



## LEVONDA GOODSON NAMED NEW CEO



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### **CITY OF OCALA DOWNTOWN TOWN HALL MEETING**

The City of Ocala will host two Town Hall meetings on Thursday, March 7 at noon and 5:30 p.m. at IHMC, 15 S.E. Osceola Ave. Both sessions will cover the same topics. Meetings are free and open to the public.

At these meetings, city staff will be covering topics including but not limited to parking garage two, the downtown parking program, loading zones, future pedestrian improvements, underground trash receptacles, and lighting. Citizens will have the opportunity to ask questions and engage with City Staff in an open forum setting. Topics covered during these meetings will be limited to those within the jurisdiction of the City of Ocala. Residents are encouraged to attend and participate in the conversation.

For more information, please call the City Manager's Office at (352) 401-3977.

*Our mission is to record the rich history of the people, places and events in the community and share information that impacts the lives of residents in Marion County.*



# TOWN Talk MAGAZINE

Sharing the good news happening  
in our community.

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Monica Bryant & Cynthia Wilson-Graham

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### Let's Talk

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## EDITOR'S DESK



It's our time to Shine!

March is designated as Women's History Month, a time to celebrate the achievements and contributions of women in history and society. The commemoration started in 1978 as Women's History Day in Sonoma County, California and was championed by Gerda Lerner. It became a national celebration in 1982 although the initial celebration was Women's History Week. In 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the event to the entire month of March, which was successful.

On Friday, March 8, 2024, Ollin Women International (OWI) will host its 7th annual International Women's Day (IWD) Celebration by honoring Women in Law and Government with a luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the CF Klein Center, 3001 S.W. College Rd. The event usually sells out so get your ticket if you plan to attend. Tickets available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2024-international-womens-day-celebration-tickets-804386761457?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>.

Founded during the Suffragette movement in 1911 and celebrated annually on March 8, IWD recognizes the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. This year's IWD theme is "Inspire Inclusion," which encourages everyone to recognize the unique perspectives and contributions of women from all walks of life, including those from marginalized communities. Inclusion refers to actively creating a society where all women, regardless of their background, identity, or experiences, feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate fully in all aspects of life.

According to [internationalwomensday.com](http://internationalwomensday.com), inspiring inclusion in your community or on social media is a powerful way to foster a sense of belonging and celebrate diversity. Since social media is already a big part of our lives; I believe this is something we can do as a community and not just during the month of March!

#### Check out the strategies below that promote inclusivity to get started:

- **Share Positive Stories:** Utilize your social media platforms to amplify positive stories and experiences of women. Highlight their achievements, resilience, and contributions. By doing so, you inspire others to recognize and appreciate the value of women's inclusion.
- **Challenge Stereotypes:** Be an advocate for change by challenging harmful stereotypes. Use your voice to debunk myths and misconceptions about women. Encourage conversations that break down barriers and promote understanding.
- **Use Inclusive Language:** Be mindful of the language you use in your posts. Prioritize inclusive language that respects diverse identities, backgrounds, and experiences. Avoid reinforcing biases and exclusionary terms.
- **Visual Representation Matters:** When selecting images for your social media content, be intentional. Choose visuals that represent a wide range of women—different races, ages, abilities, and body types. Inclusive imagery sends a powerful message.
- **Advocate for Equal Opportunities:** Use your platform to advocate for women's economic empowerment, equal opportunities, and leadership roles. Share information about programs, initiatives, and organizations that support women's advancement.
- **Engage in Discussions:** Participate in events, discussions, and campaigns that promote inclusivity and understanding. Encourage dialogue around gender equality, intersectionality, and the importance of women's voices.

Let's Talk!

*Monica Bryant*

Monica T. Bryant, Editor

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# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## MEET RAMONA WILLIAMSON: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR FOR THE CITY OF OCALA

Five years ago, the City of Ocala was looking for a way to get input from the community, engage and educate residents, bridge gaps and most importantly build better relationships between the community and the City, so they created a new position and selected Ramona Williamson to accomplish those goals.

For Williamson, who was born and raised in Ocala and has spent the majority of her life in the community, the Community Engagement Coordinator position was a perfect fit.

"This position gives the community the opportunity to be involved with the decisions we make. I sit in important meetings to continually inform the community on what's happening and what meetings they should attend," said Williamson, who has worked for the City for 10 years. "It allows me to have outreaches to assist with utility bills and access to meetings to enlighten the community on what's happening so they can be involved."



**Ramona Williamson**

One of those meetings Williamson encourages residents to attend and provide input is the final community meeting the City is hosting to discuss its Vision 2050 plan on Saturday, March 2, from noon to 2 p.m. at Citizens Circle, 151 SE Osceola Ave. For individuals unable to attend in person, a survey is available at [www.ocalafl.gov/vision2050](http://www.ocalafl.gov/vision2050) and will be open for feedback until Friday, April 5. According to a press release, the purpose of the meeting is to solicit input from the community about the future of our city. The vision plan serves as a roadmap for the future and is built upon community consensus to promote continued support and implementation of projects over time. The vision document will act as the basis for updating the comprehensive plan once established. For more information, contact the City of Ocala Growth Department at [gmd@ocalafl.gov](mailto:gmd@ocalafl.gov) or call (352) 629-8488.

Another event is Mayor Ben Marciano's Townhall Meeting "Let's Talk" on Wednesday, March 6, from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed's Place, 1821 N.W. 21st Ave. The meeting is open to the public and is an opportunity to meet the newly elected Mayor and hear his vision for Ocala's future.

"It's very imperative that the community come and support all our outreaches," she said. "It will take community participation to make change."

Although getting residents involved is not easy, Williamson is committed to doing it and considers it a blessing to be able to help people in the community she loves.

"I had to build relationships by listening, listening, listening to their story on how they got where they're at and what they've done to resolve their issues. I try to understand their issues as well as educate them and give them solutions and connect them with the outreaches and townhall meetings they should be involved in," she said. "Everyone doesn't think or perceive things the same, so I have to be strategic. I have to peel back layers to really find out what the problem really is."

She sits on several boards; the United Way Financial Stability Vision Council, Safe Kids of Marion County, Howard Academy Community Center Advisory Committee, Community Home Project and the Dare 2 B Great Girls Mentoring Group. In addition to creating the Heritage Trail Committee, she coordinates bus tours for the City and spearheads efforts to inform residents on the importance of voting, employment opportunities with the City, Covid 19 shots, Fire Fee Refunds and community cleanups and givebacks in West Ocala.

A typical day for Williamson includes answering calls 24/7 from residents having issues with their electric, housing, employment, code violations, families facing homelessness or those who lack basic needs such as diapers, clothes and food. She said Finances, Employment, Housing and Knowledge of How the City Operates are important issues facing the community right now. She recalled being contacted by a citizen who needed employment, but since he didn't have the background or education in the field that was open, she brought him on as a temporary employee.

"I told him if he works hard and proves himself, then he could become a permanent employee," she said. "I told him working for the City, you will have good benefits and retirement and there also may be room for advancement. The citizen listened, worked hard, got all his certificates and now has advanced three times."

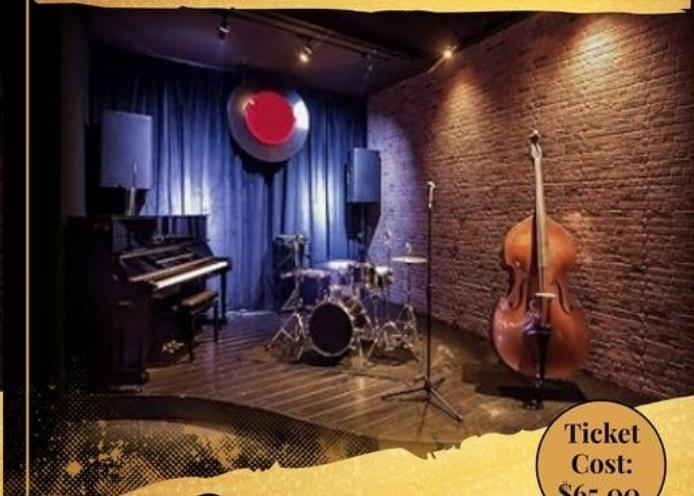
The most rewarding part of her job is when citizens trust her because they know she has their best interests at heart. She said, having people trust her to help make their lives a little better means a lot to her. To keep herself motivated, she keeps in mind that it could be her or a family member that needs help, so she treats people the way she would like to be treated.

"We would love to hear your thoughts and for the community to be a part of the decision-making process," Williamson said. "Be involved. Don't come out and make noise once the decision is made."

To contact Williamson, call (352) 456-8460 or email [RLWilliamson@ocalafl.gov](mailto:RLWilliamson@ocalafl.gov). To stay informed about the services or community events the City is on all social media platforms except Tik Tok or visit their website at [ocalafl.gov](http://ocalafl.gov) for updates.

The **Community Spotlight** highlights a person, place or event in our community. Tell us what's happening around town so we can share your **Good News** with others. Email submissions to [Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com](mailto:Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com).

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# KIMBERLY POMPEY WILKERSON: MORE THAN A COACH

It's hard to believe that Kimberly Pompey Wilkerson's first love was not basketball! When she was five years old and under the direction of the late Ora Lee Jackson, she knew that swimming and Creative Dance were her true passions.



**Ora Lee Jackson**

"Besides my mom and my family, she was the first sports coach in my life. She instilled a hunger in me to do it all," Wilkerson said. "She was the foundation that began a journey that I have now completed. She was the fire that ignited confidence, self-worth and the ability to achieve."

Wilkerson said her mom, Barbara Pompey, was a single mom who always found ways for her to participate in the best recreation and school programs in the community and opportunities for her to grow and learn that she could afford. She said her mom made her believe that she could do anything and that she was special in God's sight and that he created her to be great in whatever she chose to do.

At seven years old, Wilkerson picked up her first basketball in a PE class at Oakcrest Elementary School. She still remembers what amazing coaches Coach Tuck and Coach Foster were because they cared about every child and saw special gifts in the students.

"They were cultivators who always brought out the best in children," she said.

After finding pleasure in playing basketball at a young age, Wilkerson became absorbed in it, and it became a big part of her life. She ate, slept and drank basketball all day, everyday and developed a strong desire to get better and better.

And she did!

While a student at Howard Middle School, Wilkerson said Coach Diane Thomas was the sole reason she became a multi-sport competitive athlete. Thomas was her mentor, who launched her from the greatest springboard into competitive sports and really made her believe she could do anything and play with anybody. She also taught her how not to feel inferior to anyone.



**Diane Thomas**

"She made me believe that I could compete at a high level and that's exactly what happened. From basketball, track and field, volleyball and softball, she started me as a pre-teen competing with students my age and against young athletes," she said.

When she got to Vanguard High School, Wilkerson said Coach Wayne Allen was an influential icon in her life. Halfway through the season, she was the only freshman on the varsity basketball team and a starter on the varsity volleyball team

"He was a tough, demanding and a strong disciplinarian who molded and shaped great female athletes," she said. "He was a father to many of us who had no father figure in our lives and taught us to be young ladies and to be skilled in the classroom, on the court and in life."

Wilkerson received a basketball scholarship to the University of South Alabama in 1987. She graduated in 1992 and started her coaching journey a year later.



**Kimberly P. Wilkerson**

In 1993, she got her first coaching job as the Girls JV Head Coach and the Girls' Assistant Varsity Coach with Head Coach William "Bill" Lavan at Vanguard High School. The same year, she became the Girl's Track and Field Head Coach and Danny Gilman was the boy's head coach.

"At that time, I didn't think my career would reach this magnitude. I wanted to teach not only in the classroom but also in the sports arena," she said. "Growing up, I looked up to coaches (Jackson, Thomas, Lavan, Allen, Ed Croskey and Robert Williams) who had impacted my life, and I desired to give back in the same way they gave to me."

Now, after 32 years of coaching competitive sports (Basketball and Volleyball), and impacting the lives of thousands of students, Wilkerson recently retired from it, but will continue to teach PE at Belleview Middle School.

"Beautiful shifts in my life have helped me make my decision to retire," she said. "My family with a new edition of a granddaughter, Kensley, personal aspirations of writing and creating and operating more effectively in my call in ministry are a few of the reasons I've made this decision."

Wilkerson's coaching career included nine years as a PE Coach; 26 years as a high school basketball coach, 10 years as a track and field coach, three years coaching cross country, 12 years coaching middle and high school volleyball and two years coaching cheerleading. She wants it to be known that there's no secret to her success. It took believing in herself, having a strong spiritual foundation and a strong family support system that contributed to her success as a coach and as a person.

**Continued on page 7**

# BUILDING TRUST IN RELATIONSHIPS

By *Elgin Carelock, Chairman of the Greater Ocala Community Development Corporation*

Trust is a crucial element in building strong and healthy relationships, whether it be personal or professional. It is a fundamental aspect that forms the foundation of any successful interaction. Building trust can be a challenging process, but it is a vital ingredient in creating lasting relationships that can withstand the test of time. This article delves into the importance of building trust and its impact on various aspects of our lives.



Trust is the belief that others will act in our best interest, even when we are not present. Trust is formed over time, and it requires consistency in behavior and actions. It is built through honesty, reliability, and communication. Trust is essential in building a strong connection with others, whether it be family, friends or colleagues.

In personal relationships, trust is the cornerstone of a healthy and happy partnership. It is essential to have a sense of security and comfort with your loved ones, and trust is the primary factor that creates this bond. When trust is present, it can lead to open communication and the ability to express vulnerability without fear of judgment. This allows for a deeper level of understanding and intimacy, creating a more meaningful relationship.

However, trust can also be fragile and easily broken. When someone violates our trust, it can create a feeling of betrayal and hurt that can be challenging to repair. It is important to note that building trust takes time and effort, but it can be destroyed in an instant. Therefore, it is crucial to be mindful of our actions and communicate openly and honestly in our personal relationships.

In the professional world, trust is equally important. In business, trust is the foundation of all transactions and relationships. It is essential to establish a sense of credibility and reliability to succeed in any industry. Clients and customers must trust that they will receive quality service and products, while colleagues and superiors must have faith in each other's abilities to work together effectively.

When trust is present in the workplace, it can lead to a positive work environment and increased productivity. Trust encourages open communication, teamwork and collaboration, which leads to better results and a more efficient work process. It also fosters a sense of loyalty and commitment to the company and colleagues, which can lead to long-term success.

However, when trust is broken in a professional setting, it can have severe consequences. It can lead to a breakdown in communication, damaged relationships and even legal action. It can also harm the reputation of the company, leading to a loss of trust from customers and clients.

Therefore, it is crucial for companies to prioritize building trust with their employees and customers. This can be achieved through transparent communication, ethical behavior and a commitment to providing quality products and services.

In addition to personal and professional relationships, trust is also important in society as a whole. Trust in institutions, such as government and the media, is essential for a functioning democracy. When people lose faith in their leaders or the information they receive, it can lead to a breakdown in trust and a lack of confidence in the system.

Therefore, it is essential for leaders and institutions to prioritize transparency and honesty. By being transparent with their actions and decisions, leaders can foster trust and confidence in their leadership. It is also important for the media to prioritize accurate reporting and avoid sensationalism, as this can erode trust in the information they provide.



In conclusion, building trust is essential in all aspects of our lives. It creates a sense of security, comfort and connection in our personal relationships, fosters a positive work environment in our professional lives and promotes a functioning democracy in society. Trust takes time and effort to build, but it is worth the investment. By prioritizing honesty, reliability and communication, we can create lasting relationships built on a strong foundation of trust.

# CONGRATULATIONS: JOB WELL DONE COACH WILKERSON

“Without God giving me the gifts and talents and believing in myself, there would be no me,” she said. “Being humble as my mom carried the humility was and is always an attribute that I carried. It elevates me because I take no credit for God’s hand in all that I do and say.”

The greatest lesson Wilkerson tried to instill in each of her players is teamwork causes great advancements when you diligently work together. Everyone has the same common goal, but each has their individual job to complete.

Several of Wilkerson’s former students have excelled and played ball at the next level: Brittany Bowe (AAU Basketball) now a multiple Gold US Olympic Ice Skater; Sarah Poehlman (Warner Southern); Jalaysha Thomas and Tamera Johnson (UF); Kaitisha Haines (Yongsan and Daegu - US Army); Shambria Washington (Texas A&M); Shantia Arthur (College of Central Florida); Hallie Croson (Clearwater Christian College) and both her daughters, Ashley Hampton (FAMU, FIT) and Essence Bell (Volleyball, Howard University).



Wilkerson said being able to coach and train both her daughters to be stellar and elite players was a tremendous honor and a blessing, but to be able to teach them humility and staying lowly with all the accolades, hundreds of newspaper articles, individual interviews, numerous awards and being lifted on so many pedestals was the most fulfilling for her.



**Kimberly Wilkerson, Essence Bell and Ashley Hampton**

“My two daughters emulated the heart of humility along the way as they did out work, out grind, out practice and out hustle the competition to become great student-athletes. Now they’re living a life of success,” she said.

Wilkerson said she will miss the art of coaching, the creativity in pulling out the best from the least, the build up of game day, stepping into the arena to compete against competitors and the opportunity to display the hard work, blood, sweat and tears in practice to be showcased on stage.

“I will miss the Thank You’s! Thank you for coaching me. Thank you Coach Wilkerson for believing in me.” she said. “Coach, I didn’t see the life lessons when you coached me, but I see them now as an adult. Thank you for being tough on me.”

Wilkerson said she wouldn’t change anything in her career because everything made her who she is today. Her struggles and trials, she said, taught her how to persevere, one of her strongest teaching points when teaching children and athletes.

“We don’t pick and choose everything about life,” she said. “Those challenges that come, come to stretch, mold, shape our character, our voice, our relationships with others and grow and set our mental toughness as it helps fulfill our destiny in life.”

Now Wilkerson plans to focus on community service needs, specifically, War Cry 4 Peace. She is the president of the organization, which supports families who have lost loved ones to gun violence. As a youth pastor at Immerse Church, she said, she’ll continue to help develop, nurture and grow kingdom minded youth as they continue to build and maximize their relationship with Christ.

Wilkerson’s upcoming projects include writing children’s books, developing a series of multi-activity books and creating inspirational books for youth and adults. She said her voice comes through writing and through that gift she plans to touch and change lives through encouraging ways.

Despite the long list of accomplishments she’s made in her life, Wilkerson just wants people to remember her as someone who genuinely loves and cares about others, and that she tries her best to give young people the same or better opportunity she had to help bring out everything in them that can make them successful.

“To my husband, Carlton Wilkerson, my children, family and friends and the Marion County School Board, thank you for helping me make these 32 years of coaching young athletes a beautiful milestone in my life,” she said. “I may be retired from the sport of coaching, but I will never retire as being a Life Coach, one who helps lead, guide and direct youth and adults to their fullest potential.”



**Kimberly and Carlton Wilkerson**

# LEVONDA GOODSON APPOINTED THE NEW CEO OF THE



## Levonda Goodson, CEO, EBWCHC

Levonda Goodson is not focused on trying to fill the shoes of her predecessor, Carolyn Adams, founder and former CEO of the Estella Byrd Whitman Community Health Center, formerly known as the Estella Byrd Whitman Wellness and Community Resources Center. Instead, she is charting her own path to success.

Adams, who is entering her third retirement after 55 years in healthcare, appointed Goodson, the former Chief Clinical Operations Officer for the Heart of Florida Health Center, as the new CEO in January. Adams only considered one other person for the position.

"I chose Levonda because she knows the community. She is extremely trustworthy and felt she could take the clinic to the next level if the opportunity presented itself," she said.

In December 2023, Adams said she faced some health issues she could not avoid, and Levonda was her angel, and she can't thank her enough for her support.

For Goodson, who has always wanted to be a nurse and take care of people since she was a little girl, the opportunity was the answer to her prayers.

"Heart of Florida will always be a part of me, but I prayed a long time for something that made me feel like I was fulfilling the purpose God had for my life," she said. "I have a genuine love for people and this honor was an opportunity for me to give something back. Being in a smaller setting allows you to get close to people. There's such a great feeling when you know you're making a difference."

Goodson said her top three priorities are Community Engagement through Townhall Meetings and outreach events; Establishing Consistency; and Increasing patient flow and revenue to become self-sustaining. She said they learned from results of surveys collected from a Townhall meeting held in December that the community wanted the building to be more noticeable and wanted to know what services they provided. The first thing they did was address the aesthetics of the building and started reaching out to the community using mailers and flyers to answer the "what do you do" questions.

The health center, which serves adults, is currently open Monday - Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., and has four employees. The center provides primary care services and referrals to community partners for specialty care and has plans to add pediatric care in the future without cutting any existing services. Medicare, Medicaid, Aetna BetterHealth, Partners Direct and Florida Community Care insurances are accepted, and a sliding fee discount is offered to uninsured patients.

"We have limited patients. In order for us to grow, we need to build our following. Marketing the center is going to be a huge aid to overcoming this," she said. "We aim to be the hub that connects our patients to services that treat the whole person."

Referrals for service are accepted via e-mail at [Ebwwcrc@gmail.com](mailto:Ebwwcrc@gmail.com), by secure fax at **(352) 389-1013**, and many of their community partners, The Community Home Project (CHP), Interfaith Emergency Services and FreeD.O.M. Clinic, USA have their referral form to refer clients.

The organization's 6th Annual Charity Golf Tournament will be held on Saturday, March 30, at the Ocala Golf Course, 3130 E. Silver Springs Blvd. Registration fee is \$60 per person and \$240 for a foursome and includes 18 holes of golf (including cart), continental breakfast, lunch and an awards ceremony. To sign up to play or for more information, contact Reginald Landers at **(352) 207-1996**.

They will also participate in the Community Celebration hosted by CHP on March 9, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Howard Academy Community Center, 306 N.W. 7th Ave. Although the dates aren't confirmed yet, Goodson said, they will host another Townhall Meeting in late April and a community CPR event.

The health center is funded by grant funds from the State of Florida, the Marion County Hospital District Trustees and revenue generated from patient visits in addition to donations and support from other individuals dedicated to the mission set by their founders.

Monetary donations can be made through their website at <https://estellawellness.com/> mailed or dropped off at the health center, located at 819 N.W. 7th St., Ocala, FL 34475.



Carolyn Adams, former CEO

Continued on page 9



# ESTELLA BYRD WHITMAN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

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Goodson said that while financial support is essential to any non-profit organization, the community can help by spreading the word that the health center is there and ready to assist the community in meeting and exceeding their healthcare goals. She said there are many skilled individuals out there that have expertise that could be of value to their growth.

“The more people we reach, the greater the impact,” Goodson said.

Adams believes Goodson is off to a great start.

“I am more than pleased with the progress that Levonda has made in the past month,” she said. “She has generated additional dollars and now she has money to hire staff.”

The health center has openings for a part-time APRN and Director of Community Engagement and Marketing. Volunteer opportunities for MDs and Mid-level providers are also available.

Adams, who served as CEO from 2009 to 2023, said she promised her grandmother she would return to Ocala and assist in providing healthcare to the residents of Tucker Hill and surrounding areas. She shared the promise with her husband Arthur Adams, who was eager to help with the project and took the lead. A short time later, Dr. Pamela Lewin, co-founder, joined them.

Getting the facility up and running didn't happen as fast as they anticipated. Adams said the first five years were not an easy journey. She suffered a stroke and was later diagnosed with breast cancer. On December 17, 2013, Arthur passed away. Since her husband's proposal had made a huge impact on the community, Adams wanted the project to still move forward despite what she was going through. She reached out to Lewin and together, they decided to move forward. The facility didn't become a neighborhood clinic until 2018, when the City of Ocala changed the zoning to make it a reality.



“It is my wish that Ms. Goodson can take this to another level and to a new building,” Adams said. “I feel that I can trust her with my legacy and she will do good for the community.”

Adams words of wisdom for Levonda is to perform at your highest level, only view the past as the past and never look back. Walk like the world belongs to you.

Lewin retired in March 2023, and now Adams spends her time playing Scrabble with her 96-year-old mother. She plans to do some traveling and read some of the books she's always wanted to read after her cataract surgery in March.

Goodson said having the health center in West Ocala makes a difference.

“Being in a federal medical desert, the community doesn't have the convenience of having a health clinic in close proximity to where they reside,” she said. “Having a center that may be small in size, but still provides large facility care, gives the community the same advantages as there may be elsewhere. This is their center, in their community.”

As one of the founders, Adams said she wants to ensure the mission and vision are carried forward, but she doesn't plan to be involved in the daily operations. She is serving as the board chair, and her goal is to see additional small sites all over Marion County in the future.

Goodson's ultimate goal is to build a medical home that promotes and supports a healthier West Ocala. If we put the patients we serve at the forefront of the care we provide, the end result is a win win for everyone.

“We want to work with our community to help them achieve whatever goals we can,” she said. “We're here and will continue to work towards gaining the trust of those we serve.”

For more information or to support the health center, visit [www.estellawellness.com](http://www.estellawellness.com) or call (352) 875-2226.



Carolyn and Arthur Adams, Founders, EBWCHC



Dr. Pamela Lewin and Carolyn Adams, co-founder and founder of EBWCHC



recycle.ocalaf1.gov | 352-351-6697

# TIRE WASTE AMNESTY DAY

Saturday, March 9 | 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Hampton Aquatic Center  
255 NW Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. & The SW corner of NE Eighth Avenue and NE 14th Street

City of Ocala residents may bring up to 10 tires for free disposal. A driver's license listing a city address may be required. Tires generated by businesses will not be accepted.



# A Walk THROUGH TIME

*Six historic homes within walking distance*

Saturday, April 27  
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



Tickets \$25 pre-sale, \$30 day of tour  
Available at To Your Hearts Desire in Ocala Shopping Center  
For further information call Historic Ocala Preservation Society 352-484-0502  
HistoricOcala.org/SpringTour

## OCALA RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT TO HOST 'SAVE THE PANTHER' PROGRAM

The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department will host the 'Save the Panther' program and movie night for National Save the Florida Panther Day on Saturday, March 16, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Fort King National Historic Landmark, 3925 E. Fort King St.

Rangers and other experts will present information about these endangered animals and conservation efforts to save them. Crafts will be available for the kids and a dusk trail hike will begin before showing the Florida Film Festival winner, "Path of the Panther."



"Path of the Panther" follows a wildlife photographer, veterinarians, ranchers, conservationists and indigenous people, who find themselves on the front lines of an accelerating battle between forces of renewal and destruction that have pushed the Everglades to the brink of ecological collapse.

The movie, rated PG, will start near sundown with a run time of approximately 90 minutes.

For more information, visit [www.ocalaf1.gov/Recpark](http://www.ocalaf1.gov/Recpark) or [www.pathofthepanther.com](http://www.pathofthepanther.com).

## CITY OF OCALA TO HOST 41st ANNUAL PARADE OF SENIOR SERVICES INFORMATION FAIR

The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks will host the Parade of Senior Services Information Fair on Friday, March 15, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the College of Central Florida Klein Conference Center, 3003 S.W. College Rd.



The Parade of Senior Services brings together over 30 agencies to provide information on a wide range of services for senior citizens in Ocala/Marion County and the surrounding areas.

Many attend this yearly show to obtain information on services currently needed or may be needed in the future. Information about services includes various health insurance companies, long-term care facilities, services for the blind, and social services offered by Marion County like the board of elections, electric, and veteran services. It's a great opportunity for seniors to gather valuable information and connect with the agencies that can assist them.

This event is free to attend for adults ages 50 and over.

For more information, contact the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department at (352) 368-5517.

## HCA Florida Healthcare Opens New Freestanding Emergency Room

24/7/365 emergency care for adults and children



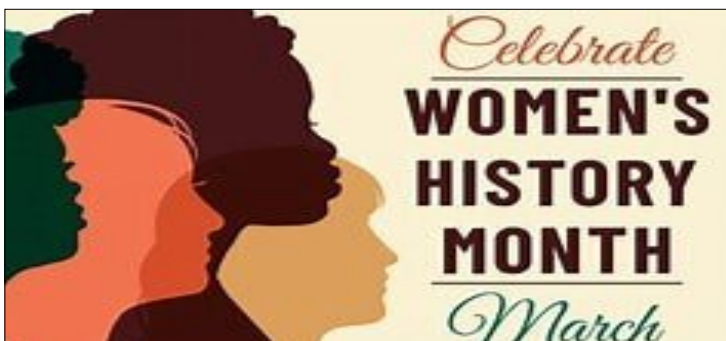
HCA Florida Ocala Hospital recently opened a new freestanding emergency room as part of HCA Florida Healthcare's continued expansion across the state. HCA Florida Foxwood Emergency, an 11,000-square-foot facility located at 4361 N.W. Blitchton Road, on the west side of Highway 27, provides a full range of medical services for children and adults.

This new, state-of-the-art ER will be staffed with board-certified emergency medicine physicians and nurses, 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, just like an emergency room that is housed within the walls of a hospital. Physicians and colleagues will treat a range of general and specific conditions including infections, chest pain and broken bones.

Designed to meet the community's growing health care needs, HCA Florida Foxwood Emergency will feature:

- A separate pediatric entrance and waiting area
- 11 private treatment rooms
- CT capabilities
- Digital ultrasound
- Digital diagnostic & portable X-rays
- On-site laboratory
- Telemedicine technology with a specific focus on stroke care and behavioral health

For more information, visit [hcafloridahealthcare.com](http://hcafloridahealthcare.com).



### SAVE-THE-DATES

**VANGUARD HIGH**  
May 22 - 6 p.m.  
@ Southeastern Livestock Pavilion

**NORTH MARION HIGH**  
May 23 - 6 p.m.  
@ Southeastern Livestock Pavilion

**HILLCREST**  
May 24, 10 a.m.  
@ Hillcrest School

**DUNNELON HIGH**  
May 24, 6 p.m.  
@ World Equestrian Center

**LAKE WEIR HIGH**  
May 24, 6 p.m.  
@ Southeastern Livestock Pavilion

Congratulations

CLASS OF

2024

**BELLEVUE HIGH**  
May 25, 8 a.m.  
@ Bellevue High School

**FOREST HIGH**  
May 25, 8 a.m.  
@ World Equestrian Center

**WEST PORT HIGH**  
May 28, 8 a.m.  
@ World Equestrian Center

**MARION TECHNICAL COLLEGE**  
June 13, 6 p.m.  
@ Marion Technical Institute

Graduation

Ocala Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

## Save The Date

May 4th, 2024 ~ 4:00 - 8:00 pm

Derby Divas

A Day  
at the

Delta  
Downs

An evening of elegance and excitement at our Derby Gala Fundraiser & Watch Party!

Join us for an unforgettable blend of food, fun, and festivities all in support of a great cause!

Klein Conference Center  
Ocala, Florida

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## MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

### COMPARISON SHOPPING CAN SAVE YOU MONEY

If you are a regular reader of Town Talk Magazine, you will recognize some of these topics as those I have written about before, but they are so important I am going to mention them again. I harp on Comparison Shopping. On any large purchase I always suggest getting at least three prices for the same or comparable item or service. This month's best examples include one of my own. I wanted to add a built-in over the range microwave oven to free up counter space in my kitchen. I was able to buy the microwave on sale at \$119 off the regular price but then needed an electrician to install it. I asked friends and neighbors for recommendations on reasonably priced quality electricians. I got prices from three which were \$584, \$350, and \$150. I used the electrician who charged \$150, and he did a terrific job.

In working with residents in West Ocala I received a call from a woman whose Homeowner's Insurance went up to an astonishing \$8,084 per year. After just a few calls Bird Insurance Agency was able to find her a policy for \$1,769. That is a savings of over \$526 every month. Another woman told me she is paying \$139 a month for her internet service. I shared with her that I use T-Mobile's Wi-Fi internet tower and pay \$40 a month, taxes and fees included. I believe they have raised the price for new users to \$50 per month but still a lot better than \$139. The point is there can be great value in shopping around and comparing prices.

When buying large items, you can negotiate the price on many items that perhaps you never thought you could. According to *Kiplinger Personal Finance* people who negotiated major appliance purchases at Home Depot saved an average of \$114 and almost \$140 at Lowe's. Independent locally owned stores are even easier to negotiate a better price and almost all stores will match another store's price if you have a reason you want to buy from a specific store.



This month I received a notice that one of my credit cards was going up to 30.49% interest. That is an obscenely high rate. If you have credit cards that you are paying off over time, make sure you know the current interest rate you are paying. If you can qualify search the internet for zero percent limited time

balance transfer offers, often these will last six months then revert to a higher rate but at least you get the six months to try to pay it off. Remember my favorite strategy is to pay off the highest rate card first then start the next highest rate, always making the minimum required payment on all cards to avoid a late fee and penalty. I suggest you also call your high-rate credit card and tell them you would like a lower interest rate to keep using their card and not transfer the balance to another card. Surprisingly, you will often get a lower rate offered to you as they do not want to lose your business.

If you are paying off Student Loans or have a friend or relative who is paying off that type of loan this is another area where you might be able to save some money. After the COVID forgiveness period ended a lot of these loan payments went to a high monthly payment. The government has been trying to either forgive or reduce these payments and it seems like there is a new program almost monthly that you might be eligible for. I encourage you to Google Search SAVE Student Loan Forgiveness and this will take you to the SAVE program and other sites showing you how to reduce your monthly student loan payments and even have some costs partially or totally forgiven.



**Business Name:** Neighborly Airport Ride, LLC

**No. of Employees:** 0

**Business Owner:** Terri Johnson

**Business Address:** Ocala, FL

**Business Phone:** (352) 657-9963

**What Year Did You Start Your Business?** 2022

**Hours of Operation:** 24/7 rides

**Products and/or Services:** Airport transportation

**Email:** Neighborlyairportride@gmail.com

**Website:** N/A

**Are you on Social Media?** Yes

**Facebook:** MCOTPAPIEGNV

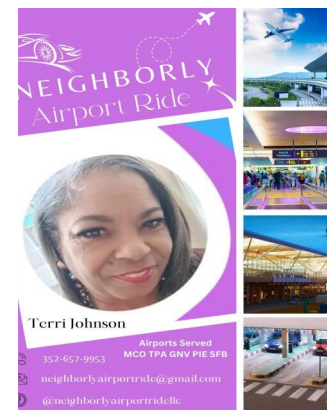
**What or Who Inspired you to start your business?**

I was inspired to start my business because I found a need in Ocala and filled it.

**What Makes Your Business Unique or What's Your Specialty?** I provide private, door to door car service to five area airports at affordable rates

**What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting a Business?**

Research EVERYTHING for yourself. Get a certified tax consultant and at least a paralegal.



The **Small Business Profile** is **FREE** and open to small businesses located in Marion County with less than 25 employees or solo entrepreneurs.

To have your business featured in an upcoming edition, please request a form by emailing [Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com](mailto:Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com). Completed forms can be returned via email or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.



COMMUNITY EVENTS CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH  
 (TOP) LEGACY DAY AT FESSENDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
 (BELOW) 2024 BLACK HISTORY MUSEUM ARCHIVES AWARDS GALA



# SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

## TALLAHASSEE COLLEGE TOUR

### 3 GREAT SCHOOLS | 2 FULL DAYS



**MARCH 22-23 2024**

Calling all High School and Community College Students

Students will have an opportunity to interact one-on-one with college admission reps from TCC, FSU, and FAMU.

CASH APP: \$SWN2YOU

**\$300**  
PER PERSON  
Includes Transportation, Hotel stay, 2 Meals & Registration

GRAB YOUR SPOT TODAY

## NEW PROGRAM LAUNCHED FOR COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS

The Ocala Recreation and Parks Department will launch a new program this spring allowing college-bound students, ages 14 to 18, to tour colleges and universities. This immersive experience offers prospective students an opportunity to discover the educational institutions that call Florida home.

Teens will spend the day in each city visiting several colleges and universities while also experiencing the culture of each location. Cost is \$25 per person per trip and buses will leave from Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 NW 21st Ave. Participants will depart at 7 a.m. and return at approximately 8 p.m.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

- **April 15** - Florida A&M University and Tallahassee Community College, Tallahassee, Fl.
- **April 17** - Jacksonville University and University of North Florida, Jacksonville, Fl.
- **April 19** - Bethune Cookman and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, Fl.
- **June 3** - University of Florida and Santa Fe College, Gainesville, Fl.
- **June 17** - Webber International University, Warner University and Florida Southern College, Lakeland, Fl.
- **July 8** - University of Central Florida, Full Sail University and Rollins College, Orlando, Fl.
- **July 22** - University of South Florida and University of Tampa, Tampa, Fl.

For more information or questions, contact **(352) 401-6980** or [www.ocalafl.gov/recpark](http://www.ocalafl.gov/recpark).

## APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR THE 2024 CITY OF OCALA CITIZENS ACADEMY PROGRAM

Applications are now being accepted for the 2024 City of Ocala Citizens Academy program. Citizens Academy is a free, exciting, 11-week program that touches upon virtually every facet of city government. Sessions will be held **Thursdays, March 21 through May 30, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.** at various city locations. Food and other refreshments will be provided at each session.

Participants will visit and interact with nearly every City department including Ocala Fire Rescue, Ocala International Airport, Ocala Police Department, Public Works Department, Ocala Electric Utility and more. Participants will hear from elected officials and top City administrators including City Manager, Peter Lee. Each session will include live demonstrations, a question-and-answer portion, and educational discussions to give participants a better understanding of current City projects and economic development opportunities.

All participants must be at least 18 years of age and currently be residents or business owners in Ocala/ Marion County. Participants must also be able to attend a minimum of nine sessions to successfully graduate from this program.

The deadline to register is Friday, March 8. Register at [www.ocalafl.gov/citizensacademy](http://www.ocalafl.gov/citizensacademy). Space is limited and reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, visit [www.ocalafl.gov/citizensacademy](http://www.ocalafl.gov/citizensacademy) or call **(352) 401-3978**.

Ocala Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
Ocaladeltas.org

**DREAM ACT ACHIEVE**

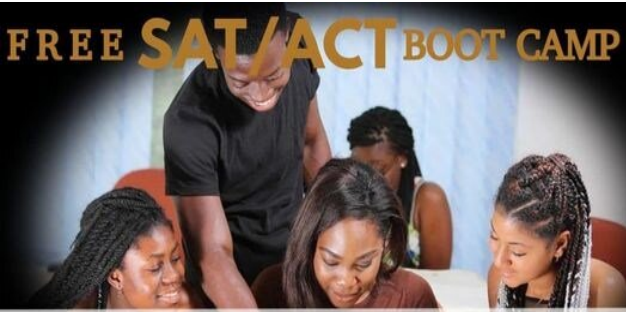
**Now Accepting Scholarship Applications**  
Deadline to apply is March 8, 2024

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- \*Female Senior attending a Marion County High School
- \*GPA of 3.0 or above
- \*Have taken a college entrance exam (ACT, SAT, or other)
- \*Have been accepted to a college or university
- \*Bring an official, sealed transcript to the College and Scholarship Brunch on March 30, 2024

Apply online by scanning the QR code:

For more information contact:  
Cassandra Boston at 352-209-2973 or at [ocalascholarship2@gmail.com](mailto:ocalascholarship2@gmail.com)



**Sponsored by:**  
**ΑΦΑ The Epsilon Pi Lambda Chapter of ΑΦΑ**  
**Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated**

**FEB 27TH,  
 MARCH 5, 19, 26 AND  
 APRIL 2ND**

**Location: New Zion M.B.C. 728 NW 6th Ave.  
 6:00P.M. - 7:30P.M.**

- \*High School Juniors and Seniors
- \*Qualified Instructors
- \*Dinner served after every session

RSVP by texting or emailing Antron Woods your Name, School, Grade Level and Telephone Number

For More Information contact:  
 Antron Woods 352-598-8610 (awoods687@gmail.com)  
 Adeniki Leahmon 352-615-3738 (adeniki.leahmon@gmail.com)

**CITY RESIDENTS WILL SOON GET SOME FINANCIAL RELIEF ON THEIR ELECTRIC BILL**

City of Ocala electric customers will notice some financial relief beginning in March. On February 6, the Ocala City Council members approved a reduction to the power cost adjustment (PCA) rate and an increase in the electric base rates, which will result in an approximate eight percent decrease in customers' monthly bills.

Effective Friday, March 1, the PCA rate will be lowered from \$0.056 to \$0.02815 per kilowatt hour (kWh) and the energy charge (base rate) will increase from \$0.08964 to \$0.10126 per kWh, resulting in an overall rate reduction. The customer service charge, which is assessed to each customer every month, will be raised from the current 17 dollars to 20 dollars.

Residential customers who consume approximately 1,000 kWh will experience a reduction of \$14.93, or 8.1 percent, in their overall bill. The exact amount of reduction will vary depending on individual energy consumption. For commercial and industrial customers, a similar monthly reduction will be reflected.

For customers with questions or concerns, please call the Customer Service Office at **(352) 629-2489**.



FEATURING DENNIS D'SATCHMO KEATING

**MADE FOR TEACHERS, INC.**

**CHAT & CHEW**

**SPRING EDITION**

APRIL 27, 2024  
 1821 NW 21ST AVE, OCALA, FL 34475  
 1:00PM - 3:00PM  
 COST: FREE

**THIS EVENT IS FOR MARION COUNTY TEACHERS K-12**

JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL EVENT WHERE YOU CAN CHAT, CHEW, AND CONNECT WHILE LEARNING ABOUT OUR MISSION AND ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS. ENJOY A DELICIOUS MEAL AND RECEIVE GIFTS OF APPRECIATION AS A TOKEN OF OUR GRATITUDE FOR YOUR DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT. DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY TO NETWORK, SHARE IDEAS, AND BE A PART OF A COMMUNITY THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS YOU. RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

**EVENTBRITE: MADE FOR TEACHERS CHAT & CHEW SPRING EDITION**  
*Thank you so much for everything that You do!*

All teachers must have their school ID. E-ticket will be available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/made-for-teachers-chat-chew-spring-edition-tickets-840165476557?aff=oddtcreator>



**SPRING FESTIVAL MARKET**

SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 2024 | 12:00 - 4:00 PM

OCALA DOWNTOWN MARKET | CORNER OF SE 3RD ST. & 3RD AVE.

**VENDORS BOUNCE HOUSE**  
**ENTERTAINMENT FOOD TRUCKS**

Holiday Market is Presented by:



\*\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE THERE ARE SCAMS ADVERTISING VENDOR SPACE AVAILABLE. THE CONTACT INFORMATION BELOW IS THE ONLY WAY TO REGISTER:  
 EMAIL: LYNN@OCALACEP.COM OR  
 WWW.OCALADOWNTOWNMARKET.COM



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**P.O. Box 6212**  
**Ocala, FL 34478**

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  @levittampocala

## 10 FREE CONCERTS

# Fridays, March 15 - May 17

7 - 9 p.m. | Webb Field, 1510 NW Fourth St.  
Rain location: E.D. Croskey Recreation Center

## 2024 LINE-UP

**March 15 | Americana**  
**Leon Timbo and the Family Band**  
with Theo Moon

**April 19 | Cuban Jazz**  
**Iliana Rose**  
with Sean T Music Global Group

**March 22 | Folk Rock**  
**Streetlight Cadence**  
with Nicole Equerme

**April 26 | Country**  
**Roberta Lea**  
with Noah Hunton

**March 29 | Reggae**  
**Jah Movement**  
with Ace Winn

**May 3 | Soul/Gospel**  
**The Sensational Barnes Brothers**  
with Mwiza

**April 5 | Heavy Metal**  
**Metalachi**  
with El Trio Rosal

**May 10 | Root/R & B**  
**Kyshona**  
with Jenna Clark

**April 12 | Irish Punk**  
**Clover's Revenge**  
with Irish Dance by Gainesville Dance Academy

**May 19 | Funk**  
**The Rumble feat. Chief Boudreaux Jr.**  
with Central Florida Community Arts

[www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp](http://www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp) | [artinfo@ocalafl.gov](mailto:artinfo@ocalafl.gov)

