

School News

HAPPENINGS FROM OUR CLAY COUNTY SCHOOLS

JANUARY 2022

VOL. 10 — ISSUE 1

Conduits and cars: Middleburg programs set up students for careers

By Nick Blank
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MIDDLEBURG — Students are getting ready for the real world with electrical and automotive Career and Technical Education courses at Middleburg High.

The electrical classroom contains the framework of a house, built by carpentry students, that's just under 2,000 square feet. Students are shown how to wire different areas of the structure.

"It's basically how a house would be wired in public," instructor Billy Mathis said.

Mathis is a veteran of the field and passes on his knowledge to students over

multiple levels. On the house's exterior are outlets, switches, lights and doorbell chimes.

The field needs workers with electrical experience and certifications, Mathis added. Students complete projects around the school, from hooking up lights to golf carts to stadium improvements.

"Here, they get all that base knowledge. They can skip a year of apprenticeship," Mathis said. "They're learning how to control power and send it where you want it to go."

On Monday morning, Mathis said his high-level seniors were on track to well-paying jobs.

SEE CAREERS, 5



STAFF PHOTOS BY NICK BLANK

The Career and Technical Education program at Middleburg offers work skills like construction and electrical servicing for students.



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Clay School Board members create new district boundaries

By Nick Blank
nick@claytodayonline.com

FLEMING ISLAND — Clay County School District board members have new district boundaries and numbers, though there was some contention, and a 3-2 vote, among board members about synchronizing the numbers with the county.

The boundaries were changed with a unanimous 5-0 vote to accommodate population increases from the 2020 census. Earlier this month, the BOCC altered their map to match the district's map.

At a school board meeting last week, Board Chairwoman Mary Bolla said there are instances where voters see county and school district candidates from their areas with different numbers. She said she didn't believe in doing something just because it had always been done that way.

"When people move to the county, which is happening in droves at this stage in the game, it is incredibly confusing to people," she said.

Board member Janice Kerekes asked about the cost to make the changes. In her experience, phone calls or emails from concerned voters about district numbers have been few and far between.

Kerekes said she didn't think changing the numbers was necessary at all.

"I've been on the board 11 years now, and I've had one or two people say, 'What are the different numbers?'" Kerekes said. "I think our voters are smart enough to know what district they're in. They get a sample ballot."

Board member Ashley Gilhousen said she has received emails that start with a

person writing they don't know who represents them.

"I think this [change] does give a strong image to the public, that we represent, that we want to be accessible, and we want to work together," Gilhousen said.

Board members Tina Bullock and Kerekes voted against the resolution to change district numbers. Bullock said the county and district are separate entities, but they do collaborate.

"This is where I think it's appropriate for collaboration," Bullock said after the unanimous boundary change vote. "I don't think making our numbers match is what we should have done."

In other business

The district also approved advertising the rezoning of Oakleaf High students to Orange Park High School to relieve capacity issues next school year. A similar vote followed to rezone Oakleaf Junior High students to Orange Park Junior High. The board voted 4-1 on both measures with Kerekes the dissenting vote.

Most of the rezoning affects the Argyle area. After an emotional public hearing last month with parents and students speaking against the change, Kerekes asked if anything more could be done.

"I just feel like we could have looked more and looked at different ways rather than just taking that one part of Argyle and moving it," she said.

Gilhousen wanted an open house for new students to acclimate to the Orange Park schools. Bolla, whose district lies in Oakleaf, said the rezoning is frustrating and she knows several families impacted.



She dug her heels in against the move last year, she said, but Oakleaf has 2,700 students and capacity concerns.

"It's incredibly frustrating because I also know how Oakleaf is. I know they have

been asking us as a board for years now to make some changes," Bolla said. "This is one of the most difficult decisions we'll be making and there will be more difficult decisions in the future."

CLAY TODAY

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Ridgeview grad's screenplay garners festival nomination

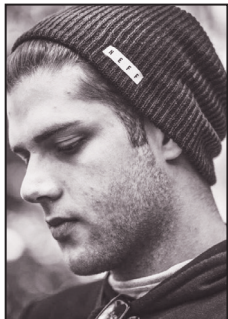
'The Jackal' highlights 'concept of home and what it means'

By Nick Blank
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GREEN COVE SPRINGS – Coming home during the COVID-19 pandemic led Ridgeview alum Guy Fisher III to reflect on what he's accomplished in the film industry and what he wanted to build on.

His screenplay, "The Jackal" was a 2021 summer semifinalist at the Los Angeles International Screenplay Awards. Fisher describes "The Jackal" as a neo-western about an aging barfly returning home.

"Ultimately, the goal is for it to become



Guy Fisher III

a feature with production behind it," Fisher said. "It's about the concept of home in your life and what that means."

The screenplay mirrors Fisher's own pandemic experience in Los Angeles and moving back to Green Cove Springs. He was working as an assistant editor when the pandemic began. Suddenly, many in the film industry had job uncertainty and the city was hit hard. Masks and groceries were not readily available, Fisher said.

"It felt like the end of the world," Fisher said. "For example, Hollywood Boulevard was completely barren. There wasn't a soul there. It was like that feeling before a hurricane."

Fisher, who could continue to work post-production jobs remotely, figured it would be a good time to spend with family in Green Cove. Though grateful he could keep working, it was strange to work on films from his room, he said.

"It's a weird juxtaposition," Fisher said. "I would have dreamt to be in LA and work on movies [in high school], but I can come

back to my childhood room and be closer to that."

No path to Los Angeles is the same. Fisher and his friends began with putting googly eyes on Mexican food for a small YouTube following on a channel called "Chalupa Wars."

"We were always making little videos and putting them on YouTube. We deleted [the channel] out of embarrassment," Fisher said with a laugh.

At the University of South Florida, Fisher majored in biomedical science for a short time. He recalled trying to make a news show at the school while realizing all the work a medical degree required. A tough conversation with his parents followed soon after about his career change.

Fisher said the transition from medical aspirations to the editing and post-production field required hours upon hours of video tutorials and focus.

"I realized then, I didn't want to give up this path. I wanted to explore," he added. "There is a chance to be creative and be OK

and be stable. It was not a clear path. It took eight months to find my first job."

Fisher has worked on TV shows like the "Handmaid's Tale," "The Expanse" and "The Mysterious Benedict Society." He has credits for the horror film "The Unsettling" and with marketing on the TV adaption of "The Lion King." He was a production assistant with "America's Got Talent" in 2019.

"It's exactly as crazy as you think it would be," he said.

Fisher's torso was used on the poster for the feature "Free Guy," which was released in August. The star of the film, Ryan Reynolds, was too busy and his head was photoshopped in later.

"That was fun timing for a guy named Guy to be on 'Free Guy,'" Fisher said.

The next couple of things on the horizon for Fisher are a pair of music documentaries. Fisher said he didn't know what his journey would look like, but his work put him in the right direction.

"It's a journey that's continuously unfolding before me," he said.

Tips FROM A VIKING

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College Briefs

Reedy earns Top College of Nursing and Health Sciences graduate honors at Valdosta State

VALDOSTA – Kyleigh Gail Reedy of Middleburg was the recipient of the Fall 2021 President's Award for Academic Excellence for the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Valdosta State University.

The President's Award for Academic Excellence is presented to the graduating student with the highest grade point average in each of VSU's six colleges – Harley Langdale Jr. College of Business Administration, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, College of the Arts, James L. and Dorothy H. Dewar College of Education and Human Services, College of Humanities and Social Sciences and College of Science and Mathematics.

Reedy was recognized during VSU's 232nd Commencement on Dec. 11. She will graduate magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and an Honors College Certificate.



Kyleigh Reedy

"I am extremely blessed and honored to be named the top graduate of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, as it has always been something I have strived for," she said. "Balancing the nursing program and being on the women's soccer team here at VSU was not always easy, with there being many tears shed and late nights spent studying. However, my experience at VSU also brought me my best friends and the best support system I could have ever asked for."

"Looking back at all that I have done here at Valdosta State, I can confidently say that my hard work has allowed for my dreams to start becoming reality, and I could not be more proud of the woman I have become. As always, go Blazers!"

As a student at VSU, Reedy played for the Blazer women's soccer team and volunteered her time to support the community as an elementary school and youth soccer volunteer.

Theodore Viens makes Presidents List at Cumberlands

WILLIAMSBURG, Ken. – In recognition of academic performance, the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of the Cumberlands announced Theodor Viens of Green Cove Springs as one of the students who earned a spot on the President's List for the fall 2021 semester.

To be eligible for the President's List, students must be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours, maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 4.0, receive an "A" grade in UC Engage, and be in good academic standing.

University of the Cumberlands is one of the largest and most affordable private universities in Kentucky. Cumberlands is an institution of regional distinction offering quality undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and online degree programs. Learn more at ucumberlands.edu.

Two Fleming Island students on Dean's List at Berry

ROME, Ga. – The Dean's List honored Hannah McDonald and Ellie Rosenau, both of Fleming Island, after they achieved an average of 3.5 or better on a 4.0 scale while carrying a class load of at least 12 hours during the semester.

Nationally recognized for academic excellence and as an outstanding educational value, Berry is an independent, coeducational, comprehensive liberal arts college of approximately 2,100 students. For more than a century, the college has offered an exceptional education that balances intellectual exploration, practical learning, and character development. Its 27,000-acre campus is the world's largest. Visit www.berry.edu.

Thomas Viens makes Missouri Valley College's Deans List

MARSHALL, Mo. – Dr. Diane Bartholomew, vice president of academic affairs for Missouri Valley College, has announced Thomas Viens of Green Cove Springs made the Dean's List.

The requirements for the Dean's List are a 3.3 or higher grade point average; at least 12 graded hours for the semester and no "D," "F," or "Incomplete" grades for the semester.

Known for its dynamic, richly diverse, and friendly educational environment, Missouri Valley College offers many opportunities to grow in mind, body, and spirit. Grounded in the liberal arts, undergraduate studies empower students to master interdisciplinary skills needed to succeed in a knowledge-based global society.

Pollard on Missouri Southern's Deans List

MO – Orange Park's Samanta Pollard earned a spot on the Dean's List for the Fall 2021 semester at Missouri Southern State University.

To make the Dean's List, full-time students must earn a grade point average of 3.75 or above on a 4.0 scale. The students qualified for the honor by earning the required GPA while enrolled in 12 or more hours of credit courses.

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Careers

from page 1

“... Absolutely I’m proud of them.”

Senior Blake Barfield wants to work in the field after high school. At a base level, the coursework on switches and outlets can be used in everyday life, he said, but Middleburg’s electrical program gives students the ability to seek apprenticeships.

“It’s a lot of learning and preparing you for things you wouldn’t expect,” Barfield said. “It’s cool learning how to do it all and how to do it yourself.”

Close by is a garage where automotive career and technical education students work on cars.

Teacher James Jourdan said students can earn certifications like painting and finishing, and structural and damage repairs. The cars worked on are usually donations. Students can also work on individual parts like hoods or fenders.

“They’ll gain the experience and they’ll have the certifications to go with it,” Jourdan said. “In today’s world that will give you a leg up.”

Other tasks include restoring a Chevrolet Chevette, safely learning how to prepare a car or repairing a chip with a sander.

“A lot of these take a lot of time,” Jourdan said.

Edward McCreary said the program is



Most of the cars in the automotive department are donated. Students can get hands-on experience working on them so they have a head start in the workforce after graduation.

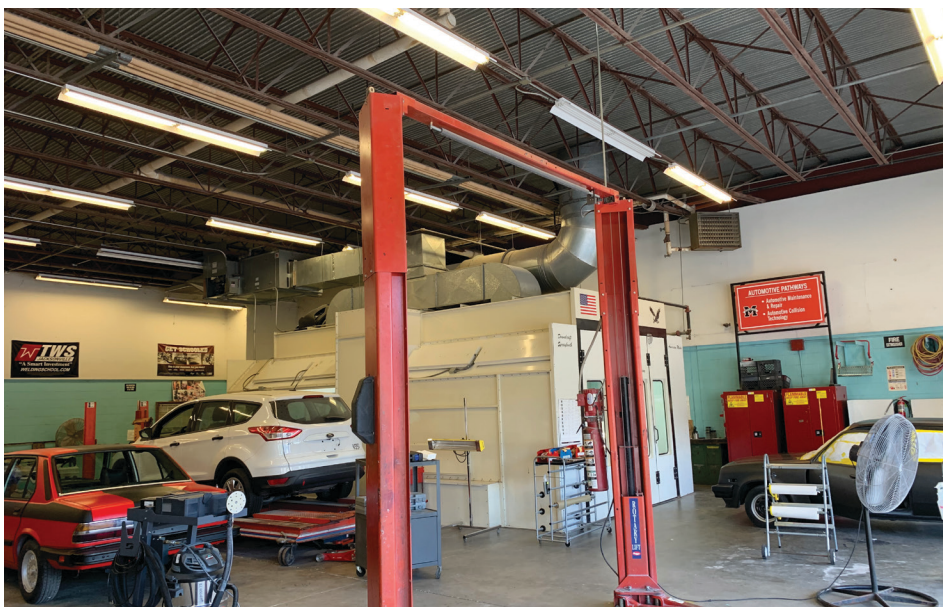
giving him skills for the future. The class gives him a chance to work with his hands, he said.

“You go to the shop and have fun, it’s like fun, but it’s work,” McCreary said. “These [Automotive Service Excellence] certifications carry over with us into our jobs.”

Principal Martin Aftuck said CTE programs, of which Middleburg has 14, can help get some students through the day.

He said the goal for every student is that they either go to college, join the military or become gainfully employed.

“Because of the skills and trades they’re learning here, I think it’s a testament to what our teachers do,” Aftuck said.



The automotive shop at Middleburg High would be the envy of any dealership. Students have the benefit of one-on-one training and using modern equipment to keep cars on the road.

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CLAY TODAY 2021 SUPER 11

Ammon, Thompson top performers of the season

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor
with Ray DiMonda, Mike Zima,
Doug Deters and Don Long

FLEMING ISLAND - After an exciting football season that included two playoff spots for two area teams; Keystone Heights and Fleming Island highs, and near misses by Clay High and Oakleaf High, the final three weeks of the season provided a chance to see athletes perform at their very best to try and push the season for a week or more.

Clay Today newspaper and the sports staff would like to highlight some of the very best players of the year in a tribute to a return to the competitions in all sports.

Our Super Teams, comprised of our staff picks for the athletes that provided the most exciting and telling stories of the seasons. Statistics are a part, week-to-week observations are a part and season-endings are a part of choices on the Clay Today Super Teams.

Football will be comprised of the

Super 11 team for offense and a Super 11 team for defense.

For 2021, Oakleaf High quarterback Drew Ammon earned two spots on the selections with a best kicker choice and also the offensive player of the year while, on defense, it was Clay High defensive end Blake Thompson, with his timely sacks, fumble recoveries and one electrifying tackle on the goal line with nine seconds on the clock that got Thompson the top choice as defensive player of the year.

Ammon did about as much as a first year starting quarterback could do to win six games with more than 30 points ending in losses, but the smooth tactical thinker found targets and executed the complex Oakleaf offense with efficiency and tenacity with plenty of close calls. Ammon had 1,750 passing yards, 17 touchdowns, seven interceptions and a QB rating of 85 for the season. Ammon also had 48 kickoffs that averaged better than 50 yards; punted 26 times

with 40 yard average and three landing inside the 20 and 33 of 38 point after kicks with three of five field goals for 42 extra points to the Oakleaf total.

Thompson was the barometer for the Blue Devil defense because as Blake went, Clay went and it was mostly good stuff for the Blue Devils in pressure situations with Thompson on the field. Dependable

three fumbles recovered. In upcoming issues, Cross Country's Super 11 teams will be comprised of the top three male and female runners for the season. Swimming will be comprised of the top three male and females swimmers for the year and a diver. Golf will be the top four athletes; male and female from the season. Volleyball will have a Super Six team plus one.

and aggressive, Thompson was where my camera went when a third and 12, fourth and six and final play against Middleburg was going. Thompson, Clay High's high-energy defensive end was the main disruption for the Blue Devil's "11-hats to the ball" mentality with a big engine and a fearless abandon to attack on demand. Thompson recovered numerous key fumbles in the biggest of games and had tackles for losses; sacks at opportune moments of the Blue Devil season; 60 tackles, eight sacks, two fumbles caused,



Offense

Quarterback

Freshman quarterback Cibastian Broughton possibly solidified his name as a four year starter for coach



Damenyum Springs with study on the high school game after the Golden Eagles opened the season with a big question mark at the position. Broughton brought an energy, a near-mistake free execution and the courage to keep getting up off the turf at the helm of a team that was looking at replacing a ton of talent to graduation; a daunting task for a returning quarterback let alone a freshman. Here's the ironic concept; Broughton did exactly what the coach asked.

Running back

Senior Dalton Hollingsworth at Keystone Heights was the focal point for the Indians rugged offense that featured games of nearly 350-450 yards rushing compiled by a four-man attack and a voracious offensive line. Hollingsworth was top stat guy in Class 4A, but also hardly ever came off the field with a handful of kick returns for exciting touchdown runs and a bucketload of tackles from his secondary position. To rush for over 1500 yard with 21 touchdowns, smash 60 tackles, kickoff occasionally, average 24 yards a punt return with a 90 yarder for a score and a few of them going 70-plus with penalty flags squashing the effort and 17 two-point plunges, that's workhorse numbers.

Running back

Orange Park Restall was just rug- junior JoJo simply ged.

his up front, Kearney, With big man Roderick Restall was a the muscle for the Raider offense on a team that had defenses from four state-ranked defenses with strong games against the likes of Oakleaf, Clay and Riverside. Restall finished with 1134 yards; five over 100 yards, and nine touchdowns. The tell tale of Restall's tenacity was his quarterback was the second leading rusher with just 177 yards.

Wide Receiver

Clay High had to adjust it's offensive personality a bit near mid season and that task fell to senior wide receiver D'Maurion Frazier who became the spark for the Blue Devils' offense. Frazier time and time was the surprise open guy 35 yards downfield that blew up a game with his speed and daring downfield snatching balls out of the sky against not one, but most times, two defenders. With 50 catches and nine scores, Frazier not only was the ace in the hole for coach Kyle Kennard, but Frazier also snared three interceptions when injuries and inexperience dictated a move to defense. Frazier also was a jet-sweep option for Kennard with a near 10 yards a pop when the need for a blast was needed.

Wide Receiver

Oakleaf High's Taylor Bradshaw was a familiar name on my desk each week

the Knights when examining results of the football team with nearly 20 yards per pass in 47 playsmaker getting the clutch guy for coach Frank Garis. Bradshaw's best games were against Camden County, seven against Bartram Trail. From Don Long's "That number 14 catches everything."

Offensive line

Top five guys here are a recipe for massive, mammoth power up front; Orange Park junior Roderick Kearney, Keystone Heights High senior Mason Dicks, Clay High's Desiron Gantt, Middleburg High's Tanner Peery and Oakleaf High's Wyatt Nordean.

Kearney, with wingman Braylon Hawkins, was the power for the Raiders with massive result (and a truckload of NCAA Div. I offers). Over 50 pancakes and a lot of pictures of him shoveling guys 10 yards past the line of scrimmage made Kearney the scariest guy to line up a defensive end against.

Dicks, with his shadow Luke Snider, was the quiet leader of the Keystone Heights run game that average nearly 400 yards per game. Both guys are state champion weightlifting team members and the best moment for Dicks was blocking a guy from the line of scrimmage on a two yard scoring plunge to the goal post and pinning him on the post much to the dismay of

the defender. Gantt, with his guard Brad Warren, were a smallish-sized pair that was the trough of doom for opposing defenders as the Blue Devils transitioned their run game from one style to another near mid-season. No problem, just keeping knocking people back. Gantt was one of smallest most effective blockers on the field for 48 minutes.

For Middleburg's Tanner Peery, his guy was Dakota Gerber, but Peery was the dictate for the newly-explosive Bronco ground game that had an elusive quarterback, a power running back and a speed demon that could break on a dime. Peery's leadership kept the Broncos attack moving the chains from his center position.

For Oakleaf, Nordean, like a NORAD commander, was the smallest of the massiveness on the Knights' front line and probably one of the savviest guys to direct the first line of attack. There was no doubt that Oakleaf had the firepower to move the ball; 1736 passing yards, 2300 yards on the ground and 1750 yards via the air, and the ability to put points on the board; just one game out of double figures and four losses with 30-plus points on the scoreboard.

X-Back/H-Back/Athlete

Caleb Freytag, Middleburg's most often wide receiver and a Jet Sweeper and kick returner was the guy I would have liked to have seen get the ball more times

Continued on page 10

Local students earn diplomas at St. Johns River State College

Students better prepared to enter workforce, continue education

By Kathleen Chambless
For Clay Today

ORANGE PARK – For so many people, graduation from college is one of the most important and exciting days in life.

For students of St. Johns River State College, that day arrived on Thursday, Dec. 16. Students from across Northeast Florida gathered at the Thrasher-Horne Center of the Arts for the 2021 Fall Commencement ceremony.

Many of the graduates from SJR State are adults seeking higher education than what they started with in the job market. Students choose to take specific courses for certifications they need. And some pursue an associate or bachelor's degree to push them towards the top of the list for job applications or internal promotions and job growth.

Korey Lebrasseur is a former nursing assistant who graduated from the SJR



Korey Lebrasseur

State College's EMT Certificate program. Though Lebrasseur has been a nursing assistant for 21 years, her long-term goal has been to become a flight medic.

"Completing my EMT certification was the first step on the way," Lebrasseur says. "I'm continuing my degree program in the paramedic program. In ten years, I see myself on a helicopter taking care of the critically ill."

Two students were dual enrollment students. They completed the requirements for their high school diplomas alongside the requirements for their associate's degree. Mallory Zike, a student at Fleming Island High, has just completed her associates in arts transfer degree. After graduation from FIHS, she intends to transfer to Embry Riddle University to study aeronautical engineering. Katlyn Griffin from Middleburg High also completed her AA transfer degree and will transfer to Clemson University to study psychology.

Both graduates had similar things to say about the experience of studying at SJR, and the challenges and benefits it provid-



Mallory Zike

ed. Both mentioned flexible scheduling. "I enjoyed having the flexibility SJR State offered through their class selection. SJR State offered morning and night classes that better fit my schedule than high school classes did." Griffin said.

Professor availability and flexibility also impacted both graduates immensely, with Zike commenting "I enjoyed being able to communicate easily with my professors and being able to speak with the staff when I have questions."

The genuine care and interest that professors have for their students is something I heard echoed by all the graduates.

Morgan Harmon, a graduate and recipient of the Collier-Blocker Scholarship, said: "All the teachers and staff here are so friendly, understanding, and encouraging. They want you to succeed as much as you do. They provide help and support with smiling faces."

The graduates were all driven and determined, especially recognizing the importance of accessible higher education. Scholarships, closeness to home, and af-

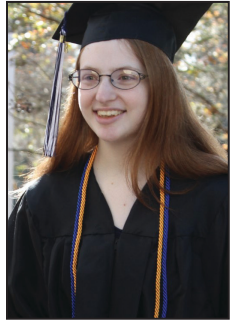


Katlyn Griffin

fordable programs in a variety of subjects draw in students from Clay, Putnam and Baker counties to the Orange Park campus.

Many of them graduate with further clarity besides their further education. Lebrasseur

continues to follow her dream of providing medical aid in high-pressure situations. Zike aims to earn a pilot's license and take to the skies as a personal and commercial pilot. Griffin went into psychology at the recommendation of her professor Heather Milam and her experience taking human growth and development and psychology classes. Harmon plans to attend Central Florida and earn her bachelor's in business as she continues to write novels and poetry while starting her own entrepreneurial endeavors. Despite the differences in the students' projected career paths, one thing is clear. The chance to learn at SJR State College gave them the steppingstone they needed to push further and achieve their dreams. Education is the path to progress, and these graduates are shining examples of its importance.



Morgan Harmon

SJR State Student Spotlight:

Meet Shannon Beechum

For School News

ORANGE PARK – Shannon Beechum, 22, is living her dream of becoming an aircraft electrician, thanks to a partnership between St. Johns River State College's Orange Park campus and Fleet Readiness Center Southeast, located at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville.

Created to prepare artisans for the future, the FRCS apprentice program involves four years of intensive training in a skilled trade in areas such as aircraft electricians, aircraft mechanics, electronics mechanics, machinists, painters, pneumatic systems mechanics and sheet metal mechanics.

Shannon chose the aircraft electrician track because of her interest in airplanes

and how they work. She initially planned to pursue her career goals by enlisting in the military; however, she said that the FRCSE apprenticeship program is a similar path.

In addition to living her career dream, another plus for Shannon is the daily, relatable conversations she has about the apprenticeship program with her dad, Terry, who retired from FRCSE after working for the company for nearly 40 years. He introduced his daughter to the apprenticeship, and Shannon said it's hard to put into words what it means to her to be following in her dad's footsteps. "I can't even describe the level of joy I'm feeling doing something that I know my dad's so proud

SEE SPOTLIGHT, XX





PHOTOS COURTESY CLAY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Seven Clay County students return home to be honored

ORANGE PARK – Author Thomas Wolfe was wrong. You can go home again. Seven Clay County high school students were honored Dec. 4 during the Alumni Hall of Fame ceremony at the Thrasher-Horne Center. From left, Coach Ron Riddle, who was the first Black teacher to integrate a school in Florida when he was hired to coach and teach at Clay High, joined Tony Steve, a world-renowned percussionist from Orange Park High, Kim Tracanna-Breault, who received the Education Achievement Award for her 30 years as a physical education teacher at Lakeside Elementary, Clay High graduate and current Clay County Sheriff Michelle Cook, Cliff Avril, a 2004 graduate of Clay High and former Seattle Seahawks defensive end, and Nolan Carroll, a Clay High graduate who played cornerback in the NFL, in person, while former Clay High and Olympic gold medal swimmer Caeleb Dressel appeared live virtually.

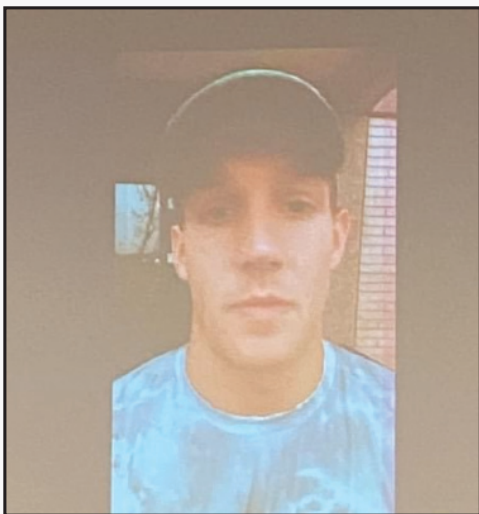


PHOTO BY U.S. NAVY BY M. BREEDEN

Amaya stands watch in support of Indo-Pacific region

Left, Lt. Iman Amaya, a graduate from Oakleaf High stand watch in the pilot house aboard Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Charleston (LCS 18) during routine operations. Charleston, part of Destroyer Squadron Seven, is on a rotational deployment in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operation to enhance interoperability with partners and serve as a ready-response force in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

VICTORIA'S SECRET

DICK'S SPORTING GOODS

HOLLISTER

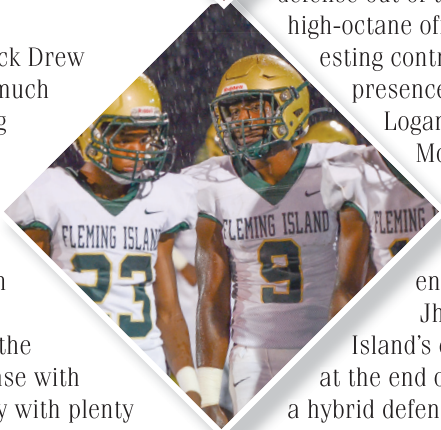
Buckle

francesca's

in his games. Freytag was the brimming fire for the Broncos' offense; ready to go on a dime when his number was called. With ripping kick returns, great long ball slashes and timely runs; especially that flip reverse thing that happened against Clay, Freytag was the hidden missile in the chamber.

Offensive Player of Year and Top Kicker

Oakleaf quarterback Drew Ammon did about as much as a first year starting quarterback could do to win games with six games above 30 points ending in losses, but the smooth tactical thinker found targets and executed the complex Oakleaf offense with efficiency and tenacity with plenty of close calls. Ammon had 1750



one of the leading attackers from the line of scrimmage. Moncrief, with 39 tackles; 18 solos with 3.5 for losses and two sacks, was a big play and a tense moment sack or tackle for loss that kept the Indians defense out of the way for the high-octane offense. An interesting contribution of Moncrief's presence, was that linebacker Logan Williams; about half Moncrief's size, picked up six sacks off edge blitzes behind Moncrief. Moncrief also played tight end, catching four passes. Jhace Edwards, Fleming Island's defensive highlight reel at the end of the season, in kind of a hybrid defensive end outside linebacker role, is another guy that needed to be seen early in the season. Edwards' explosive play at the end of the season only makes one wonder if the cat was unveiled early the amount of havoc he could have wreaked. He was the Clay Today player of the week on both offense and defense during the season, a feat never done before. Edwards constant strong play throughout the season then explosiveness when the team requested it was impressive. And, he smiled a lot while making 67 tackles, intercepting passes downfield, knocking down passes and even running balls into the end zone. Playing as an inside linebacker against Oakleaf, Edwards was key to shutting down the Knights' inside run game en route to the Golden Eagle upset that propelled them into the Class 7A playoffs.

Donovan Wimberly, Middleburg High's athletic defensive tackle, was going to be the lead guy for the Bronco defense that would be tasked to give coach Ryan Wolfe more chances to flex his offensive wizardry on the field after years of exhausted defensive effort by past Bronco defenses. Wimberly finished off with 43 tackles; four for loss and a season high six against St. Augustine, and 10 quarterback hurries that contributed to 13 interceptions behind him, giving Wolfe and quarterback

Luke Padgett plenty of offensive play time.

Linebackers

Clay High's Dominic

Martin was the fire behind the Blue Devil defense with his ultra-competitiveness keeping the offenses in front of him wary of 6-10 guys piling on the poor ball carrier. Not the biggest of guys in his position, Martin's 72 tackles with 5.5 for losses was impressive compared to the size of the people blocking him.

Middleburg High's Austin Cruce was just plain fun to watch. "Cowboy" as nicknamed was the prototypical tough-guy in the middle just picking fights against the biggest guy on the field. Cruce's presence racked up 105 tackles (six games in double figures), four sacks, two interceptions; one an interception that should have been a pick-six and a handful of fumbles.

Oakleaf High's Vladimir Rosa was a 72-tackle wrecking machine for the Knights' defense that was a big reason why teams passed over him rather than challenge him through the middle thus creating a lot of secondary tackles for the Oakleaf defense. Rosa's athleticism put him in tackles far away from him.

Defensive backs

Middleburg High's Malachi Flowers was the recipient of an ultra-aggressive Bronco defense with fellow Super 11s Cruce and Wimberly giving Flowers a shot at three interceptions for the season to combine with teammate Omar Holcomb's six steals as enemy passers had to pick their own poison as to who to throw against. Flowers was equally aggressive at the point of attack with 61 tackles; 39 solos, to be one of the lead stoppers for the Broncos. Flowers was credited with 12 pass breakups, but probably

could have had more had enemy offenses attempted to pass his way.

Dedric Walker, senior defensive back at Fleming Island got thrust into the role of lockdown corner when an injury took out West Point-bound Joe Stephens. Walker responded with the leadership in the secondary with three interceptions and 10 pass breakups dictating opposing quarterbacks go to the opposite side of the field. Walker also was a leading tackler for the Golden Eagles with 67 stops; just behind linebackers Walker Whiddon, Jhoel Robinson and Abram Wright.

Oakleaf High senior Dylan Stubbs (6'-1", 175 lbs) was big enough to play linebacker, played safety and a nickel guy at times and also rushed the passer on outside blitz to create a stat package of 59 tackles, two sacks and a handful of kick returns. Opposing offenses needed to know where Stubbs was to create space away from him.

Utility

Fleming Island High's Walker Whiddon was the quietest best tackler in the county with 85 tackles; 67 solos with one sack. Whiddon, much in the same history of his big brother Wesley, was best against the best with a season-ending flurry of nine tackles against Nease, 15 tackles against Oakleaf and 13 against Buchholz.

Defensive player of year

Clay High's Blake Thompson was the barometer for the Blue Devil defense because as Blake went, Clay went and it was mostly good stuff for the Blue Devils in pressure situations with Thompson on the field. Dependable and aggressive, Thompson was where my camera went when a third and 12, fourth and six and final play against Middleburg was going. Thompson, Clay High's high-energy defensive end was the main disruption for the Blue Devil "11-hats to the ball" mentality with a big engine and a fearless abandon to attack on demand. Thompson recovered numerous key fumbles in the biggest of games and had tackles for losses; sacks at opportune moments of the Blue Devil season; 60 tackles, eight sacks, two fumbles caused, three fumbles recovered.

Defense

passing yards, 17 touchdowns, seven interceptions and a QB rating of 85 for the season. Ammon also had 48 kickoffs that averaged better than 50 yards; punted 26 times with 40 yard average and three landing inside the 20 and 33 of 38 point after kicks with three of five field goals for 42 extra points to the Oakleaf total.

Defensive line

First guy to give some kudos to for job well done in tough situation was Ridgeview High nose tackle Derrick Mosley who was a Hard Hat, blue collar stud in the midst of a team that needed a MASH unit for most of the season. Mosley's stalwart play as the crushing center of the Panther defense was admirable in that most teams ran away from him thus making his 70 tackles, three sacks and 17 for loss even more impressive.

Keystone Heights handled a 10-2 final season record with four shutouts and just three games above a touchdown scored with senior defensive end Caleb Moncrief

Spotlight

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of,” she said.

As part of the apprenticeship program, Shannon has completed 18 free credit hours of classroom training at SJR State and is now involved in full-time, hands-on training at FRGSE.

Shannon, which phase of the apprenticeship program are you currently in?

Beechum: I'm in the final phase of the apprenticeship program, where I rotate around different aircraft lines every few months to train specifically on each bird to gain some knowledge and hands-on experience. I will be doing this for the next year and a half.

Why is this program so special to you?

I'm doing exactly what I wanted to do, and I got paid to go to school. It's unbelievable. It's a blessing.

What are you enjoying most about your training?

My current role as an apprentice on the floor gives me the freedom to learn by myself and with others to enhance my knowledge on things I didn't know before or think that I could do. Every day, I'm guided by an artisan who's already out on the aircraft line and has experience on the specific airplane, and we tackle situations one-on-one. It's rewarding to be able to gain the trust of the artisans who see great potential in me and give me the opportunity to perform tasks by myself, or to work side by side with them. I've gained so many friendships on the floor with people who have supported me along the way, and I thank everyone who has shaped me into who I am today as an apprentice. I wouldn't be where I am without their guidance.

What are your career plans for the future?

Eventually, in a few years, I'd like to apply for a management position, but for now, I'm set on trying to perfect my skills and learn as much as I can on the floor as an aircraft electrician.

For more information about SJR State's partnership with Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Apprenticeship Program, visit https://sjrstate.edu/fleet_readiness.html.

The Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Apprenticeship Program is a comprehensive training program developed in ac-

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