episcopal and David Chavez of Pensacola Catholic both with 2-Under par 70s. For Bishop Snyder, Matthew French, an Orange Park resident, finished 14th with a 77.

Addington with a 40-39 finish for his nine hole rounds, double bogied his second hole, but then dropped quick with a triple bogie on his final hole after two birdies and two pars.

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