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Vol. XX, Issue 2  
Fall/Winter 2024-2025

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# Life



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*Joanne*

**Joanne Crowley**  
Publisher/Art Director  
Advertising Specialist

# 20

**ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION**  
EST. 2004

## *A Letter from the Publisher*

Our 20th anniversary celebration continues in 2024, which inspired me to take a trip down memory lane. My personal collection of printed magazines are featured below. I saved each publication because it is an encapsulated memory for me. My face lights up every time I talk about Citrus County Life Magazine. I am an artist by trade with a passion to create a visually stimulating, and on point magazine. Each article layout and ad design is carefully thought out and executed to showcase every business in a unique and professional manner.

My role with this publication has changed and grown over the years. When I started, I was designing a few ads and article pages. Now, as well as designing, I am networking, searching for the most interesting articles, and offering local businesses an opportunity to share their services, products, and stories with the residents of Citrus County.

Citrus County Life Magazine is all about community, sharing information, and showcasing the vast array of locally-owned businesses. As a strong community, we banded together to assist anyone who needed help during and after the recent storms. I've lived in Citrus County for over 30 years, and I am proud to be a part of a community that lifts each other up.

Thank you Citrus County for your continual support of the magazine. Enjoy this issue that is sure to educate, inform, and entertain you. Cheers to another 20 years!

### **Our Dedicated Staff**

**Rebecca Pujals-Jones**  
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Travel Writer

**Vicky Iozzia**  
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**Camille Quinn**  
Magazine Distributor

**Fall/Winter 2024-2025**  
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## About the Cover...

*This publication showcases business professionals who are dedicated and take great pride in their chosen career paths.*

*Enjoy their stories, starting on Page 14.*

*Our cover photos were taken at Liberty Park in beautiful Downtown Inverness.*

*Cover photo, and individual cover feature photos, by local photographer Rebecca Pujals-Jones. [www.pujalsjones.com](http://www.pujalsjones.com)*

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Letters, articles, and editorials should be submitted to the magazine at least 30 days prior to published dates. Our editors reserve the right to edit all submissions.

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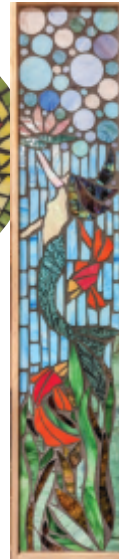
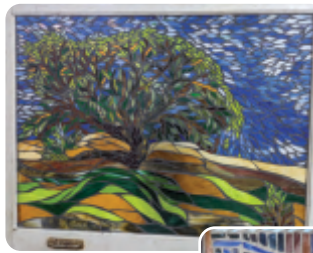


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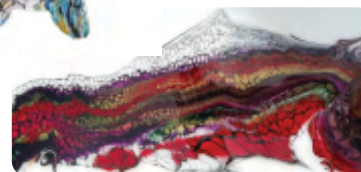
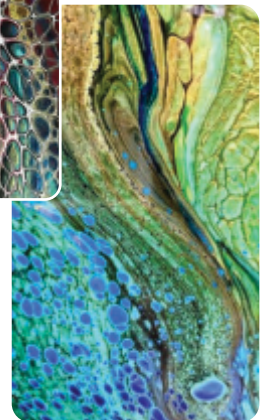
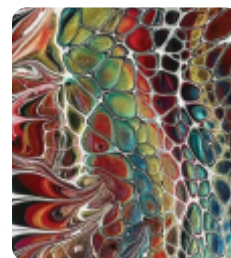
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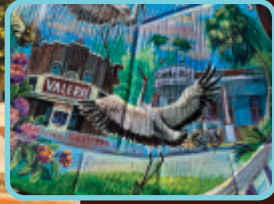
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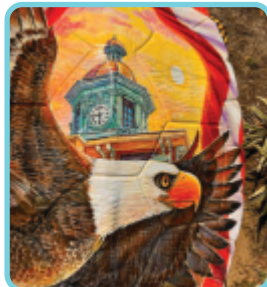
# The Painted Cooter Turtles of Inverness

Downtown Inverness has six new visitors, they are the Inverness Painted Cooter Turtle sculptures.

You can't miss them. They are beautifully painted by fine artists, and sparkle in the sunlight. Each turtle is painted with a mural depicting the heritage and culture of our "Small Town Done Right".

The turtles are the result of a labor of love by their creator, Paul Hertensen, of the Inverness Arts and Culture Alliance, a 501(c)(3) company dedicated to promoting and supporting arts & culture through collaboration, education, and advocacy.

It is truly a collaboration with sculptor Paul Hertensen, the City of Inverness, and the artists Leah Tinsley, Jay Ramirez, and Lena & Olena Stoddard. The Inverness



**Article & Photos  
By Tom Craig**

Painted Cooter Turtle sculptures are up to 8' in length, hand made of recycled aluminum, and weigh up to 800 pounds. At the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum, you can view the "Family of Painted Turtles" that include three of the smaller versions of the sculpture.

Paul Hertensen stated, "Each turtle sculpture is hand crafted and one-of-a-kind. The small turtles are made from ten molds, and the large turtles are made from thirty molds. They're welded together, and with a lot of grinding and filling, makes them look like real Florida cooter turtles. From beginning to end, the large ones can take up to 250 hours to create, including the artist's painting. Each turtle is painted by a local fine artist who transforms the aluminum into a beautiful mural depicting life in Inverness."



The Inverness Painted Cooter Turtles are environmentally sustainable. Paul says, "We call our aluminum cooter turtle sculptures generational art because they will last from generation to generation. When no longer desired, they can be recycled, making them one of the most environmentally friendly art forms on the planet."

Leah Tinsley, a local mural artist, designed and painted the turtle sculpture in front of Nine Street Brewery. Leah also painted the mural seen on the side of the building.



Another local artist, Jay Ramirez, painted the turtle sculpture that is located on the corner nearest to Pine Street Pub and Ally J's Ice Cream. He is also known for his Elvis mural that is on the side of the Ally J's building, viewed best in the parking lot of Pine Street Pub.



Citrus County residents, Lena and Olena Stoddard, painted a few of the turtle sculptures including the turtle at the City of Inverness Government Building, and the family of turtles near the Old Courthouse and the Valerie Theatre. Lena also painted the patriotic turtle located on Old Main Street across from Twysted Vyne, Stumpknockers, Cumbie Jewelers, and Salty Dogs.

The Painted Cooter Turtle that greets visitors to Inverness on the corner of West Main Street and Apopka Avenue was painted by the sculptor of the turtles, Paul Hertensen.

Inverness is our "Small Town Done Right". Come on over to Inverness and take a stroll through our quaint town that is now the home of the Painted Cooter Turtles. Along the way, you may stop in for a bite to eat, or find a nice gift at one of the many downtown shops and boutiques.

**For more info, visit:**  
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# Citrus County's **ICONIC** Christmas Tree

Check out the Citrus County Chamber's holiday event calendar for all of the enchanting events happening this Christmas season!  
[citruscountychamber.com](http://citruscountychamber.com)

Citrus County's Iconic Christmas Tree was a dream that Mayor Bob Plaisted and Sandy Levin had after seeing Brooksville's Christmas Tree Lighting Festival in December of 2022.

What if Citrus County had a "one of a kind" custom built tree outside our beautiful Historic Courthouse in Inverness? We could kick-off the Christmas season the Saturday after Thanksgiving, and everyone near and far could enjoy it. We wrote down all the fantastic Christmas events here in our county, and thought that with our tree, we could make Citrus County "The Christmas County of Florida."

We didn't want to buy a traditional tree. We searched and found Gary Schram, of D.S. Tractor and Tree, who is a genius at designing and building impossible and never done before items. Gary made his fame building monster trucks, and lucky for us, now resides in Citrus County. Thanks to our friends in Brooksville, we found Mark Reichard, a pastor who programmed the patterns for the tree's 3,600 lights. With assistance from "can do local people" from the City of Inverness, the Downtown Inverness Rotary Club, the Historic Courthouse staff, and County Commissioner Rebecca Bays, we knew anything was possible!

Dreams are wonderful, but where do you acquire the funds to make them come true? You share your vision with local community businesses who want to give the families of Citrus County a real Small Town Christmas experience! Lowman Law Firm, LKQ, Brannen Bank, Eagle Buick, Citrus Cardiology, Mike Scott Plumbing, Nick Nicholas Ford, and Withlacoochee River Electric, all contributed to make this dream a reality.

Gary Schram and several volunteers began building the tree. They spent months welding steel to construct the 31' high x 14' wide Iconic Christmas Tree. Three giant sections were then transported and assembled on the grounds of the Historic Courthouse.

The Saturday after Thanksgiving 2023, it finally arrived. Thousands of people came to see our tree, play in real snow, and listen to music. Kids enjoyed face painting, balloon art, and downtown businesses served treats. Once it was dark, we sang "We Wish You a Merry Christmas", which magically turned on the tree lights. Cheers, applause, and gasps of joy erupted as the light show began.

Join us on Saturday, November 30th, as Citrus County's Iconic Tree will light up the square again. There will be even more activities for families to enjoy, including a visit from Santa! This year, the tree will have an extended light show with music. The tree will light up and play music every night at 6pm until January 6th. Come experience this magical and magnificent tree.



Article & Photos  
By Sandy Levin



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*Gloria Snyder is the owner of Five Pillars of Hope, an Independent Consultant for NIKKEN® Inc. She guides individuals and families to the concept and application of a Wellness Home®.*

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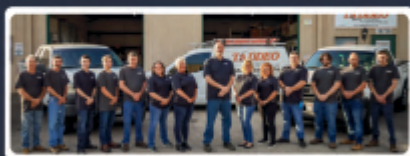
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*These featured business professionals may have diverse service offerings, but they share a common objective: to serve the community!*

*They understand the value of collaboration and networking, which is reflected in their commitment to delivering high-quality products and services.*

# ON THE COVER



**Mary White**  
Discreet Boutique



**Stuart Hernandez**  
Sandpiper Softwash



**Jodi Campbell**  
SET Home Health



**Tony Winebrenner**  
Citrus Pest Management



**Dr. Luis Carrascosa**  
Florida Cancer Specialists

**Dedicated to Excellence!**



Mary White was born and raised in Inverness, Florida. She has always appreciated the warmth and southern hospitality that this area provides. Though she had pursued her degree away from the area, she decided she wanted to return and start her own family.

Mary's career path began in the dental field. She smiled when she mentioned that dentistry is a passion for her, and she is a prime example of what a beautiful smile looks like. Mary has a Bachelors Degree in business management and she enjoyed being a practice manager of operations in the dental industry for over 10 years.

Mary volunteers for a variety of non-profit organizations that serve local veterans, the homeless, and other community events where her dental skills come into play. She is heavily involved with Nature Coast Ministries, whose mission is to provide dental care to those who cannot afford it.

During the times she spent in the community, Mary noticed a need that would truly make a difference in many people's



lives. She wanted to own a shop with affordable items where anyone can come and dress for success...for less! In 2024, Mary's vision was realized when Discreet Boutique opened for business.

Discreet Boutique is in the heart of Dunnellon, surrounded by the charm of a tight-knit community of downtown businesses. It is a clean and classy environment that offers high quality clothes, furniture, jewelry, shoes, and other items at very reasonable prices. Everything in the boutique is carefully considered and fully cleaned before being displayed or sold. Items are obtained by generous donations from local residents, or by those wishing to consign their products at the boutique.

Mary has a wide variety of clothes to help you dress for business as well as clothing for the entire family, from babies to adults. Finding clothes that are appropriate for business can be very costly, hence the name "Discreet Boutique". She believes everyone deserves to look their best, whether they are attending a business function, special event, or church. The true mission is to help you feel good about yourself.

When not at her boutique, Mary enjoys fishing and shopping. She spends quality time with her mother, father, and two sisters, who all live nearby in Citrus County. Mary's two year old daughter, Madeline, has been her biggest cheerleader of her new boutique. Madeline loves to assist Mary with the displays and trying on all of the fancy shoes. A very discerning young lady just like her mother.



**Mary White**  
Owner/Operator



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Florida Cancer Specialists has been awarded the prestigious seal of accreditation by the American College of Radiology (ACR), which represents the highest level of quality and patient safety.

Dr. Luis Carrascosa has been a radiation oncologist for 20 years, and feels privileged to be part of the Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute (FCS) – Ocala Cancer Center. Dr. Luis works along side a team of medical experts including oncologists, hematologists, radiation oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, and pharmacists. They treat patients with a broad range of cancers, blood disorders, and other diseases. Dr. Luis and his team provide highly sophisticated stereotactic radiosurgery and radiotherapy treatments. Often, these treatments are delivered in very short schedules that result in better outcomes, enhance patient convenience, and decreased cost.

The FCS Ocala Cancer Center is state-of-the-art. It is the first and only comprehensive center of its kind in Marion County. FCS is celebrating its 40th year in 2024, and has built a national reputation for excellence.

They provide exceptional and compassionate patient care, driven by innovative clinical research, cutting-edge technologies and advanced treatments, including targeted therapies, genomic-based treatments, and immunotherapy.



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As Florida's largest community oncology practice, with nearly 100 clinic sites located across the state, FCS is able to provide patients and families convenient access to world-class cancer care close to home. Their top-ranked cancer experts provide the newest and most advanced treatments available, increasing cure rates and extending lives.

Dr. Luis was born in Guatemala, where he attended medical school. He received training in radiation oncology at the University of Louisville in Kentucky, where he was named chief resident, and remained on the faculty for five years, where he trained new residents.

Radiation oncology is a fascinating specialty to Dr. Luis. He has always been drawn to the ever-evolving technology that involves modern computers, linear accelerators, and CT scanners to deliver treatment. He appreciates that this is a clinically oriented specialty, using evidence-based decisions to develop recommended treatment plans. Above all, he enjoys the ability to communicate and interact very closely with his patients throughout their treatment journey.

Like many others, the Florida weather and friendly people were his primary reasons for choosing to live in this area. Dr. Luis is actively involved in the community. He currently serves as chairman of the Cancer Committee at HCA Ocala and HCA West Marion. He regularly attends tumor boards at AdventHealth Ocala. He has been a member of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), the world's premier society for radiation oncology, for 20 years. He is the past president of the Marion County Medical Society.

In his free time, Dr. Luis enjoys tennis, outdoor activities, and spending time with his wife, who is a real estate agent, and his three college-age children.

## S.E.T. Home Health: Where Compassion Meets Excellence in Care

At S.E.T. (Service. Excellence. Trust.) Home Health, exceptional care is not just a promise; it's a practice. S.E.T. Home Health is set apart from other agencies because of its dedication to the well-being of both home bound and non-home bound patients. The agency provides a comprehensive range of services designed to address the unique needs of each patient.

Founder/Owner Jodi Campbell, is a highly skilled physical therapist with certifications in orthopedics, geriatrics, wound care, vertigo/balance disorders, and Alzheimer's/dementia care. Under the leadership of Jodi, S.E.T. has achieved a rare distinction, a dual 5-star rating by medicare.gov. They made their mark in the world of home health care by combining clinical expertise with genuine compassion. This accomplishment underscores the agency's unwavering commitment to delivering personalized, one-on-one care, with integrity, respect, and kindness.

S.E.T.'s success comes from their focus on compassionate and quality care tailored to individual needs. Jodi's deep expertise in orthopedic rehabilitation is invaluable in assisting patients regain strength and function. Her certifications in geriatrics and wound care ensures that elderly patients and those with complex medical needs receive the best possible treatments. For patients with balance disorders, or those suffering from vertigo, S.E.T.'s specialized care provides relief, and reduces the risk of falls. Extensive training in Alzheimer's and dementia care allows the team to offer compassionate support for patients and their families.

After an illness or surgery, you're entitled to physical therapy and nursing in your home. If you have Medicare, these services are paid for 100%. In order to recover more quickly, contact us about receiving physical therapy and/or nursing at home. You have the right to choose your own home health service provider. Choose someone who cares about you.



S.E.T. Home Health offers private pay options for individuals who desire quality one-on-one care in their own homes, even if they don't meet the criteria for home bound status. S.E.T.'s services allow clients who seek the highest level of personalized care, to access skilled therapy and nursing without requiring insurance. This is particularly valuable for those who want the best functional outcomes, but are not considered home bound.

S.E.T. Home Health's team is devoted to building long-lasting relationships with patients and their families. The team's goal is to restore independence and enhance quality of life as patients recover from surgery, manage chronic conditions, or improve mobility. Every visit embodies their mission: to provide not just quality care, but compassionate care—because at S.E.T. Home Health, it's more than just medicine. It's about healing with heart.



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**Jodi Campbell, PT**  
**Owner/Physical Therapist**



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When Tony decided to move to Citrus County 31 years ago, he was already familiar with the area. He had fond childhood memories of hunting in our local forests, and enjoyed the quiet community in order to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

Tony learned about the pest control trade at a company in Tarpon Springs when he was only 17 years old. When he moved to Citrus County, he worked for another pest control company. It was then he realized that with the knowledge and experience he'd collected over the years, he could own and operate his own pest and termite company. In 1997, he formed Citrus Pest Management. Over the years, it grew to one of the most respected and trustworthy pest control companies in the area. What sets Citrus Pest Management apart from others in the industry is their integrity shown in honest quotes, timely arrival for appointments, and taking care of pest control issues.

Tony was in business for 20 years when he decided he wanted to retire. After five years of traveling and spending quality time with his family, he realized he missed the industry and assisting homeowners. So in 2022, he re-opened the business, and he's been on top of his game ever since.

Citrus Pest Management is licensed, insured, and bonded. He works hand-in-hand with the University of Florida in developing methods to eradicate an ever growing problem – bed bugs! They are leaders in tent fumigation and offer their services to other local companies if a pest problem requires tenting.

Technology in the products has changed a lot throughout the years, transforming the pest control industry.

Prevention is key in pest control. Years ago, a monthly pest control service was to spray baseboards. Products today have a longer lasting residual, therefore, pest control service can be provided every 90 days, eliminating spraying baseboards.

As far as termite prevention, Tony says one of the biggest misconceptions homeowners have is they can't get termites because they have a block home. Termites can gather in any type of home and with proper yearly treatment, it keeps your biggest investment safe.

Citrus Pest Management provides the following services: termite treatments, rodent control, in-wall pest control tubing systems, and quarterly household pest control treatment plans.

Tony and his wife, Christy, have three daughters, and three grandchildren. In their free time, they enjoy boating, outdoor activities, and adventures with their grandchildren.

Citrus Pest Management supports a variety of local organizations such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, the Citrus County Foster Parents Association, and the YMCA. They're active members of the Realtors' Association of Citrus County.

For honest answers to your questions, fair prices, excellent service, and the goodness you feel when supporting a locally owned small business, reach out to Tony at Citrus Pest Management!



For Stuart and Tee Hernandez, owners of Sandpiper Softwash, customer satisfaction is the main priority. Your home and property are your most valuable asset. Every job is treated as if it were their own personal property. When the customer is happy, they are happy!

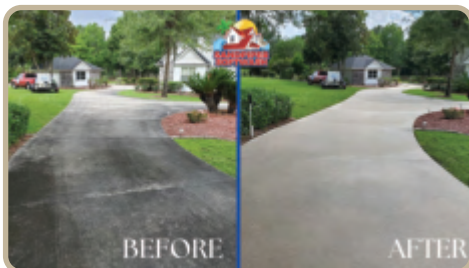
Stuart and Tee take the time to listen to their clients, understand their expectations, and pay close attention to detail, which leads to their sharper skills and growth. They have a knack for talking with people, and more importantly, listening to their feedback. Before any project is started, Stuart explains his process and procedures. By carefully communicating with each homeowner, customers are informed, and satisfied with the final result.

Stuart and Tee consistently upgrade their equipment to be more effective and efficient. They are innovative and focused on streamlining their procedures to save their clients money. Stuart is meticulous on each job site, and uses products that are safe for people, plants and pets.

If it's dirty, they can clean it! They clean driveways, sidewalks, buildings and homes, fences, sheds, screened lanais, pool areas, and more. The softwash process is one that is gentle on roofs, allowing mold and mildew to be eliminated without removing the gravel on the shingles. They also offer gutter cleaning services, which keeps your drainage system working properly around your house. Sandpiper Softwash is fully licensed and insured.

This "power-washing" couple are both native Floridians. Stuart was born in Fernandina Beach, and Tee was born in Jacksonville. Stuart's upbringing brought him up and down the East Coast from Miami to Maine with his family who traveled working in the nuclear power industry. Stuart's father purchased a

marina in Ozello in 2015. That's when Stuart moved to this area and loved it! Tee moved to Citrus County to be closer to her grandparents when she was young. She graduated from Lecanto High School and immediately joined the U.S. Army. She served our country for 8 years. She enjoyed traveling all over the U.S. and seeing 9 countries. Tee moved back to Citrus County in 2016, after completing her contract with the Army. Tee and Stuart met in 2016, and have been together ever since. They inspire each other and they love working together.



Both Stuart and Tee are proud to be active members of the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, the Citrus County Chamber's Young Professionals, and Rowing of Citrus County Students. Tee is a member of Suncoast Business Masters, WIN ~ Women in Networking, Community of Catholic Women, and the Hospitality Committee at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. Getting involved enriches their daily life by interacting with a variety of groups of all ages, in business and community.

When they're not working, they take full advantage of what Citrus County has to offer: kayaking, free diving in the freshwater springs, saltwater fishing in the Gulf, hiking, camping, and snorkeling. They also love to explore different areas in Florida. Though they do not have any children yet, they have two dogs and a cat that they consider their children.

Call Sandpiper Softwash to set up a review of your clean-up needs.



**Tee Hernandez**  
Owner/Marketing Director

**Stuart Hernandez**  
Owner/Operator



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# ONE MAN. ONE MISSION.

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**Article & Photos By Art Jones,  
Founder and Operator of "One Rake at a Time"**

It all started on a hot day in August 2003, when I was living in St. Pete. I went to the beach and when I arrived, the water was hovering around 90 degrees and there was an awful smell. A red tide, which is an algae bloom, sucked the oxygen out of the water and killed many fish. Dead fish were floating in the waves and lying along the shore.

I decided to check out Crystal River, where the spring water is 72 degrees year-round. I loaded up my truck and headed north to Hunter Springs Park to get relief from the heat. The water was covered in floating blobs of Lyngbya algae. I could see blue water beyond the algae, so I dove in and swam under the algae to the main spring. I found relief in the cool and

refreshing water. Except for the nasty algae, the place was a paradise.

I asked the few people who were there what was going on. I was informed the water used to be clear with a white sandy bottom, and a diving board. They also remarked how sad it was that a very popular place for locals and tourists was now polluted. There are signs telling the public to swim at their own risk for danger of getting a skin rash from swimming in the water.

Something needed to be done! There were rumors about closing the park since it had gotten so bad. I felt strongly that these springs were worth saving, and I wanted to be near them, so I found a nice affordable house to buy in the area. The first morning I moved in, I went to the park at the crack of

dawn. I raked a truck load of algae off the steps and in the swimming area, then hauled it away before anyone arrived. When I was young, and in summer camp, I learned to do nice things for people without them knowing. I returned later that day and kids were enjoying the cool spring water, laughing, and having fun. Some of the parents there said, "It is like a miracle happened. The park was nasty yesterday, but today something must have blown the algae out of the swimming area." I felt a deep sense of accomplishment and vowed I would go back and clean it up again and again. And that is exactly what I did.

As time went on, other people joined me with hand raking the algae out of the spring, and the One Rake at a Time project was born. I was informed a permit was needed to clean the springs, so I got one. To this day, the effort has expanded to include removing muck and algae off the bottom, and re-establishing eelgrass that had been killed off by invasive algae. This successful project has been imitated in Homosassa



Springs and is starting up on the Rainbow River in Dunnellon.

For more on the history and current projects, visit: [www.OneRakeataTime.org](http://www.OneRakeataTime.org)

To find out how to become a volunteer, or for more information, contact Art Jones at [info@onerakeatime.org](mailto:info@onerakeatime.org).

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# Transforming Lives and Shaping Futures: The Impact of Pace Center for Girls, Citrus



At Pace Center for Girls, Citrus (Pace Citrus), we don't just believe in the potential of every girl—we unlock it. When a girl walks through our doors, she begins a journey not just toward academic success, but toward a future filled with possibilities she may have never imagined.

Our comprehensive approach transforms the lives of the girls we serve by providing the essential support they need to overcome challenges and achieve their potential. We offer a full academic school day specifically designed for middle and high school girls, ages 11-17, and supplement it with a wide range of wrap-around social services. These services include critical mental health support, life skills training, and career development opportunities, ensuring that every girl is equipped with the tools she needs to succeed.

What sets Pace Citrus apart is our small student-to-teacher ratio of 1:14, allowing our dedicated team of educators and counselors to craft individualized approaches that cater to each girl's unique needs. The impact of our work is clear: 8 out of 10 girls graduate from high school, pursue higher education, or secure employment after completing our program. Additionally, 9 out of 10 girls experience significant academic improvement, laying a strong foundation for a bright future.

The influence of Pace Citrus reaches far beyond personal achievements. When our girls graduate, pursue higher education, or enter the workforce, they aren't just changing their own lives—they're breaking generational cycles and contributing positively to their community, setting the stage for lasting change.



**Angela Kennedy, M.Ed., Executive Director**  
Angela.Kennedy@pacecenter.org  
352-464-6520 Ext. 6505



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# UP, UP, AND AWAY...FOR HER 86TH BIRTHDAY!



**Article & Photos  
By Vicky Iozzia**

One of the advantages of being retired is that you get to choose who you want in your life. I have been retired for twenty years, and it has been my delight to surround myself with positive people. My fellow volunteers share their talents, their amazing skills, and I always enjoy learning about their lives and careers before they started volunteering.

Barbara Cairns is always a positive person, not only when things go her way, but when she faces life's most difficult challenges. I met Barbara when we were both volunteering at the Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, and I am happy to still have her in my life.

Barb, as we call her, grew up with her younger sister in Connecticut. She is a retired teacher and principal, author, volunteer, world traveler, and resident of Sugarmill Woods. As she progresses through her eighties, she is truly a daredevil, as you see above.



**"Aspire to inspire before you expire."**

**- Barb  
Cairns**



She received degrees from Seattle and Columbia University, taught special education children for seven years, from ages five to thirteen in what felt like a one room schoolhouse in Panama, and was a Master Teacher and Principal. As an administrator, she championed the PRIDE program: "Positive, Responsible, Independent, Dependable, and Enthusiastic", where she rewarded children and staff with praise.

While in Panama, she and her husband Ian saw an ad for the house in Florida, where she currently resides.

Barb is an accomplished writer, and you might see her at local fairs with her books. She researches books for young adults and adults, and you can find her many books at the public library and on Amazon. The titles include: *Cracker Cow*, a narrative of Florida History, *Nettie's Dreams*, *Rachel's Next Chapter*, and *Abby's Attraction*.

Check out her website: [www.BarbaraCairns.com](http://www.BarbaraCairns.com) and watch her jump out of an airplane on her blog!

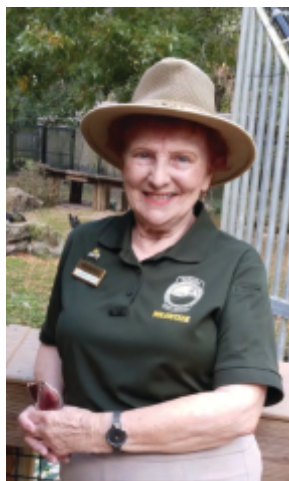
She has been volunteering at the Homosassa Wildlife Park for twenty-four years. These days, you'll find her in

the Discovery Center. She has been involved with animal enrichment for twelve years, where she would play a "Jeopardy" game with her audience. She'd research a particular animal and quiz her audience.

In addition, Barb volunteers with the Citrus County Education Foundation (CCEF). As a reading pal, she tutors four year olds at the Tiny Treasures Preschool.

Barb speaks fondly of her husband, Ian, who passed away a few years ago. Ian was a member of the Black Watch Royal Highland Regiment, enlisting as a boy soldier at fifteen, and was fighting the Mau Maus in Africa at age seventeen. When he first met her in Germany, he told his friend "That is the woman I am going to marry." He asked her three times before she said yes. He is truly the love of her life. She cared for him lovingly as he suffered from Vascular Dementia and Lewy Body Dementia.

She is a member of the Lady Journey Seekers, a group of over nine hundred ladies who love to travel and have as their motto: "Girls just want to have fun". On a trip to Africa earlier this year, she fell and broke her hip. That resulted in having to be airlifted from Kasani, Botswana to Johannesburg, South Africa, and having a total hip replacement. As her friends here monitored her progress during the weeks that it took to get her home, she still kept her excellent attitude and beautiful smile.



▲ Barb as volunteer at the Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park.

Barb belongs to Citrus Writers, the British American Club, Pen Names, a group called Bistro Babes, and another group of women from the Homosassa Wildlife Park called the Swans. She is always active and social. Nothing slows her down! She loves her neighbors and home in Sugarmill Woods.

For her eighty-sixth birthday she



▶ Barb at a local fair selling books she has published.

went skydiving in Dunnellon at ten thousand feet high! No matter how old I get, I won't do that! For her eighty-seventh birthday she went to Africa. I wonder what she will do for her next birthday? I couldn't guess!

Get ready to see Barb somewhere else you might not expect to see her. She said an item on her bucket list is to operate heavy equipment. She thinks in another life she did this, and she is fascinated by huge machines, so you might see her in a cherry picker!

She said her motto is "Aspire to inspire before you expire." I admire her spirit, her spunk, and her energy that allows her to live every day to the fullest.

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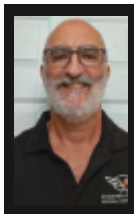


Michelle Frenton, AuD  
 Doctor of Audiology

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**Citrus**  
VETTES & CAMAROS  
CAR CLUB INC.



Article & Photos By Wayne Kilmer,  
Secretary, Executive Committee,  
Citrus Vettes & Camaros Car Club Inc.



**The Citrus Vettes & Camaros Car Club** was founded in 2013, and is based in Citrus County. The club currently consists of 202 members from all over the state of Florida.

Almost every month, several of our members head out in their cars for a day of fun. Our day may include a restoration shop tour, a visit to a winery, or a car museum. We participate in car shows, take river and luncheon cruises, train rides, or just drive scenic roads in Florida.

Our motto is: *"Giving back to the community we live in"*. Since 2013, the club has donated over \$33,000 to local non-profit organizations. Our biggest support is geared toward our amazing military veteran organizations that operate in our area. Without their service and sacrifice to our country, we wouldn't be able to have the freedom we all enjoy today.

The club has partnered with the City of Inverness, along with the downtown business merchants, to promote and support local events such as the *Cooterween Trunk or Treat Fest*, held every October, and the annual *All Corvette & Camaro Car Show and Vintage Market*, held every March in the Historic Courthouse Square.

Our club participates with Citrus County's *"Adopt a Highway"* program. We maintain a two and a half mile stretch of CR39 by picking up litter quarterly. This promotes bonds between club members and also keeps our road sides clean and beautiful.

We support locally owned restaurants by monthly breakfast and lunch gatherings. The club also travels together on monthly road trips to various destinations in Florida. We share stories and ideas about our Corvettes or Camaros, while enjoying good food with new and old friends.

# KARS

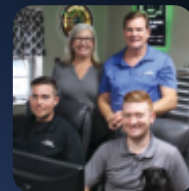
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**Join the fastest growing Corvette & Camaro Car Club on the west coast of Florida.**

The club takes several trips during the calendar year. We have visited outstanding race shops, restoration shops, and car museums. We've also enjoyed group cruises to the Caribbean and Alaska. We have visited Canada via the Rocky Mountaineer, and met amazing people along the way.

Our club meetings are held quarterly at the Valerie Theatre in Inverness. Everyone is welcome to join a meeting and meet our members. If you want to join an active car club, you have come to the right place! We encourage you to explore our website at [www.cv-ccc.org](http://www.cv-ccc.org) and view our supportive sponsors. Scroll down on the main page and see the many activities we have coming up, or browse through our YouTube Channel and Gallery to see the latest event the club has participated in.

**COME AND SEE AMAZING CARS & STREET RODS!**  
**The Friday Night Classics & Muscle Car Cruise-In**

Enjoy music, a variety of cars, plus the shops and restaurants in Downtown Inverness on the Courthouse Square.

Every 3rd Friday of the month from 5pm-8pm, with the exception of November, when the event is held on the 2nd Friday of the month from 5pm-8pm. Roads close and parking begins at 3pm.

If you have any questions or would like some additional information about the club, please contact Mac McGarry, club president, at: [mac.mcgarry@cv-ccc.org](mailto:mac.mcgarry@cv-ccc.org).

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By Mayol "Mr. G" Gutierrez, M. ED.

In the dynamic landscape of health insurance, finding a reliable and knowledgeable partner is crucial. Mayol Gutierrez, also known as "Mr. G" for his services as an educator in Citrus County Public Schools, is the driving force behind SunCoast Insurance and Tax Services. He has established himself as a trusted name in the industry, offering comprehensive health insurance solutions tailored to meet the diverse needs of individuals and families in our county. Mayol and his team have a deep commitment to customer service, a wealth of knowledge, and expertise, and provide exceptional guidance and support to their clients.

### About SunCoast Insurance & Tax Services

SunCoast Insurance & Tax Services, founded in 2020 by Mayol, has become synonymous with excellence and reliability in health insurance. They have been selected "Best of the Best" by the Citrus County Chronicle readers two years in a row. Mayol's unique approach to the health insurance acquisition process is that of an educator. SunCoast's mission is to make health insurance accessible, affordable, and understandable for everyone.

### Medicare Plans

For those eligible for Medicare, SunCoast Insurance Services offers expert guidance in selecting the right Medicare plans. Whether it's Medicare Part A and B, Medicare Advantage (Part C), or Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (Part D), Mayol ensures that his clients understand their options and choose the plans that best suit their healthcare needs and financial situation.

SunCoast represents all health insurance carriers in the state of Florida allowing selection from a wide range of plans. From routine check-ups and preventive care, to emergency services and hospital stays, these plans ensure comprehensive coverage. Mayol and his team assist clients in navigating the complexities of the health insurance marketplace, helping them choose plans that fit their specific needs.

In addition to primary health insurance, SunCoast Insurance Services offers supplementary benefits such as: dental, vision, and life insurance.

### Tax Services

SunCoast Insurance Services also offers comprehensive tax preparation services designed to simplify the tax filing process for individuals and businesses. The team provides personalized assistance to ensure accurate and timely filing, maximizing refunds and minimizing liabilities. SunCoast's commitment to detail and customer satisfaction ensures a stress-free tax season for their clients.



### Customer Service

What sets Mayol and the SunCoast Insurance Services team apart is their unwavering commitment to customer service. Mayol believes in building long-term relationships with clients, offering ongoing support and advice, even after the initial policy is acquired. He's readily available to answer questions, address concerns, and help clients make informed and educated decisions about their health insurance needs.

SunCoast Insurance Services is located at 1300 US 41, Suite #6, in Inverness. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call Mayol at (352) 535-0733.

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Rane Herzek,  
CASA CEO

# Breaking the Silence Around Male Victimization

In 2018, Citrus County Abuse Shelter Association, Inc. (CASA) made a significant and necessary change by opening its doors to male survivors of domestic violence. Domestic abuse is often portrayed as a crime that affects women, but men can be, and are, victims too. With our expanded service, we aim to address the underreported, and often misunderstood, issue of male domestic violence.

While domestic violence is commonly associated with only female victims, men also experience abuse, although their stories are often less visible. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), 1 in 7 men will experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Male victims often endure the same types of abuse as women, including physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse. Emotional abuse may include belittling, threats, and isolation, while physical violence can range from pushing and shoving, to more severe forms of aggression.

Men's experiences of domestic violence can sometimes look different from those of women. They may face specific challenges, such as societal expectations to be strong, non-emotional, or in control, making it even harder for them to speak out. For example, a male victim may feel embarrassed or fear that they won't be believed because of the stereotype that men should be able to "handle" a violent partner. In same-sex relationships, these fears can be compounded by additional stigmas around masculinity and vulnerability.

Many men face significant barriers when it comes to seeking support for domestic violence. Social stigma is one of the largest factors, as men are often conditioned to believe that seeking help is a sign of weakness. Some male victims fear they will not be taken seriously, or that they will be ridiculed for being unable to "stand up" to their abuser. This cultural pressure can make them reluctant to report their abuse, reach out to shelters, or seek legal recourse.

There are also structural barriers that prevent men from accessing services. Historically, domestic violence shelters and services were designed with female victims in mind, leaving men unsure where they can turn for help. Before 2018, many

## CASA Services are Free of Charge to Both Male & Female Survivors of Domestic Violence

- 24-Hour Crisis Hotline
- Emergency Shelter
- Confidential Individual Counseling
- Court Advocacy and Injunction Support
- Men's & Women's Empowerment Groups
- Economic Empowerment Program
- School-Based Prevention Classes
- Public Education and Training
  - Relocation Programs
  - Community Referrals
  - CPI Project Advocacy
  - Children's Services
  - Therapy Services
  - Advocacy

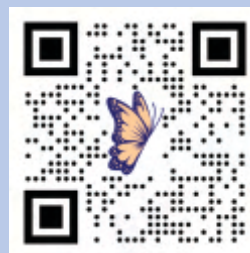


services, including those at CASA, were primarily targeted at women. Recognizing this gap, our services are now inclusive and welcoming to all victims, regardless of gender.

Since expanding our services, CASA has worked to create a safe and supportive environment for male survivors. Our shelter provides confidential resources such as emergency housing, legal advocacy, and counseling for men experiencing domestic abuse. We believe that every survivor deserves access to help, support, and healing, and we are committed to breaking the silence around male victimization.

Our goal is to educate the community, raise awareness, and foster an environment where all victims of domestic violence feel safe and empowered to seek assistance. By acknowledging the needs of male survivors, CASA continues to stand as a place of safety and hope for anyone facing domestic violence, no matter their gender.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, please don't hesitate to reach out to CASA for confidential, judgment-free support.



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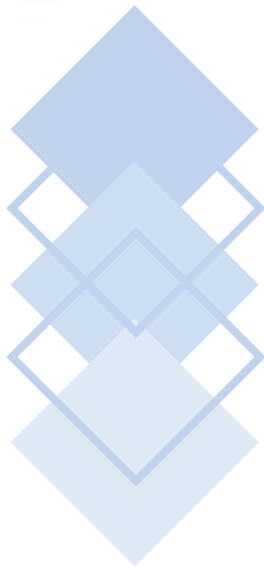
# A Message from Your Citrus County Tax Collector



*Integrity • Innovation*

**Janice A. Warren, C.F.C.**

*Citrus County Tax Collector*



In the state of Florida, the elected position of County Tax Collector is a constitutional officer, outlined in Article VIII of the Florida Constitution. The primary responsibility of Tax Collectors is to collect and distribute local property taxes on behalf of the state to fund vital services such as schools, roads, cities, and parks, as well as provide other state services at the local level as outlined in Florida Statute. Tax Collectors are elected to serve every four years in the presidential election year.

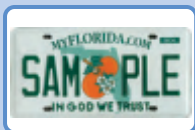
The Citrus County Tax Collector's Office is responsible for collecting and distributing local property, tangible, and business taxes. In addition, as an agent for the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, they provide motor vehicle, vessel, and mobile home titles and registrations, issue disabled parking permits, issue driver licenses and ID cards, and administer written tests and road tests. They also collect tolls and clear toll violations as part of motor vehicle transactions.

Additionally, the tax collector partners with other state and local government agencies to issue certified copies of Florida birth certificates, and to provide concealed weapons permits, Sunpass, and hunting and fishing licenses.

## 2023 IN REVIEW

### We processed 548,278 transactions in 2023

259,404



Tags and Titles

162,331



Property/Tangible  
Taxes

80,210



Phone Calls

35,095



Driver Licenses  
ID Cards

11,238



Other  
Transactions

### Customers Served in 2023 = 133,608

**99%**

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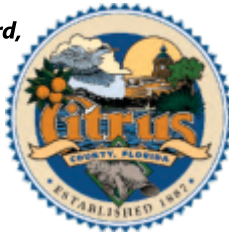


# THE GREATEST LESSONS OF ALL



**Article By Steve Howard,  
Citrus County  
Administrator**

**Photos By  
Citrus County BOCC**



Our community has a long road to recovery from hurricanes Helene and Milton. As I traveled throughout Citrus County, the greatest lessons I have learned are from what I've witnessed.

Before Helene arrived, Holly Davis, our BOCC Chair informed us all, in a very real way, exactly what "ten feet of storm surge" means. The leadership, drive, and determination shown by Commissioners Holly Davis, Rebecca Bays, Diana Finegan, Ruthie Schlabach, and Jeff Kinnard, was remarkable.

Amid the first storm, and immediately after, our first responders mobilized and acted in a unified effort between Citrus County Fire Rescue, Citrus County Sheriff's Office, Lake County Sheriff's Office, Sumter County Sheriff's Office, and Florida Fish and Wildlife. Collectively, they performed over 150 missions, rescuing an estimated 500-600 people. Once the victims were out of harm's way, Citrus County Transit escorted them to safety. Fire Chief Craig Stevens called them "Energizer Bunnies." They just kept going and going!

These organizations answered the call by staffing the

Citizens Information Line and ice distribution sites. They also provided meals to those in need. The worker's homes were also personally affected by these storms. The only thing deeper than my gratitude is my sense of pride in seeing this staff in action.

After Helene, the City of Crystal River, Citrus County Public Works, and our debris management contractors, began a full-scale effort to clean up the coast. These dedicated people went above and beyond for our citizens.

Hurricanes Helene and Milton not only caused devastation in Citrus County, but also impacted our loved ones across the state. The hurricane directly impacted my family, too. My in-laws were rescued from southwest Florida, where their home of 43 years was severely flooded.

The devastation from hurricanes Helene and Milton spread far and wide. The residents of Citrus County, relief organizations, non-profits, the faith-based community, and all of our government agencies, set out on a mission to take care of our own.

A well known saying is "Experience is the best teacher, and the worst experiences teach the best lessons."

We have a long road ahead of us, and I believe our best days are yet to come. The greatest lesson we have learned throughout Helene and Milton is that our community bands together. I'd put my money down on "Team Citrus" any day!

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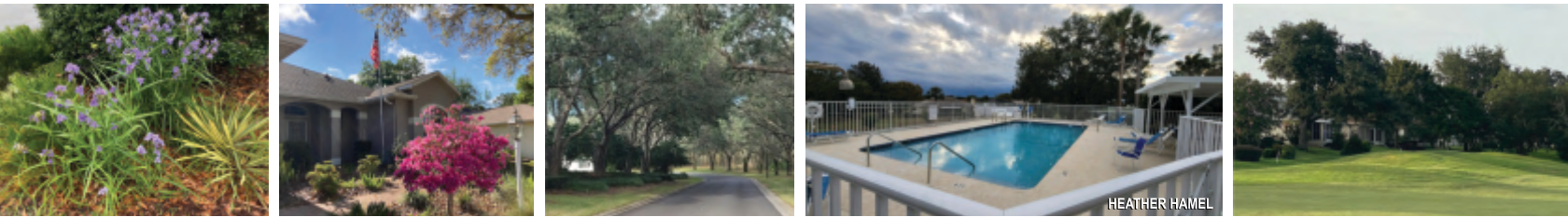
**Mike Bays, Agent**

# Community Pride



Article & Photos  
By Gloria McCune,  
Laurel Ridge Resident

## Laurel Ridge



Life in the community of Laurel Ridge is rich and amazing for the 301 owners who call this place home. There are fascinating contrasts in our Citrus County community from the documented history of ancient peoples, to 1GB fiber internet service. Mature landscaping of more than three decades is complemented by native plants and wildlife in our common areas. Neighborliness is fostered and privacy is respected. So what is this place called Laurel Ridge?

When Laurel Ridge was first developed, it was part of a much larger plan to include thousands of homes, multiple recreational opportunities and many new roads. Laurel Ridge was the first phase of a Beverly Hills Development Corp. concept. But a changing economy resulted in only the completion of this first phase which was, and is, a gem. It is completely enclosed by the first nine holes of Twisted Oaks Public Golf Course and so it provides open vistas and great recreation.

The center of the community contains a few acres of common land. There is a lovely pool with a recreation center. The Rec Center is available for use by residents for their own private events, and also hosts many community activities. There are card games, exercise classes, and special events such as: Kentucky Derby parties, monthly dinners, and committee

meetings. Owners take a lot of pride in the community and express that through their countless volunteer hours. There's also a lot of pride in our individual and spacious lots. This is expressed with interesting landscape design and well-tended plants.

What is unique to Laurel Ridge? Three things come to mind. When looking for a Florida home, many people are concerned about crowding, flooding and restrictions. Not here! Take a look at the lots in Laurel Ridge from a satellite view. They are spacious, and of varied and interesting shapes. The result is an interesting flow and layout. The name "Beverly Hills" says it all, and this community is perched on average about 90' above sea level. Home ownership is open to all ages in this vibrant community, and yet it is a calm and quiet neighborhood.

Laurel Ridge is convenient to the both the new turnpike exchange and the expanded shopping opportunities at the intersection of Lecanto Hwy. 491 and Norvell Bryant Hwy. 486. With all that convenience, our neighborhood maintains a quiet and safe personality.

In the twelve years that I've called Laurel Ridge home, every morning starts with gratitude for living in this piece of paradise. For more information, visit: [www.laurelridge.us](http://www.laurelridge.us).



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## SPOTLIGHT MEMBER: Ronnie Bogart

Certified Independent OPTAVIA® Health Coach



Ronnie Duurloo-Bogart is a Certified Independent OPTAVIA Coach who is passionate about helping people get, and stay, healthy! Ronnie is also the Public Relations Manager for the non-profit organization, The Priceless Journey, that helps empower women to find their worth and live in freedom. She has been a member of WIN for the past year and is enjoying this amazing group of businesswomen.

Ronnie was introduced to OPTAVIA, and shortly after starting the program, she felt better, had more energy, and got back into her smaller size clothes. She lost 37lbs., but the biggest non-scale victory was that her knee replacements have been postponed for now. (Interesting Fact: 1 pound of weight equals 4 pounds of pressure on your joints!) That's 148lbs. of pressure removed from her knees. WOW!

OPTAVIA is a personal development program that includes: a personal coach, a supportive community, rock solid nutrition, and the Habits of Health System that teaches you more than just how to lose weight. The Habits of Health System includes six macrohabits: Healthy Weight Management, Healthy Eating & Hydration, Healthy Motion, Healthy Sleep, Healthy Mind, and Healthy Surroundings. These habits of health are the foundations of optimal wellbeing that help change your mindset, so the weight stays off for a lifetime!

Do you know someone who is struggling with their health, looking to get healthier, or become more fit? Ronnie can help! Reach out today for a free wellness survey. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

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## The Ten Essentials of Compassionate Caregiving



By Debbie Selsavage, CDP

*"We all deserve the best."*

The so-called "Ten Essentials" do not arise from ancient Buddhist wisdom; that is called "Discourse on The Ten Dhammas". The Ten Essentials represent a relatively recent discovery of knowledge amongst dementia care partners. They have been named and republished many times by the Alzheimer's Association and other sources of sound caregiving information.

The Ten Essentials are based on the key principles of Compassionate Care, where one lets the person with dementia have his or her unchallenged reality; that the care partner never discounts or belittles the person with dementia; that requests or commands are couched in positive, not negative, language; that at all times have their dignity be maintained to the best of our ability.

### The Ten Essentials are:

1. Never ARGUE.....Instead AGREE
2. Never REASON.....Instead DIVERT
3. Never SHAME.....Instead DISTRACT
4. Never say YOU CAN'T.....Instead DO WHAT YOU CAN
5. Never COMMAND or DEMAND.....Instead ASK or MODEL
6. Never CONDESCEND.....Instead ENCOURAGE and PRAISE
7. Never say REMEMBER.....Instead REMINISCE
8. Never say I TOLD YOU.....Instead REPEAT
9. Never LECTURE.....Instead REASSURE
10. Never FORCE.....Instead REINFORCE

Practicing the Ten Essentials improves with experience. It is not easy to do. The care partner often must be quick-witted and creative. Over time, compassionate dialogue based on the Ten Essentials will become an easier and more "natural" care

giving technique. You may also count to three, and take a deep breath before speaking. Role playing amongst care partners can help develop this skill.

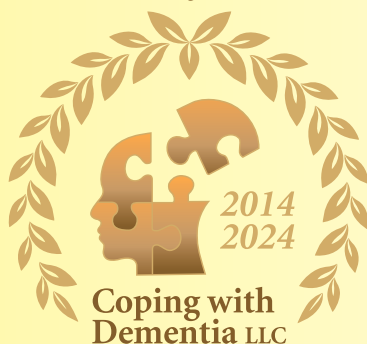
So often I hear an interaction between a care partner and the person living with dementia, and for some reason, we find ourselves trying to bring the person back to the current time. Instead, if we really listen to our loved ones, we can interact with them in their specific moment, and it can be gratifying for everyone.

### Seven Additional Suggestions:

1. Don't try to force them to remember.
2. Attend caregiver support groups and educational workshops.
3. Accept help from family and friends whenever possible.
4. Remember that they are not trying to give you a hard time; they are *having* a hard time.
5. Don't try to drag them into your reality. Try to understand their reality.
6. Remember that they *cannot* adjust, so you are the one who must adjust.
7. Finding the time to keep a journal.

*Debbie Selsavage is a Certified Trainer and Consultant in the Positive Approach to Care®, and a Certified Dementia Practitioner. Her company, Coping with Dementia LLC, is dedicated to making life better for individuals living with dementia. Contact Debbie at: deb@coping.today to learn about free support groups online.*

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# 5 Wallet Friendly Wellness Services to Consider



*By Stacey Wilson,  
Owner & Massage  
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**Wellness services should be accessible for everyone, and there are some overlooked services that could really help you get a head start without getting in over your head financially. Below are five great options that fit both your budget, and your goals.**

- 1. Chair Massage:** Ideal for those on the go! A chair massage targets stress and tension, while you sit comfortably. It's a quick and effective way to relieve stress during a busy day.
- 2. Hand Paraffin Massage:** Enjoy a warm paraffin wax dip, followed by a soothing hand massage. This treatment eases joint stiffness and offers relaxation, especially on colder days or when you need extra care.
- 3. Foot Bath Massage:** Pamper your feet with a luxurious experience featuring warm water, a sugar scrub, and a relaxing foot massage. It's a perfect way to unwind and soften the stress of the day.
- 4. Fitness Classes:** Enhance your strength and flexibility with fitness classes. Focused on core stability and body alignment, these sessions are designed to improve overall fitness and well-being.
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# Stillwater Preserve RV Resort

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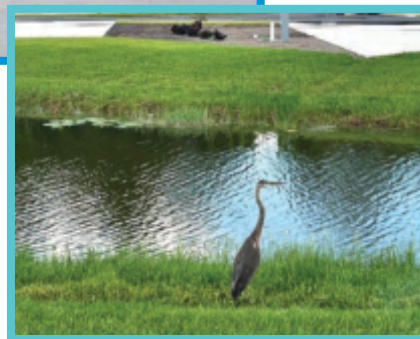
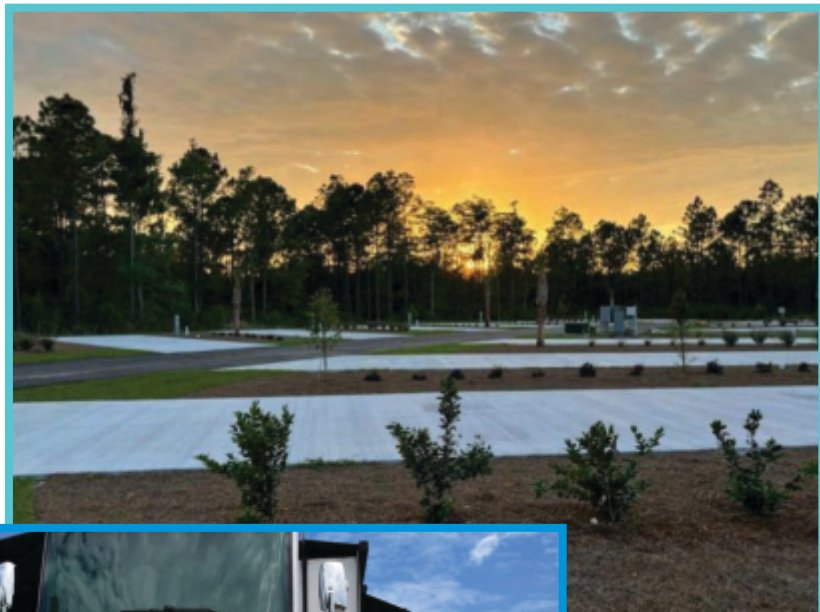


*Article By Bert Henderson*  
*Photos By Nancy Ponticos & Ray Smitherman*

Would a restful vacation at an RV resort be your kind of vacation? Would you like to see wild turkey, coyotes, deer, and all kinds of birds including ospreys, great blue herons, and eagles? This is what you can expect, not far from your site, at the new state-of-the-art Stillwater Preserve RV Resort in Homosassa, FL.

**What this area has to offer on the Nature Coast, is nature.** There is fishing in local rivers, hunting, manatee viewing (only a mile away), or scalloping in the gulf (during the summer). In Citrus County, you can go kayaking in all seven rivers, or bicycling on the paved bike trails, such as the 42 mile Withlacoochee Trail. At Stillwater Preserve, there are thirteen lakes for kayaking and they are fully stocked with bass and bream for catch and release fishing. You can also walk or bicycle over four miles of beautiful trails right on the property.

According to Ray Smitherman, Stillwater Preserve RV Resort manager, "Citrus County is known for having



50% of the land mass never to be built on. There's the state forest, national wildlife refuge, lakes and rivers that can't be built on. You have the same concept at Stillwater Preserve. "The total acreage of the Stillwater Preserve property is 176 acres; the owners saved over 50% of the property never to be developed. This includes wooded areas, natural habitats, and lakes.

The property was in the planning and permitting process for 10 years. When the local owners bought the property, they





were all wetlands referred to as transitional wetlands, to be transitioned to upland areas. On the west side of the property, there are 48 acres never to be developed, and at one time, were all cypress trees. Over time, the property dried up and long leaf pine trees took over. It is currently a mixture of pines and cypress. The property was cleared, 3' of fill dirt was built up to cover the RV sites in order to prevent flooding. The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) allowed the owners to create wet DRAs.

Stillwater Preserve is a luxury motorcoach/RV destination where each site is a level, premium lot offering a view of a water feature or a nature preserve. The lots are wider, measuring 40' x 75'. The RV pads are 20' x 60', with poured concrete 5" thick, at over 3,000psi strength. Each lot has a 20/30/50-amp electrical service with full hook-ups for water, sewer, and WiFi. The huge concrete slabs allow for a tow vehicle, plus an extra vehicle with a spacious front patio area. Trails and trees provide a different experience for an RV owner and their co-pilot.

If you're looking for amenities, we have those too. RV owners have access to four state-of-the-art "cushion" pickleball courts, a heated resort style pool and spa, a state-of-the-art exercise room, a card room, shuffleboard tables, and large screen TVs for viewing sporting events. There are four bath/shower houses equipped with laundry facilities. The resort is pet friendly with a dog park for your K-9 companions to enjoy.

If you are traveling with a large group, there is a 1,764 sq. ft. party pavilion and a 6,500 sq. ft. ballroom style clubhouse, including a stage for special events. The banquet kitchen is ideal for bringing in catered food.

*Continued on page 40*

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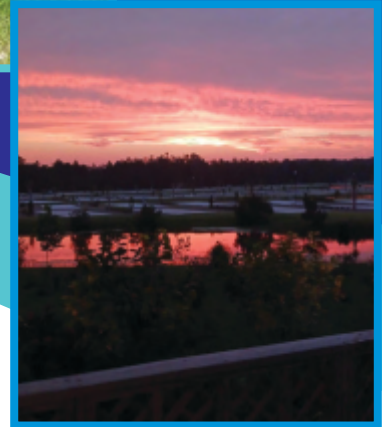
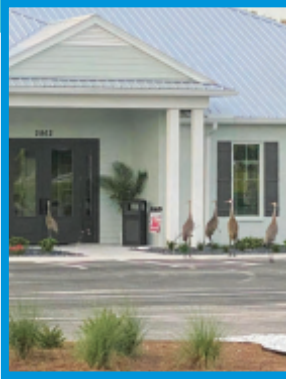
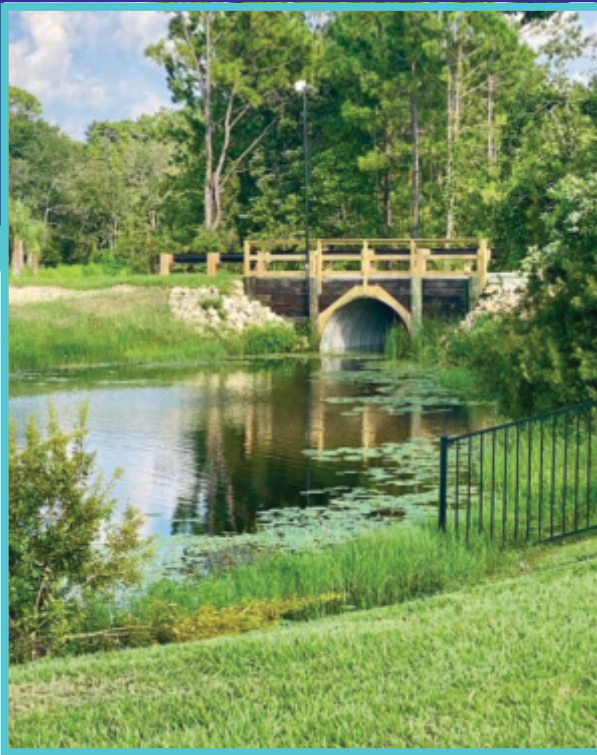
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Continued from page 39

### Testimonials of recent guests that visited Stillwater Preserve RV Resort

"We were lucky enough to get a preview of a very nice new RV Resort in Homosassa, Florida, called Stillwater Preserve," said Don Conway. "What a great facility! The resort is well done. Over 200 large spacious sites are completed for the phase one opening. The clubhouse, pool, pool room, weight room, gathering hall, kitchen for rallies, and pickleball are wonderful amenities. There are natural lakes that interconnect. The property is surrounded by deep woods. There are numerous bath houses. There are deer tracks all over, and the resort is not far from town."

"Stillwater Preserve is one of the most beautiful, spacious, and well maintained RV resort/preserve I have ever visited," said Fr. Bob Wagonseil. "The staff are outstanding in every way, and there is no detail left untouched when it comes to the wellbeing of the visitors. I am looking forward to returning in the very near future. Five stars are not sufficient to describe this wonderful resort. It's a '10' in every way!"

"What a spectacular addition to the Nature Coast!" said Sue Heyde. "A beautiful first-class RV resort that encompasses natural resources and defines with top-of-the-line amenities. From the stately club house, to the relaxing pool and spa area, you are not disappointed. The owners take great pride in making sure you feel welcome. Do not miss an opportunity to stay here."

"Stillwater Preserve is a peaceful retreat nestled in a wooded area featuring spacious paved sites, fishing ponds, walking trails, a sparkling pool and much more. This is a place to relax, unwind, and immerse yourself in nature while enjoying first-class resort amenities. We loved our stay and can't wait to visit again," said Virginia George.

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# Should your fur baby have pet insurance?



By Dr. Shane Henry, Veterinarian and Owner  
of River Region Animal Hospital in  
Crystal River, Florida



Just like people, unexpected illness and accidents with our pets can surprise us at any time. Pet parents are sometimes faced with the worry of their fur baby not feeling well, and with proper pet insurance established, you would not have to stress about the cost. The ability to choose more options for care becomes available once insured, which significantly reduces out-of-pocket expenses. Most insurance policies reimburse pet parents up to 80-90% of the cost of treatment, while some pay your veterinarian directly. Pet insurance companies help ease the costs associated with services such as cancer treatments, behavioral conditions, allergies, ear conditions, and dental diseases, as well as medications necessary to treat illnesses. Worry less knowing that serious illnesses will be covered, as well as any hereditary conditions. Some companies offer additional wellness packages that assist with the cost of spaying/neutering, preventative care, and vaccines.



Ensure yourself with the most coverage by applying when your pet is young. Rest assured, no pet is discriminated against for breed or age. Pet parents have the ability to purchase an insurance plan at any point in their pet's life. Although any pet is eligible for insurance, pre-existing conditions aren't covered by most companies, so it is best to establish insurance for your pet as soon as your baby comes home. The earlier you choose an insurance plan, the more likely you'll have coverage for any issue that arises. Many companies offer a wellness plan to add onto your accidental/illness coverage. This is important, as we all know routine check-ups at the doctor are important to maintain a long, healthy life.



Dr. Henry has  
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Ultimately, having pet insurance improves the quality of life for your fur baby by enabling you to authorize necessary medical care your pet may need at any time. This also allows you to stay ahead of any health conditions that may arise by scheduling a yearly appointment.

At River Region Animal Hospital, our professionals are here for you to answer any questions you may have. Give us a call today for an appointment, or for assistance in selecting the best coverage to insure the health of your fur baby.

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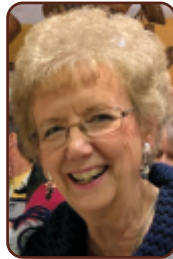
*"The story of Floral City really begins long before the town was established, and the fascinating history of the site fits into the much bigger sequence of events that shaped Florida. One should not study the town's past without also taking into account all that led to its actual development, because in fact, its location has long been appreciated as a place for human habitation."*

– Tom Ritchie, Floral City Heritage Museum Director and author of: *FLORAL CITY The story of a small town in Citrus County and its place within the history of Florida* (expanded and revised in 2000).



# A PLACE FOR HUMAN HABITATION

**Article & Photos By**  
**Marcia L. Beasley, Founder of**  
**the Floral City Heritage Council**  
**A Council of the Citrus County**  
**Historical Society, Inc.**



Hernando De Soto lead his expedition directly through this area, now known as Floral City.

Here on July 24, 1539, they camped at the Timucuan Village of *Tocaste*, located on the southern shore of the Floral City Pool of Lake Tsala Apopka. This village had been inhabited from at least 800AD, and written descriptions of the area have been made by Spanish chroniclers who accompanied the early Conquistadors.

Today, this site is a part of the Florida State Hernando De Soto Trail. A kiosk at the entrance to the Duval Island boat ramp parking lot relates the route of his expedition. De Soto's visit brought violent death, deadly disease, and cultural destruction; ultimately leading to the abandonment of *Tocaste* in the 1540s.



By the end of the 1600s, after continuous human presence for thousands of years, the Floral City area was devoid of people.

The proliferation of white settlers in Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas forced the Creek Indians to relocate south into Florida, where they became known as Seminoles. Sometime before 1765, the Seminoles came to the Floral City area and established the village of *Cho-illy-hajo* (meaning "crazy deer's foot"). This village was located on the north shore of Lake Consuella in the



location of the First Baptist Church of Floral City, on Magnolia Street. At its peak, there were 15-20 dwellings as shown on a map in Lt. Prince's diary. He chronicled the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) while serving here from January 1836 through June of 1838, and apparently took part in the destruction of *Cho-illy-hajo* by fire in 1837.

At the end of the war, the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 was created to encourage white males to settle in a portion of Florida, which included Floral City. The Act provided 160 acres of free land for a number of considerations during a five year period. With the Act of 1842, and the 1849 survey of the land around Floral City, white settlers began arriving expeditiously. The well-drained, sandy soil provided ideal conditions for growing cotton, sugarcane, fruits and vegetables, and it was only a few years before local settlers were important players in

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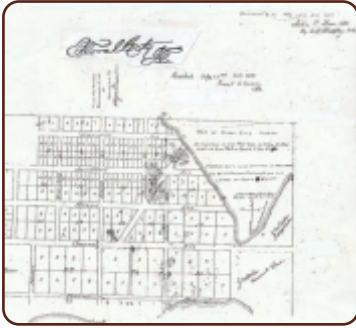
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By 1863, a Confederate Civil War veteran, John Paul Formy-Duval, had purchased vast lands that one day would become Floral City. Many original settlers in the area were also part of the war effort, or had settled afterward,

taking advantage of reconstructed, navigable waterways, and rich farm lands. When John Paul died in 1879, a small community had developed and his lands were inherited by son-in-law James Baker. It was on much of this land that the village of Floral City was officially laid out, surveyed and named in 1883.



And as they say in real estate, "location, location, location." Floral City's location has long been appreciated as a place for human habitation.



Tom Ritchie, Floral City Heritage Museum Director, and Marcia Beasley, Museum "Country" Store Manager, welcome visitors at the Floral City Heritage Museum, located in the Floral City Town Center on Orange Ave., a block from the traffic light on US41. The Museum is open every Friday & Saturday, 10am to 2pm, or by appointment. Call: 352-419-4257, or visit: [www.floralcityhc.org](http://www.floralcityhc.org)

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