



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

ABC Supply Co. Inc. opened its new 60,000-square-foot warehouse distribution facility in January. The complex includes a retail showroom open to the public. One of ABC Supply's longtime customers is Melbourne-based Hippo Roofing LLC, a generational family business. ABC Supply started as a small business. Today, the company has more than 1,000 locations. From left: Donny Cardenales, quality control manager, Pit Crew Roofing and Repair; Bill Stillwell, president, Hippo Roofing; Justin Stillwell, production manager and quality specialist, Hippo Roofing; and Sam Shearer, branch manager, ABC Supply. They are at ABC Supply in Rockledge. Over the years, Hippo Roofing has won various national honors, including one from 'Metal Construction News,' a trade publication.

Hippo Roofing, ABC Supply Co. longtime firms serving roofing industry

By Ken Datzman

ROCKLEDGE — ABC Supply Co. Inc.'s new warehouse distribution facility on Haverty Court is huge. It could hold one regulation football field, with several thousand square feet remaining.

A football field, including the end zones, is roughly 57,600 square feet. The ABC Supply Co. building is 60,000 square feet, with soaring ceilings. The structure is situated on 6 acres.

Many roofing contractors in the region rely on ABC Supply Co., which offers a range of products and services to support their work.

Melbourne-based Hippo Roofing LLC, a generational family business, is an example.

The company specializes in residential metal roofing, as well as shingle, tile, and other types of roofs. Stamped metal shingles and other metal roof panel systems are a

significant part of ABC Supply Co.'s product offering.

"We have a longstanding relationship with ABC Supply Co.," said businessman William "Bill" Stillwell, president of Hippo Roofing, whose company roots span more than 30 years in the community. "We value that relationship. It has helped us streamline the sales process and much more. They have quality products, fair pricing, and friendly staffers."

"We greatly appreciate Hippo Roofing doing business with us," added Sam Shearer, branch manager of the new

ABC Supply Co. distribution facility and retail showroom, which opened in January.

ABC Supply Co. is the largest wholesale distributor of roofing and building products in America. The more than 40-year-old company started as a small business. The husband-and-wife duo of Ken and Diane Hendricks founded ABC Supply Co., with an emphasis on putting "their contractor customers' needs before everything else."

Please see Hippo Roofing LLC, page 23

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Health First announces \$230 million Palm Bay Hospital expansion, part of nearly \$800 million of investments

By Lance M. Skelly
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System Director
Public and Media Relations
Health First

ROCKLEDGE (May 27, 2025) — Health First has announced an ambitious \$230 million five-floor patient tower expansion of Palm Bay Hospital. The schematic design phase will begin this August, and construction is set to begin in summer 2026. The new tower is projected to significantly increase capacity and throughput of the current hospital and is scheduled to be completed in 2028.

This necessary investment provides the community with:

- 60 new inpatient beds, significantly easing current capacity challenges
- Expanded operating rooms, cath labs, pre-op/recovery spaces
- Upgraded sterile processing department
- Two shelled floors to support future growth, potentially adding up to 60 additional beds
- Enhanced access and patient experience through improved navigation and facility design
- Relocating and doubling the number of operating rooms, cath labs, pre-op/recovery space
- Improved hospital campus navigation and additional visitor and associate parking.

Located on Malabar Road, Palm Bay Hospital currently includes 120 beds, more than 200 physicians, and offers more than 40 medical specialties. In 2024, the 27-bed emergency department treated more than 53,000 cases.

Palm Bay Hospital was originally built in 1992 as a 60-bed micro-hospital. And while Health First has made expansions to the campus over the years, the facility was never designed to handle the level of growth Brevard County and Palm Bay has experienced over the last decade.

“As we have for over 30 years, Health First is committed to growing with and meeting the needs of our community. This Palm Bay Hospital expansion project is one of many ambitious investments we have

long planned, and we’re very proud and excited to see these plans quickly becoming a reality,” said Health First President and CEO Terry Forde.

“Palm Bay Hospital has faithfully served the South Brevard community since 1992. As the fastest-growing city in Brevard County — and one of the most rapidly growing cities in the United States — Health First and Palm Bay’s community hospital is committed to meeting our community’s needs,” said Kyle Baxter, Palm Bay Hospital president. “I join our associates, providers, and volunteers in expressing our pride and excitement for this expansion that will improve access to quality care, and the health and wellness of our community.”

“Palm Bay is a city on the rise, and this transformative expansion by Health First reflects that momentum. It brings more jobs, more physicians, and more peace of mind to our residents,” said Palm Bay Mayor Rob Medina.

“We are grateful for this investment in the health and future of the greatest city on the face of the Earth, we call Palm Bay.”

Other ongoing Health First projects include:

Cape Canaveral Hospital

Construction progress of the new \$410 million Cape Canaveral Hospital and Medical Office Building on Merritt Island is on schedule and is expected to be completed by the end of 2026, with the officially open to the public in early 2027.

The new 268,000-square-foot Cape Canaveral Hospital will include:

- 120 private inpatient hospital beds
- 25 emergency department treatment rooms
- Six operating rooms
- Three-story, 92,000-square-foot medical office building

The hospital was designed and will be built to withstand a Category 4 hurricane. Continuation of care and the potential for evacuation will be evaluated for individual storms, and in consultation with state officials. Additionally, the entire campus site will be constructed 13 feet above sea level to withstand storm surge.

Free-standing emergency departments
Health First announced in April a \$40 million

investment and accelerated development of two new freestanding emergency departments (EDs) to help ensure residents continue to have reliable, 24/7 emergency care close to home.

Health First has long planned for the creation of freestanding EDs in Brevard County as the population is projected to grow steadily into the next decade. However, based on the evolving needs of the community, particularly given the recent announcement and swift closure of Orlando Health Rockledge Hospital, Health First will now fast-track efforts to expand access to emergency care across Brevard County.

Freestanding EDs deliver the same high-quality care found in hospital emergency departments — fully equipped and staffed around the clock by emergency physicians and trained care teams. Located in growing areas across the county, they help reduce travel times for patients and support faster treatment during critical moments.

Sites include:

● **Rockledge:** Health First is actively working to develop a 13,000-square-foot, 12-bed freestanding ED at 3300 S. Fiske Blvd. Architectural assessments have confirmed the site’s viability, and the organization is engaging with city officials on zoning and permitting. Discussions with the Florida Department of Transportation are underway to improve traffic flow in the area.

● **Southern Brevard:** A second freestanding ED is in the early stages of development to serve the southern part of the county. Details will be shared once plans advance further and permitting is underway.

First Flight Air Ambulance Fleet Expansion

Health First officially launched in March its second full-time air ambulance (First Flight 2) doubling its emergency air response capabilities in Brevard County.

The First Flight Air Medical Program now operates two state-of-the-art EC135 helicopters, equipped with critical care interiors tailored for Emergency Medical Services and Interfacility Hospital Transport. Both helicopters are staffed with highly trained professionals, including one pilot and two medical crew members, a registered nurse paramedic and a critical care paramedic.

First Flight has served as the primary helicopter ambulance service for Brevard County and northern Indian River County for more than 35 years, responding to multiple calls each day. The program now operates out of two strategic operation bases: one in Melbourne at the Melbourne Orlando International Airport — and the new base addition in Titusville, enabling the air teams to effectively support a wide range of emergencies, including trauma, cardiac, stroke, and other acute medical conditions.

Epic Electronic Medical Record

In April 2024, Health First announced the investment of more than \$100 million as part of a two-year transformative plan to modernize and transform Brevard County’s health-care experience for patients, health plan members, providers, and care teams.

Health First is partnering with Verona, Wisconsin-based health-care software vendor Epic to improve the health and wellness of the communities it serves. This ambitious project underscores Health First’s mission to deliver high-quality care and services in the most consumer-friendly manner.

The investment in the Epic platform will modernize Health First’s technology and improve its ability to support everyone it serves.



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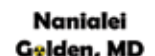
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Commissioner Wilton Simpson celebrates signing of historic 2025 Florida Farm Bill

By Communications Office
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Commissioner Wilton Simpson
Florida Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services

DADE CITY (May 15, 2025) — Today, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson joined Gov. Ron DeSantis, Florida legislative leaders, and agriculture industry partners to celebrate the signing of the 2025 Florida Farm Bill (SB 700) — a landmark piece of legislation delivering sweeping pro-freedom, pro-farmer, and pro-family reforms for Floridians.

Commissioner Wilton Simpson said, “The 2025 Florida Farm Bill is the most comprehensive agriculture and consumer protection bill in Florida’s history, passed by the most conservative legislative leaders in the country. While other states are attacking farmers and ranchers, Florida is defending the rights of our farmers, protecting families from forced medication, and putting America First by keeping foreign influence out of our land and charities.”

He continued, “This is what real conservative leadership looks like — unapologetic, fearless, and focused on family, freedom, and food security. I want to thank Senate President Ben Albritton, House Speaker Daniel Perez, Senator Keith Truenow, and Representatives Kaylee Tuck and Danny Alvarez for their steadfast leadership in getting this historic legislation across the

finish line — and I want to thank Gov. DeSantis for standing with Florida’s farmers and signing this bill into law.”

Sponsored by Truenow, Tuck and Alvarez, the legislation passed with strong bipartisan support and delivers sweeping reforms that empower Florida farmers, defend consumers, and reinforce core constitutional freedoms. Championed by Simpson, the bill represents the most far-reaching legislative package ever enacted for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, addressing nearly every aspect of the department’s responsibilities.

Specifically, the legislation enhances agricultural resilience, bans medical additives — including fluoride — from public water systems, strengthens food safety and labeling transparency, defends state sovereignty from foreign influence, prohibits anti-farmer ESG lending discrimination, upholds Second Amendment rights, and more. Senate President Ben Albritton and House Speaker Daniel Perez played key roles in steering the bill through both chambers, delivering a transformative legislative victory for Florida’s agriculture community and consumers.

Albritton (R-Wauchula) said, “I commend Commissioner Simpson for spearheading this comprehensive and historic legislation, and am grateful to Gov. DeSantis for his support today. Commissioner Simpson and Senator Truenow, who led the bill through the Senate, are both farmers themselves and understand the needs of Florida’s farm families. They ran to the fight to protect the Florida farmer, safeguard our heritage farmlands, and shore up the vital agricultural supply chain that feeds families across our state. If you eat, you’re involved in agriculture. Today all Floridians can be proud that our state leaders stand with the Florida farmer.”

Perez said, “The Florida Farm Bill is a bold example of what happens when conservative leaders come together to protect our values, defend our way of life and put Floridians first. From securing our food supply to safeguarding property rights and personal freedoms, this legislation reflects Florida’s commitment to a safer, stronger future for generations to come.”

Truenow added, “As someone who works the land and lives the agricultural life every day, I was proud to sponsor this bill and fight for the policies our farmers need to thrive. The 2025 Florida Farm Bill is a direct response to the threats facing our industry — and it delivers real, conservative solutions that put Florida farmers first. I’m grateful to have worked alongside Commissioner Simpson, whose bold leadership and deep commitment to protecting our way of life helped drive this legislation forward from day one.”

Tuck said, “This bill is a win for every Florida family. From honest food labeling to stopping forced medication in our water, we are restoring accountability, defending common sense, and protecting the core values that make our state strong. It was an honor to help lead this fight in the House. I thank Commissioner Simpson for his tireless work to get this done — his leadership made all the difference.”

And Alvarez said, “Florida is setting the national standard for conservative leadership in agriculture and consumer protection. This legislation defends our farmers, cracks down on fraud, and makes clear that Florida will not bow to radical agendas. I’m proud to have helped carry this bill across the finish line and grateful to Commissioner Simpson for his bold leadership in making it happen.”

The legislation establishes many initiatives across

the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ variety of duties and responsibilities, including:

- Prioritizing Hydration Over Medication
 - Prohibiting the addition of medicine — including fluoride — to public water systems.
 - Protecting Farmers from ESG Lending Discrimination
 - Prohibiting financial institutions from discriminating against agricultural producers based on environmental policies or set emission targets.
 - Reloading Florida’s Commitment to the Second Amendment
 - Updating Florida’s concealed weapon licenses process to eliminate red tape and delays for gun owners.
 - Prohibiting the use of drones on state hunting lands or private shooting ranges with the intent to harass.
 - Defending Against Foreign Influence
 - Prohibits charitable organizations from soliciting or receiving funds from hostile foreign countries of concern.
 - Requiring Honesty in Food Labeling
 - Prohibiting the mislabeling of plant-based products as “milk,” “meat,” “poultry,” or “eggs.”
 - Supporting Farmers Impacted by Natural Disasters
 - Enhances disaster recovery programs for agricultural producers impacted by hurricanes and natural disasters.
 - Protecting Florida’s Working Agricultural Lands
 - Providing the state with the ability to return solar fields back into agricultural production.
 - Prohibiting the use of drones on or near agricultural lands.
 - Supporting Agricultural Workforce Housing
 - Prohibits local governments from banning housing for legally verified agricultural workers on bona fide farms.
 - To combat illegal immigration, creates strict legal worker eligibility requirements for farmworker housing and establishes penalties for violations.
 - Increasing Florida’s Emergency Preparedness
 - Supporting a reliable and available fuel supply during emergencies through a retail fuel registration program.
 - Establishing a grant program for fiscally constrained counties and areas along evacuation routes to purchase generator power switches for fuel stations.
 - Putting Science and Accountability Behind Water Quality
 - Expands using proven Best Management Practices for small farms to protect water resources.
 - Educating Florida’s Future Farmers
 - Protecting 4-H and FFA programs in local schools from local governments’ zoning laws by ensuring local programs can have agriculture facilities on school property.
 - Supporting FFA participation through scholarships for annual dues and educational opportunities.
 - Supporting Florida Consumers
 - Requiring businesses to clearly mark prices on all items and eliminating an outdated law that allowed for pricing to be optional.
 - Eliminating the loophole for the sale of psychedelic mushrooms.
 - Creating a state felony for stealing checks out of mailboxes from Florida homes and businesses.
 - Enhances protections against fuel theft and payment card misuse at retail fuel stations.
- For more information about the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, visit FDACS.gov.



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Andres Yepes joins local firm Three Bridges Planning as director of risk management and insurance

By Steve Jones
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Editorial Director
Z Corp PR & Digital

MELBOURNE (May 19, 2025) — Three Bridges Planning has announced the addition of Andres Yepes, a Certified Financial Planner®, as director of risk management and insurance. His arrival to the team reinforces the firm's dedication to comprehensive financial planning and expands his ability to serve clients at the highest level.

In this role, Yepes will provide a variety of services to clients, including tax planning, financial planning, investment management, retirement strategies, and risk management and insurance.

Before joining Three Bridges Planning, Yepes served as an independent wealth advisor and financial planner. He also was a financial advisor at Raymond James and a branch manager at Chase Bank.

"I'm excited to join a firm where I can collaborate with such a strong and knowledgeable leadership team," said Yepes. "I'm also impressed with the high level of commu-

nity involvement here, which is important to me. The culture is just an excellent fit all the way around."

A graduate of the University of Central Florida with a degree in finance, Yepes is an active board member for both the Brevard Alzheimer's Foundation and the Melbourne Regional Chamber.

Brian Laughlin, CFP®, Accredited Investment Fiduciary®, the director of financial planning at Three Bridges Planning, expressed enthusiasm about this new partnership.

"Andres is a perfect addition and we're so glad to have him here," Laughlin said. "As our firm continues to grow, we're always seeking highly talented advisors like Andres to help deliver exceptional service to our clients. He's the second CFP® professional on the team and is a well-respected member of the community."

A 20-year Brevard County resident, Yepes lives in Viera with his wife and four children. He brings a depth of expertise in helping clients organize their financial lives through a comprehensive planning process.

He is fluent in both Spanish and English.

"It has always been a joy for me to work with clients in their pursuit of financial success," Yepes said. "I've helped

people achieve a wide range of objectives, including building retirement savings, managing wealth, and even planning out their charitable giving. I'm looking forward to putting that experience to work here."

Brendan McCarthy, director of wealth management at Three Bridges Planning, added, "We've known Andres for many years, both personally and professionally, and have always held him in the highest regard. He's a natural fit for our team."

● About Three Bridges Planning

Three Bridges Planning is an independent wealth management practice firm providing clients with tax planning, financial planning, and investment management.

Visit threebridgesplanning.com for more information.

SBA launches onshoring portal to advance America's economic comeback; new tool connects small firms to network of suppliers

By SBA Media Team
press_office@sba.gov
U.S. Small Business Administration

WASHINGTON (May 20, 2025) — Today, Kelly Loeffler, administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), announced the launch of the "Make Onshoring Great Again Portal," a free tool designed to help small businesses identify U.S. manufacturers and producers.

With a database of more than 1 million American suppliers, the searchable portal will empower job creators to source domestic suppliers to support their operations — which will in turn support American jobs, reconnect our supply chain with U.S.-based production, and end our nation's concentrated dependence on foreign suppliers and adversaries like the Chinese Communist Party.

"The SBA is proud to support President Donald J. Trump's mission to restore America's economic resurgence by empowering small businesses with the resources to supercharge the return of Made in America," said Loeffler.

"The Make Onshoring Great Again Portal will give job creators a direct line to more than one million domestic suppliers — replacing foreign dependence with access to American-made solutions. It's a decisive step toward rebuilding our nation's strength through stronger supply chains, better products, and a renewed commitment to American industry, small business, and workers."

The SBA is working with several private-sector cosponsors to provide public access to three free databases representing more than 1 million U.S. based manufacturers, producers, and suppliers. Not only will the portal enable small businesses to support American industry and workers — it will also benefit job creators by helping them source domestic supply chains that will deliver shortened lead times, improved quality control, and reduced exposure to overseas disruptions.

The Made in America Onshoring Portal builds on the SBA's ongoing commitment to revitalizing American industry.

Earlier this year, the agency launched the Made in America Manufacturing Initiative, which is aimed at expanding access to capital for U.S. manufacturers, promoting a skilled workforce, and cutting \$100 billion in red tape.

The agency has also endorsed recent bipartisan, bicameral legislation to double the SBA loan cap for small manufacturers in the effort to supercharge the return of American manufacturing dominance.

For more information, visit the Make Onshoring Great Again Portal at: www.sba.gov/priorities/american-manufacturers/make-onshoring-great-again-portal.

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Central Florida Safety Summit focuses on transportation safety, Palm Bay Police Department honored

By Public Information Office
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 Florida Department of Transportation

DeLAND (May 19, 2025) — The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Five presented transportation safety awards and discussed efforts by local governments, transportation organizations, law enforcement, advocacy groups, schools, and FDOT to improve safety on local roadways at the second annual Central Florida Safety Summit May 9.

More than 250 people from 70 organizations attended the Safety Summit, representing all nine counties in FDOT District Five, 31 cities and towns, 15 public safety agencies, and the five Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Transportation Planning Organizations (TPO) serving Central Florida.

“Our common goal is to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways, and we do that by engineering safety features into transportation projects and by educating drivers and pedestrians on how to travel more safely,” said FDOT District Five Safety Administra-

tor Loreen Bobo. “The Safety Strategic Plan builds on FDOT’s Target Zero initiative and many communities’ Vision Zero plans. By aligning our efforts, we are making progress on getting to zero.”

State Rep. Bill Partington was the keynote speaker and State Sen. Tom Wright provided the welcome at the annual event, held this year at Daytona International Speedway. Other speakers shared case studies and best practices centered on the Central Florida Safety Strategic Plan, which guides action steps to develop safer streets and change behaviors.

The winners of the safety awards presented by Bobo and FDOT District Five Secretary John Tyler, P.E., were:

- The City of Port Orange received the Community Award for its approach to engaging their community through hosting and recognizing multiple safety messages and events throughout the year.
- The Palm Bay Police Department received the Public Safety Award for law enforcement officers’ work in keeping everyone safe on its roadways through enforcement, responding to crashes, and interacting with the public.
- Brenda Urias, co-owner of Bickleta Bike Shop in

Sanford and founder of Sanford Tours & Experiences, and board member of Bike/Walk Central Florida, won the Individual Award for her work in fostering a culture of hospitality and inclusivity in the cycling community.

- The Ocala Marion Transportation Planning Organization received the Outreach Award for its Safety Matters initiative and video series, a community-driven effort to promote roadway safety across our county.
 - The Children’s Safety Village of Central Florida in Orlando won the Partner Award for its work in preventing childhood injuries and fatalities through lifesaving education and first-hand experience.
 - Orange County won the Project Award for the University of Central Florida (UCF) Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project, which made several improvements to create a safer infrastructure for all users including signalized mid-block crosswalks, upgraded LED roadway lighting, and a 10-foot-wide pedestrian/bike path.
- The work of the Central Florida Safety Strategic Plan is guided by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from counties, cities, MPOs and TPOs. Progress and resources are shared through the FDOT District Five Office of Safety website at fdot.gov/D5Safety.

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PB Chamber's Space Coast Alliance for Tech & Innovation to host STARCOM's Cantu at Florida Tech's Vertex facility

By Nancy Peltonen
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President and CEO
Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce

PALM BAY (May 28, 2025) — The Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce will host its monthly Space Coast Alliance for Tech & Innovation gathering from 8–10 a.m. Thursday, June 26, at Florida Tech's Vertex Applied Innovation Hub. The address is 2495 Palm Bay Road NE.

Michelle Cantu, STARCOM director of human capital, will be the featured speaker. She will talk about "Space Training and Readiness Command."

STARCOM's mission is "to prepare the combat-ready U.S. Space Force to fight and win in a contested, degraded, and operationally limited environment through the deliberate development, education and training of space professionals; development of space warfighting doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures; and the test and evaluation of U.S. Space Force capabilities."

The Greater Palm Bay Chamber launched the Space Coast Alliance for Tech & Innovation at Florida Tech's Vertex Applied Innovation Hub in January 2024. Each month, it brings together large and small companies to discuss collaboration, best practices, and opportunities on the Space Coast.

Tickets for this event are sold at new.greaterpalmbaychamber.com/events. Other programs are set for July 24, Sept. 25, Oct. 23 and Nov. 20 at the Vertex

Applied Innovation Hub.

The Space Coast Alliance for Tech & Innovation was founded and grew out of the success of Chamber's Space Coast Symposium. On Aug. 22, the Chamber will be hosting its seventh Space Coast Symposium. It has grown so large, the event this year will be at Radisson at the Port in Port Canaveral Conference Center and Pavilion. This enables the Chamber to increase attendance to about 600 people while also having an Expo showcasing 80–90 exhibitors.

The event will have a fascinating lineup of speakers from a variety of industries and corporations discussing Florida's Space Coast. The three panel presentations will be "Launched on the Space Coast," "Made on the Space Coast," and "Space's Impact on the Space Coast." The purpose of the event is to discuss how local companies, and new technologies will impact the business community. Tickets include lunch. Sponsorships are available for both events.

For more information, reach out to info@GreaterPalmBayChamber.com or call (321) 951-9998.

● About the Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber's mission is to serve, advocate and promote as the trusted voice for the business community. The organization brings together people to collaborate, network, and help grow their businesses. The Chamber also provides personal and professional development through education, keynote speakers, and events. Visit www.GreaterPalmBayChamber.com for more information.

Melbourne Community Orchestra to play music of Wild West

By Joyce Wilden
joyce@buzzbizpr.com
BUZZ Biz Public Relations

MELBOURNE (May 26, 2025) — Get out your 10-gallon hat and skedaddle along to "Frontier Fantasies," the Melbourne Community Orchestra's season-closing tribute to the adventurous spirit of America's Wild West.

Frontier Fantasies will feature two nights of music that evoke the vast landscapes and legendary figures of the country's pioneer past.

The performances are at 7 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, June 11–12, at the Melbourne Auditorium, 625 Hibiscus Blvd. The concerts will include selections infused with the western spirit, such as the "Cowboy Overture," "Buckaroo Holiday," "Pops Hoedown" and themes from The Good, Bad and the Ugly, Bonanza, Rawhide and more.

In addition, the orchestra will perform Rossini's "William Tell Overture" in full.

Those who arrive early will be treated to

a 6:15 p.m. pre-show by a brass quintet of Melbourne Community Orchestra players. Admission to Frontier Fantasies and all Melbourne Community Orchestra concerts is free.

The 65-member group conducted by Mark Nelson is the orchestra-in-residence for the City of Melbourne. Call (321) 285-6724 or visit MCOOrchestra.org for more information or to sign up for concert alerts.

Noel Barefield, orchestra manager and principal flute player, thinks Frontier Fantasies is the perfect way to end the 2024–25 performing season.

"We've all got some cowboy in us," said Barefield. "This music is a romp through the Wild West, after which we'll ride off into the sunset. But no worries, MCO will be back in the fall!"

Concertgoers can support the orchestra during these concerts with the purchase of an MCO T-shirt or by participating in the 50–50 raffle.

The nonprofit Melbourne Community Orchestra is an all-volunteer orchestra, performing seven sets of free concerts each season.

It's Storm Season

Limit Laundry

Minimize water use during and immediately after storms. Wait until power returns throughout the city before resuming normal cleaning schedules. Do laundry and run dishwashers prior to a storm. Include recycled paper plates, cups, etc. in storm supplies.

Heavy water use can overload sewer lift stations that are without power or on backup systems. Lift stations pump sewage to wastewater treatment plants. Without electricity, lift station pumps cannot operate and sewage cannot move through the system, which can cause sewage backups.

Watch for Warnings

A precautionary boil water notice (PBWN) is issued if there is a potential for a threat to the quality and safety of your drinking water. It is issued as a **precaution**.

PBWNs are primarily issued because of a main break. Breaks occur for many reasons, including large trees falling and pulling up a line in a storm.

The notice includes information on what happened, where it happened, when it happened, what is being done, what steps to take, and who to contact.

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Forget Fertilizer

Never apply fertilizer before a storm. It will only wash-off and end up in our waterways and cause algae blooms.

Reduce Runoff

Check your rain sensor.

Rain sensors prevent an irrigation system from operating during and after rainfall. Sprinklers running during or right after a storm waste water and energy. Irrigating when the ground is saturated creates excessive runoff because water cannot be absorbed. Runoff pollutes waterways. State law requires rain sensors on automatic sprinkler systems.

Prep Property

Remove diseased, dead, or broken branches. Contact an arborist to ensure trees are pruned correctly and to address any safety concerns.

Never trim trees right before or day of a storm. City crews may be unable to pick up the debris due to storm preparations. Piles of debris can become projectiles in strong winds or blown into the street creating hazards for vehicles.

Field Manor's Founders' Day community event a big success for the organization; supports its roof campaign

By Tristann Jones
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Director
Marketing and Events
Field Manor

MERRITT ISLAND (May 20, 2025) — Last month's 10th annual Founders' Day celebration at Field Manor was nothing short of spectacular, drawing a record number of guests to the historic Indian River bluff for a day of music, food, community, and preservation.

The event sold out of both presale and day-of admission tickets. Thanks to the incredible support, the event raised more than \$12,000 — almost four times the amount raised last year — making it a huge success for the Field Manor Foundation's ongoing "Raise the Roof" campaign.

Held on Saturday, April 19, the event was organized by Field Manor's staff and board of directors to support the critical replacement of the museum's aging roof, a more than \$100,000 project vital to protecting priceless Field family artifacts.

"We say it every year, but the community truly shows up when it matters," said Korinn Braden, Field Manor's executive director. "This year's turnout and generosity were just incredible. This roof protects generations of Brevard County history, and clearly, our supporters understand the importance of preserving it."

Local food trucks Bangkok House Express, Indian River Smokehouse, IDK Food Truck, and Strong Island Ice Cream delighted guests with food offerings, while Bugnuttu Brewing Co. of Cocoa Village once again served as the beer sponsor, pouring their popular craft brews. Additional beer, wine, and seltzer options, donated by Dolphins Waterfront

Bar & Grill and Victory Casino Cruises, were available to guests at the Field Manor bars.

"It was a great day. We are proud to help out the Manor," said Jon Sheldon, owner of Bugnuttu Brewing Co. Their longstanding support has made them a staple of Field Manor's events, much to the delight of attendees.

The live music stage featured Hot Pink, a fan-favorite local band whose infectious energy had the crowd dancing all afternoon. There were also tours of the historic Field family home, led by advisory board member and fifth-generation Floridian Susan B. (Blakeslee). She gave guests a personal and memorable connection to the site's deep roots.

"We couldn't have asked for a more beautiful Florida day," said Sue Lawrence, Field Manor Foundation president. "The lawn was filled with families and friends just soaking in the sunshine and history — even long after the event officially ended."

Also, among those in attendance was Sen. Thad Altman, whose support for historic preservation, including

Field Manor and Green Gables, was recognized with gratitude.

A 50-50 raffle, spearheaded by Chuck and Gail Nelson along with friends, collected almost \$2,000, with the winner taking home a cash prize of over \$900, while the remaining funds went toward the roof replacement. Additional fundraising, through a gift basket raffle and silent auction, netted \$2,500.

"Everyone seemed to love the music, the food, and the beautiful weather," said attendee Jenna Morris. "There was just so much positive energy, and knowing that you're helping save a piece of our history made it all the more special."

Buoyed by this year's turnout and fundraising success, the Field Manor Foundation is already planning an even bigger and better Founders' Day event for 2026, with expanded offerings to accommodate the growing community enthusiasm for this cherished event. Details will be posted to the Field Manor website and social media profiles when available.

Learn how to grow your own food, UF set to conduct four-class series

COCOA (May 14, 2025) — It does not matter if you have a huge yard or just a balcony, everyone can grow their own nutritious food.

The University of Florida is presenting a course for people to learn how to grow their own vegetables, herbs, fruit, hydroponic lettuce, and more in their own yard or container garden.

Participants will also learn strategies for pest control, how to grow transplants from seeds or cuttings, and more. Each ticket includes a notebook, handouts, and a variety of heirloom seeds.

This is a four-class series that runs from June 23 to July 14, with two class times available each Monday, both with the option to participate in-person or via Zoom.

Participants who choose the in-person option will meet at the UF/IFAS Extension Office in Cocoa, 3695 Lake Drive. The registration fee is \$70. Register on Eventbrite at https://loom.ly/_hlOMbE. Select either the morning class (10 a.m. to noon) or the evening class (6-8 p.m.).

For inquiries regarding this event, contact the UF/IFAS Extension Brevard County office at (321) 633-1702 or email Brevard@IFAS.UFL.edu.

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Zonta Club of Melbourne scholarship winners announced, recognize excellence, to inspire next generation of winners

By Donna Melcher
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 Vice President/Treasurer
 Zonta Club of Melbourne

MELBOURNE (May 23, 2025) — A core mission of the Zonta Club of Melbourne is to support young women in their pursuits through scholarships. In the past year, the club has provided scholarships to several recipients, enabling them to pursue their educational goals and achieve greater success.

The club's goal is not only to recognize excellence, but to also inspire the next generation of women.

The scholarship awardees are:

- The \$2,500 Jane M. Klausman Women in Business Scholarship winner was Elizabeth Tafoya. She is a technical program manager at Blue Origin and is focused on the first stage of New Glenn. She is pursuing her MBA degree from Georgetown University, while continuing to work full time and will be receiving a Global MBA with a STEM concentration. Tafoya is set to graduate in May 2027. Her plans are to continue working in aerospace with a focus on space policy and government compliance.

- The \$2,500 Young Women in Leadership Award was presented to Savannah Salter, a senior at Astronaut High School. As a dual-enrollment student, she is pursuing a career in health sciences and is graduating with a diploma and a certification as a nursing assistant. Her grade-point average is 4.2. She started an organization called "Salt & Sunshine," which distributes toys to children that have long-term hospital stays. Salter volunteers her time and talents to many local organizations, such as Toy for Tots,

Abracadabra Foundation, Love Center Church as a youth department nursery volunteer, and Frontline Resource Center serving the homeless. Salter is focused on pursuing her future career in diagnostic imaging.

- The \$2,500 Zonta/Yellow Dog Café Culinary Scholarship went to Becca Nies, who is continuing her educational journey to become a sommelier. They are highly trained professionals who specialize in wine service and pairing. They possess deep knowledge of each bottle's origin — how much oak was used, the precise blend and the unique influence of each component. Sommeliers not only have the privilege of tasting and recommending some of the world's finest wines, but they also build close relationships with winemakers, importers, and other wine professionals.

- The \$2,500 annual scholarship to weVENTURE Women's Business Center at Florida Tech for the ATHENA Leadership Program. This leadership training empowers the next generation of leaders along their journey to cultivate their authentic leadership style, preparing them to thrive in their future pursuits.

- The \$960 annual scholarship to Cooperation for Education for an indigenous girl in Guatemala. The Rise Youth Development program provides scholarship assistance so girls can stay in school, as well as mentorship, education workshops on women's rights, developing leadership skills and more. Empowering and supporting a young woman in Guatemala where poverty is so high will make such a significant difference in her life.

Also available is the Zonta/EDC Certified Production Technician Scholarships for women to become proficient in foundational skills for the manufacturing industry.

Sprint for Sight 5K set for Oct. 4, to benefit the visually impaired

By Julie G
 BAAB Marketing
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 Brevard Association for the Advancement of the Blind

INDIAN HARBOUR BEACH (May 27, 2025) — The Brevard Association for the Advancement of the Blind (BAAB) invites the community to lace up their running or walking shoes for a great cause at the Sprint for Sight annual 5K Run-Walk, set for 7:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 4, at scenic Gleason Park.

This event offers a beachside park route, race-day prizes, and the chance to connect with a caring, motivated community.

Runners and walkers of all levels — including visually impaired participants — are encouraged to join. Early registration begins at 6:30 a.m., and packet pickup will

be available the day before at Running Zone in Melbourne.

Participants will receive a commemorative race T-shirt while supplies last, and top finishers will earn awards by age group.

There will be refreshments, community camaraderie, and a chance to make a difference in the lives of those affected by vision loss in Brevard County.

Proceeds from the race support the mission of BAAB, a nonprofit organization founded in 1966 and dedicated to empowering individuals who are blind, legally blind, or visually impaired.

With more than 8,000 individuals in Brevard County living with visual impairments, BAAB serves as a vital resource that supports their independence and helps them pursue opportunities with confidence.

Visit <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/IndianHarbourBeach/SprintForSight5Kt> to register for this event.

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Travis Proctor's information technology firm Artemis to mark 30 years in Brevard, deeply entrenched in the community; a CMMC Level 2 panel is set for June 25

By Ken Datzman

MELBOURNE — In 1995, information technology was undergoing significant growth and change driven by the World Wide Web and the release of Microsoft's Windows 95, which enhanced the user experience of personal computing.

That was a pivotal year because the internet began transitioning from a primarily academic and research tool to a mainstream technology. In the years ahead, information technology helped businesses improve efficiency, enable remote work, and foster communication.

Seeing a business opportunity, Travis Proctor, a sophomore at Florida Institute of Technology studying computer science, started a tech firm from his dormitory. He took a full course load and also served as student body president.

His venture became Artemis/The IT Company, a growing managed service provider that today has clients throughout Brevard County and beyond.

"The company made \$82,000 in its first year of business," said Proctor, which today is the equivalent of \$172,876 in purchasing power.

On Sept. 30, Artemis will mark its 30th year in business. "We're proud of all the relationships we have built with businesses and organizations over the years. Our target market is serving small- to medium-sized businesses. These typically are companies with up to 200 employees," he said.

Originally from rural Colorado, Proctor co-founded his first company as a junior in high school. That business offered computer-support services.

Proctor was attracted to Florida Tech because it allowed him to combine computer science and entrepreneurship, his two interests. Unlike some institutions at that time, Florida Tech allowed students to take business courses in tandem with the primary program of study.

He earned his bachelor's degree in computer science in 1998, graduating at the top of his class. Proctor is one of Florida Tech's most visible graduates in the region and has been deeply entrenched in the community as a volunteer for decades.

Proctor chaired the just-completed United Way of Brevard fundraising campaign, whose theme was "You Changed My Life." He'll transition to the role of board chair elect with that nonprofit organization. He is the current chair of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast board of directors. And he recently served as chair of Florida Institute of Technology's board of trustees. Proctor closed out his term in February. He was elected chair in January 2020 and helped guide the private institution through one of its most challenging times in its history, the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, under his leadership as chair, Proctor navigated the hiring of the new Florida Tech president, Dr. John Nicklow. Proctor will now serve as past chair for two years.

He is Artemis' chief executive officer. His wife Teresa, nee Ho, is the chief financial officer. They met at Florida Tech. She has an MBA degree from that school and was the first full-time employee of Artemis. In its early years, the business was housed in a modest office space in The 1900 Building in downtown Melbourne.

Today, it operates from the company-owned Artemis Corporate Center, a two-story, 26,856-square-foot facility on South Apollo Boulevard in Melbourne.

A managed service provider offers outsourced informa-



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Travis Proctor is chief executive officer of Artemis/The IT Company, which will celebrate its 30th year in September. He started the venture when he was a sophomore at Florida Tech. Proctor earned his bachelor's degree in computer science in 1998, graduating at the top of his class. Artemis is a managed information technology service provider. It offers full services. He's at his company office in Melbourne.

tion technology services and support to businesses. Artemis, for example, handles ongoing day-to-day functions such as network monitoring, cybersecurity, and infrastructure management, allowing companies to focus on their core operations.

"We've had one of our strongest quarters in quite a few years. And we see an opportunity for growth through the balance of this year," said Proctor, whose company just added seven staffers to its team. "For a single month, that's a big hire for us."

He added, "We tend to see an uplift in IT outsourcing when businesses are adjusting to the economy. They are trying to control their costs and are looking for creative ways to do that. We can provide a range of services for businesses. We are an alternative to companies staffing up internally. It's probably part of the reason why we are seeing increased demand for our services."

Information technology outsourcing is growing significantly, according to research by Statista. The trend is being driven by factors like "cost reduction, access to specialized skills, the increasing complexity of IT environments, digital transformation, and stability and flexibility."

Proctor reminds businesses that on Oct. 14, 2025, Microsoft will end support for Windows 10, "meaning no more security updates or technical assistance will be provided." After this date, users will need to upgrade to Windows 11 or face increased security risks.

Transitioning from Windows 10 is vital for ensuring the ongoing safety and functionality of devices. Without protection against potential new vulnerabilities, these devices will become increasingly susceptible to malware and other cyber threats.

"We are seeing a lot of activity helping clients go through that process," said Proctor. "It can be a challenging time for businesses that do not want to spend a lot of capital working through the Windows 10 end-of-life issue. We've gotten creative in providing financing options for customers that need to spread out the cost of making that change."

His company is currently finalizing its five-year strategic business plan, "which is focused on continued manageable growth." He said Artemis has three core business pillars. The first is information technology

Please see Artemis/The IT Company, page 19

JM Real Estate expands commercial team with industry veteran Kate Gomes, works with all types of investors; more people turn to coliving spaces for returns

By Ken Datzman

MELBOURNE — The newest JM Real Estate Inc. team member is Kate Gomes, a surfing enthusiast and private pilot who moved to Brevard County from northern California a year ago.

Statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau show that more than 200,000 Californians have moved to Florida since 2016, with Miami-Dade County topping the list of where people settled.

Gomes has a decade of experience working in the real estate industry with buyers, sellers, and investors. She joined JM Real Estate a month ago.

"I have discovered the Space Coast and it's a wonderful place," said Gomes, a broker-associate. "I'm excited about being in the mix of the commercial team at JM Real Estate.

"There seems to be a lot of opportunity in this county with the population growth and the development activity. Brevard is a great place to invest in real estate."

Gomes specializes in commercial real estate and has experience in sales and leasing for office, retail, industrial, multi-family, and land, as well as recreational vehicle and mobile home parks.

Additionally, she works with investors for income-generating buy-and-hold and fix-and-flip single-family homes. Gomes also has experience in the residential market.

"We are thrilled to have Kate join us," said Nicole Reed, JM Real Estate's managing broker. "She has in-depth experience in the field and brings a lot of enthusiasm to the team. Business has been good. We're excited about the commercial real estate market in Brevard."

Reed added, "Whenever I see a filled dumpster on a construction work site, that is good news to me because it means something is being built new or is being renovated. Either way, it's pumping money into the economy."

JM Real Estate is a full-service commercial property management, leasing, sales, and investment acquisition firm specializing in multi-tenant office, medical office, retail, multifamily, and industrial properties throughout Brevard.

Before moving here, Gomes worked as a broker-Realtor in Sonoma County, known for its wine production, Pacific coastline, and diverse landscapes. Her transactions there "included commercial land deals and a couple of vineyards," said Gomes.

Sonoma County is a major wine region, with more than 400 wineries and some 20 wine-growing areas. That county is known for its "diverse microclimates and grape varieties."

Gomes took a year off to travel and surf

before going back into her career in real estate.

She surfed waves across six Latin American countries, including Colombia, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Mexico.

"I surfed a bunch of really nice breaks in Latin America. I went to a lot of distant places where you had to either take a boat or a plane to get there," said Gomes, who started surfing about a decade ago. "I only surfed occasionally because the water in northern California is cold. It's great to be in Florida and be able to surf in warm water and be close to the beach."

In surfing, "a nice break" is a term implying that a wave is fun to ride and offers a good surfing experience. "When I traveled through Latin America and surfed at different locations, a lot of the waves were intimidating."

She says in Colombia "a lot of young people take boards off their beds and surf on them."

Gomes also holds a private pilot's license. "I earned my license two and half years ago. I haven't been flying lately, but I'm looking forward to getting back to it."

Gomes said when she was in the third grade, she did a book report on Amelia Earhart. "I believe it was 'Women's History Month' and the teacher told us we could pick someone we admired. I did my report on Amelia Earhart and that stuck with me all these years. She was an amazing woman, a pioneer in her field. Piloting a plane is something I had always wanted to do."

Earhart was an advocate for women's advancement in the field of aviation. She was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean from Canada to Ireland.

Earhart also set a women's record for the fastest transcontinental flight from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey.

Gomes has a Florida broker's license which encompasses both commercial and residential. "I'm doing both. But commercial sales are what I'm passionate about," she said, adding, "I'm currently working on a couple of residential projects with investors."

She said more commercial real estate investors are turning to coliving properties because of their potential for higher returns and lower vacancy rates compared to traditional rental models.

Coliving is getting noticed as one of the biggest trends in real estate, said Gomes. The demand is being driven by young professionals, students, and others seeking flexible and affordable housing.

"Coliving spaces are a relatively new asset class for investors," she said. "And demand seems to be growing for these types of living arrangements. Coliving spaces



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Realtor Kate Gomes joined JM Real Estate, a full-service commercial real estate firm, one month ago. Gomes moved to Brevard from California, where she worked in her industry, closing more than 100 transactions and over \$100 million sales over a span of nine years. Gomes is a surfing enthusiast and holds a private pilot's license. She took a year off to travel, surfing in six Latin American countries, before returning to her career in real estate. Gomes is at JM Real Estate's office in Melbourne.

Please see JM Real Estate Inc., page 21

Early Learning Coalition of Brevard recognizes National Child Care Provider Appreciation Week with event

By Aubree Williams
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Communications Specialist
Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County, Inc.

MELBOURNE (May 13, 2025) — The Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County hosted a weeklong celebration for National Child Care Provider Appreciation Week, packed with events designed to honor, uplift, and support more than 200 child care providers in Brevard County.

One of the week's standout events took place May 7, when providers gathered for the Reflect and Recharge celebration — a special day devoted to movement, mindfulness, self-care, and celebration.

Attendees participated in a relaxing yoga session, an energizing Fit4Mom fitness class, and engaged in journaling activities. A Cozy Corner, sponsored by Becker's, offered a peaceful space for rest and reflection, while Kaplan's interactive Beam Mobile Projector Station brought joy and playfulness to the day.

Lions KidSight shared the worldwide program with providers to ensure children receive eye screenings and follow-up care when needed. Hourly raffles added excitement, with prizes awarded to lucky attendees throughout the event, including tablets, books to add to their classroom libraries, and first aid kits.

District 4 Commissioner Rob Feltner, chair of the Brevard County Commissioners, presented an official proclamation recognizing the Coalition and National Child Care Provider Appreciation Week at the commission meeting May 6.

"Teaching is not just a profession — it is a calling. It

demands creativity, patience, and heart. On behalf of the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County, thank you to our providers and educators for your passion and dedication every day," said Laura Gambino, CEO of The Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County.

She added, "We would also like to thank Commissioner Feltner and the Brevard County Commissioners who recognized the importance of early learning providers in our County."

Other events held throughout the week included teacher shoutouts on social media, recognition of providers who received high CLASS scores, and a special video thanking providers.

National Child Care Provider Appreciation Week is

celebrated annually during the first full week of May. It serves as an important reminder to recognize those who care for and educate the youngest learners with dedication and heart.

● About The Early Learning Coalition

The Early Learning Coalition of Brevard County is a multi-service agency dedicated to helping children develop skills that they will need to be successful in school and life. The agency's focus is on high-quality school-readiness opportunities for all children and their families, understanding that it is in the first years of life that a child's future educational success is determined and the critical role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher.

The Studios of Cocoa Beach to present 'Of An Idea,' by regional artists

By Leslie Lyons
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The Studios of Cocoa Beach

COCOA BEACH (May 11, 2025) — The Studios of Cocoa Beach will present "Of An Idea: A Celebration of Artistic Vision," an inspiring art exhibition running from July 8 through Aug. 3.

This thoughtfully curated show will feature the talented participants from their inaugural juried exhibition, "In Mind's Eye," held earlier in June.

Of An Idea offers a unique glimpse into the creative process and the evolution of artistic concepts conceived by regional artists.

Since its establishment in November 2016, Studios of Cocoa Beach has stood as a beacon for artistic

expression in the Brevard community and beyond. As a nonprofit organization supporting more than 25 resident artists, Studios of Cocoa Beach serves as an artist-friendly venue dedicated to fostering creativity and celebrating the cultural landscape through diverse media displayed on its walls and shelves.

Visitors are invited to immerse themselves in this vibrant exhibition that will showcase an array of art forms, reflecting each artist's individual journey Of An Idea.

The community is invited to meet the artists during a reception from 6–8:30 p.m. Friday, July 11. This event provides an opportunity to engage with the creators behind the works, discover the stories and inspirations behind the pieces, and connect with the thriving creative community at Studios of Cocoa Beach.



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Jess Parrish Medical Foundation awards 28 scholarships to aspiring health-care professionals in North Brevard

By **Christie Rimsky**
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Senior Communications Specialist
Parrish Healthcare

TITUSVILLE (May 21, 2025) — Jess Parrish Medical Foundation (JPMF) has awarded \$32,500 in scholarships to 28 college students and graduating high school seniors who have demonstrated a strong commitment to their communities and a passion for pursuing careers in medicine and health care.

Dedicated to supporting future generations of health-care professionals, the Brevard Indo-American Medical and Dental Association (BIMDA) Scholarship, in honor of Ashok C. Shah and Glad Kurian, committed funds through 2034, allowing for two additional \$1,250 scholarships to be awarded annually.

“BIMDA is honored to partner with Jess Parrish Medical Foundation in supporting the educational endeavors of our future health-care professionals,” said Glad Kurian, honorary executive director BIMDA. “It is gratifying to know that BIMDA’s contributions to the scholarship program are assisting the award recipients in pursuing their educational and career goals.”

This year’s scholarship winners include eight graduating seniors from Astronaut High School: Shelby Ferguson, Alana Gibbons, Avalon Lamb, Payton McGuire, Grayce Meredith, Ashvi Patel, Katlyn Taylor and Abigail Vass. It also includes two graduating seniors from Edgewater Jr./Sr. High School: Anshi Patel and Jamaris White. Additionally, there are five honorees from Titusville High School: Kodee Bors, Brayden Hunt, Alison Loyd, Kaelyn Murrill and Brooke Voorhees.

College students who were awarded scholarships for their academic achievements include: Allie Glass of Daytona State College, Kayla Walsh from Eastern Florida State College, Isabelle Donahoe and Samantha Donohoe from Florida Institute of Technology, Alexis Mills and Kalyn Rubio from Florida State University, Sadhna Seth from Nova Southeastern University, Sydney Van Horn from

Southeastern University, Taylor Rendina from the University of Bridgeport, Violet Dobbs and Jacy Gillingham from the University of Central Florida, Samantha Fisher from the University of Florida and Alyssa Schneerer from Valencia College.

“This year’s scholarship recipients were impressive, and we look to them to drive the next wave of innovation in healthcare,” said Melissa Lugo, chair of Jess Parrish Medical Foundation Board of Directors. “The Foundation is proud to support the educational endeavors of these talented and deserving students.”

Scholarship committee co-chairs Barbara Terhune and Philip Simpson, Ph.D., led the committee through the process of evaluating applicants in the areas of academic performance, awards and honors, extracurricular activities, leadership, community service and work experience, recommendation letters, application essay and Parrish Healthcare/JPMF affiliation.

Scholarship committee members include: Santi Bulnes; Herman Cole; Deborah Cox; Britt Diaz; Terry Lee; Josh Norris; Kevat B. Patel, M.D.; Howard Rinker, D.D.S.; Barbara Terhune; Natalie Sellers; Philip Simpson, Ph.D.; and Jennifer Trastelis.

Jess Parrish Medical Foundation invests in the future by offering medical scholarships to residents of North Brevard County who are pursuing careers in health care, with the goal of nurturing the next generation of professionals who will one day contribute to the healing of the community.

Since 1990, more than \$569,000 in scholarship funds have been awarded by the Jess Parrish Medical Foundation to support the educational pursuits of deserving students.

To learn more about these scholarships, or Jess Parrish Medical Foundation, visit parrishmedfoundation.com/scholarships or call (321) 269-4066.

Through philanthropy and volunteerism, JPMF supports Parrish Medical Center’s mission of “Healing Experiences for Everyone all the Time.” JPMF partners with the community to raise funds that sustain and enhance health-care services in North Brevard County.

Pilot Club of Titusville receives matching grant for autism project

TITUSVILLE (May 22, 2025) — The Pilot Club of Titusville has received a matching grant from Pilot International for a project titled “Assisting Children with Autism to Seniors with Ailments.”

Through this grant, the Pilot Club was awarded \$3,816 from Pilot International and matched this amount to fund their project to benefit a “Sensory Play Day” for children with autism at Parrish Medical Center’s Children’s Center. It also purchased four power recliners for the residents at Crescent Wood Assisted Living.

For more information about the Pilot Club of Titusville, visit www.nbbd.com/npr/pilot, its Facebook page at Pilot Club of Titusville, or contact club president, Jonda Erwin, at pilotcluboftitusville@yahoo.com or (321) 794-8692.

The Pilot Club of Titusville is seeking new members who wish to join an organization of friendship of service. The Pilot Club strives to make an impact not only in their local community, but also around the world. For more information, visit www.nbbd.com/npr/pilot.

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Florida Gaming Control Commission takes enforcement action against illegal gambling operations

By Florida Gaming Control Commission
media@flgaming.gov
State of Florida

TALLAHASSEE (May 19, 2025) — Last month, the Florida Gaming Control Commission took enforcement action against illegal gambling operations at 10 locations in South and Central Florida.

The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office, Deland Police Department, Daytona Beach Police Department, Volusia County Sheriff's Office, Dade City Police Department, and Pasco County Sheriff's Office partnered in the operations.

Seven "notices to appear" were issued for operators, including charges of Possession of Slot Machines, Keeping of a Gambling House, and Juvenile Possession of Illegal Drugs. Pending additional investigations into these cases may result in further charges.

Florida law strictly regulates gambling, with slot machines permitted only in licensed gaming facilities: eight pari-mutuel facilities in Miami-Dade and Broward counties and six Seminole Tribe of Florida establishments. It is illegal to operate slot machines or other unauthorized gambling machines at any unlicensed facility.

"The Commission is proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with our law enforcement partners as we collaboratively tackle illegal gaming throughout our state," said Florida Gaming Control Commission Acting Executive Director Ross Marshman.

"Slot machine gaming is only legal in a handful of places across the state — folks can check out our website to see the map of those authorized locations. Communities and business owners should be wary of any establishment

operating these types of gaming devices outside those authorized locations."

In April, agents seized nearly 100 illegal slot machines along with more than \$60,000. Locations included:

- Mobil Gas Station, 4993 U.S. Highway 441 South, Okeechobee. Agents seized four illegal slot machines and more than \$6,000 cash. One notice to appear (NTA) was issued for Keeping of a Gambling House.

- Citgo Gas Station, 3621 SE 34th Ave., Okeechobee. Staff were notified of law enforcement presence in the area and removed all illegal slot machines and related currency from the premises, resulting in zero illegal gambling machines or cash seized. One NTA was issued for Keeping of a Gambling House.

- Shell Gas Station, 3609 U.S. Highway 441 Southeast, Okeechobee. Agents seized five illegal slot machines and more than \$1,500 cash. Felony arrest warrants are pending.

- Exhale Smoke Shop, 3651 U.S. Highway 441 Southeast, Units 7 and 8, Okeechobee. Agents seized three illegal slot machines and more than \$1,000 cash. Two NTAs were issued for Keeping of a Gambling House and one NTA for Juvenile Possession of Illegal Drugs.

- Bill's Mini Mart, 3007 State Road 70 East, Okeechobee. Agents seized three illegal slot machines and more than \$500 cash. Felony arrest warrants are pending.

- A&J Discount Food Mart, 4340 SE 26th St., Okeechobee. Agents seized two illegal slot machines and nearly \$100 cash. Felony arrest warrants are pending.

- Dolly's Old Town Tavern, 1410 E. New York Ave., DeLand. Agents seized 14 illegal slot machines, along with more than \$8,000 cash. An NTA was issued to the store owner for charges of Possession of Slot Machines and Keeping of a Gambling House.

- OB's Restaurant & Lounge, 1750 N. Woodland Blvd., DeLand. Agents seized eight illegal slot machines along with only \$1 in cash, as staff were notified of law enforcement presence in the area and took preemptive actions by unplugging machines and removing currency from the premises.

- Unnamed Illegal Facility, 1112 Beville Road, Unit E Daytona Beach. Agents seized 33 illegal slot machines, and more than \$8,500 in cash. An NTA was issued to the store owner for Possession of Slot Machines.

- Play for Keeps, 37927 Heath Place, Dade City. Agents seized 24 illegal slot machines along with more than \$33,000 in cash. An NTA was issued to the store manager for Keeping a Gambling House as well as 24 counts of Possession of Slot Machines.

Legal gaming establishments ensure player protections, generate state revenue, and uphold game integrity. Anyone found possessing illegal slot machines faces criminal charges and may incur administrative fines of up to \$10,000 per machine. Business permits and liquor licenses may also be suspended for violations of Florida's gambling laws.

The Florida Gaming Control Commission is responsible for exercising all regulatory and executive powers of the state with respect to legal gaming, including pari-mutuel wagering, cardrooms, slot machine facilities, oversight of gaming compacts, and other forms of gambling authorized by state law, excluding the lottery, as well as directly enforcing Florida's gaming laws and combatting illegal gambling activities.

Concerns about illegal gambling activities or facilities in Florida are valuable and can be reported online at FLGaming.gov/File-a-Report, by email at Contact@FLGaming.gov, or by phone at (850) 880-3433.

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The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award winner announced by Florida Attorney General Uthmeier

By Office of Communications
press@myfloridalegal.com
James Uthmeier
Florida Attorney General

TALLAHASSEE (May 21, 2025) — Attorney General James Uthmeier awarded the 2024 Attorney General's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year to Detective Robert Padron of the Sunrise Police Department.

The 2024 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year ceremony honored the service of Padron and 11 other officers who demonstrated great courage and selflessness while going above and beyond the call of duty last year.

"I am proud to name Detective Robert Padron our 2024 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year," said Uthmeier. "Despite being wounded, Detective Padron risked his own life to stop a violent criminal. I am honored to recognize his service and exemplary courage under fire."

The recognition stems from Padron's heroic actions during the apprehension of a violent suspect involved in a domestic shooting. On Dec. 30, 2023, a woman was ambushed and shot twice by her child's father in a brutal attack outside her apartment. The suspect fled the scene, prompting an intense search by Sunrise Police detectives.

On Jan. 2, 2024, detectives tracked the suspect to a bus terminal where he was attempting to flee the area. As officers moved in, the suspect drew a handgun and began to run. With innocent civilians nearby, Padron courageously placed himself in harm's way to stop the threat.

The suspect opened fire, striking Padron in the upper leg. Despite his injuries, Padron returned fire, neutralizing the suspect and preventing further harm to the public.

His valor and quick action under fire exemplify the highest standards of law enforcement. Though he continues to recover from his injuries, his strength, resolve, and dedication to protecting others inspire his department and the state of Florida.

Padron has more than 12 years of law enforcement experience, 10 with the Sunrise Police Department. He is currently assigned to the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. His exceptional service has earned him numerous honors, including the 2024 Officer of the Year, the Medal of Honor, and multiple commendations for leadership, marksmanship, and conduct.

Other nominees for the 2024 Attorney General's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award include:

- Capt. Robert Bourque, Longboat Key Police Department
- Detective Mario Fajardo, Florida Department of Financial Services
- Master Detective Kyle Gaddie, Flagler County Sheriff's Office
- Inspector Guy Hill, Florida Department of Law Enforcement
- Trooper David Kitchen, Florida Highway Patrol
- Agent Ron Minissali, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office
- Detective Autumn Moore, Tallahassee Police Department
- Officer Anthony Moser, Miccosukee Police Department
- Officer Brian Pridgeon, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;
- Detective Derek Rivers, Lakeland Police Department
- Officer Jacob Wild, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

All nominees for the Attorney General's 2024 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award were previously named Officers of the Year by law enforcement agencies and associations.

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Serco closes acquisition of Northrop Grumman's satellite ground network communications software business

By Tim Neun
tim.neun@serco-na.com
Serco Inc.

HERNDON, Va. (May 27, 2025) — Serco Inc., a provider of professional, technology, and management services, announced today the completion of its acquisition of Northrop Grumman's mission training and satellite ground network communications software business, having secured all necessary regulatory approvals and satisfied other customary closing conditions.

The acquisition of the business was finalized at a purchase price of \$327 million.

This strategic acquisition enhances Serco's presence in North America, expanding its business to over \$2 billion in annual revenue. It also marks a significant advancement in Serco's mission-readiness solutions, integrating specialized expertise in synthetic training, exercise simulation, and ground satellite communications software solutions.

The incoming business portfolio empowers Serco to offer more robust and secure solutions that address the increasingly complex demands of modern defense and space operations.

The acquired Northrop Grumman business segment generates annual revenues of roughly \$300 million, and nearly 1,000 experienced professionals will join Serco, contributing expertise in digital engineering, software development, satellite ground communications software, training, and mission simulation.

Integrating this business expands the live and virtual training capabilities that Serco can offer U.S. and international customers. The acquisition also supports Serco's growth goals within the international space sector, where the company continues to build its global space footprint in regions such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Middle East.

"We are honored to welcome the Northrop Grumman MT&S team to Serco," said Tom Watson, CEO of Serco Inc. "The integration of our existing and new capabilities in

live and virtual training, and space markets, positions Serco to compete for larger and more complex projects. We have complete confidence that Serco is now further aligned to support the U.S. military's mission to enhance warfighter readiness.

● About Serco Inc.

Serco Inc. is a leading provider of professional, technology, engineering, and management services. It advises, designs, integrates, and delivers solutions that transform how clients achieve their missions. The company's customer-first approach, robust portfolio of services, and global experience enable it to respond with solutions that achieve outcomes with value. Headquartered in Herndon, Virginia, Serco has about 10,000 employees and annual revenue of \$2 billion.

Serco Inc. is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Serco Group plc, a \$5 billion international business that helps transform government and public services around the world. More information about Serco can be found at www.serco.com/na.

City of Cocoa awarded Cybersecurity Grant to renew critical digital protections, helps city respond to threats

By Jaime J. Braudrick
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Public Information Officer
the City of Cocoa

COCOA (May 19, 2025) — The City of Cocoa was recently awarded a Florida Local Government Cybersecurity Grant to support the renewal of key cybersecurity capabilities.

The grant is administered by Florida Digital Service. This award, part of round two of the year-two funding cycle,

supports the renewal of key cybersecurity capabilities originally acquired by Cocoa last year.

These resources help enhance the city's ability to detect and respond to cyber threats in real time. Cocoa will continue to use these tools to protect public data, ensure secure digital operations, and maintain reliable services for residents, businesses, and city staff.

This a \$40 million competitive grant funded through Section 200 of the enacted Florida Fiscal Year 2024-25 General Appropriations Act.

The program equips local governments with software, services, and solutions designed to enhance their

cybersecurity posture, helping protect both critical infrastructure and the personal data of Floridians.

This grant has helped nearly 200 local governments enhance their cybersecurity infrastructure. Through this program, the state successfully turned a \$30 million investment into \$300 million of deployed cybersecurity capabilities. As a result, Florida has become a national leader in cybersecurity.

The City of Cocoa places a high priority on cybersecurity to safeguard critical infrastructure, emergency services, personal data, and essential public services.

For more information, visit www.CocoaFL.gov.

Melbourne Liberty Bell Museum to present Flag Day event June 14, patriotic program free to the community

MELBOURNE (May 27, 2025) — The Melbourne Liberty Bell Museum, Melbourne's patriotic historical museum, will host its annual Flag Day program from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Saturday, June 14.

Museum volunteers will properly retire American flags which are no longer suitable for public display, using special equipment built by Cliff Barber, board member of Honor

America Inc., which operates the museum. A BSA Scout Troop will participate.

The Pledge of Allegiance will be recited at 7 p.m., coinciding with other public recitations across the country. It will be followed by a reading of Johnny Cash's "Ragged Old Flag."

The museum's extensive collection of military, cultural,

and technological artifacts will be open for viewing before and after the program.

The Melbourne Liberty Bell Museum is at 1601 Oak St. Ample free parking is available off Hickory Street, between the museum and the Melbourne Auditorium.

For further information, call (321) 373-2311 or write to honoramericafl@gmail.com.



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Artemis/The IT Company

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preventive maintenance, “supporting customers in a responsive manner,” which includes the Windows 10 upgrade.

The second pillar centers on cybersecurity, cyber hygiene, and data protection. “We have always offered business continuity planning. But now with the dramatic increase in cybercrime, a focus on that area must be a pillar of any information technology strategy.”

A business continuity plan is a strategic document outlining how an organization will maintain essential functions during and after a disruption, such as a hurricane. It’s a proactive approach to ensure minimal downtime and a swift return to normal operations.

A cyberattack can be devastating for businesses, potentially costing millions of dollars. While small businesses might face lower total breach costs than large enterprises, the proportional impact on their operations and survival is typically more severe.

The average cost of a data breach for small businesses ranges from \$120,000 to \$1.2 million, depending on the severity and industry, according to Execweb. Experts say shoring up cyber defenses is crucial for small businesses because a breach can harm the firm’s reputation, leading to customer churn and loss of trust.

Artemis’ third pillar, which overlaps its second pillar, is helping businesses leverage technology.

“That is the reason why we got into this business,” Proctor said. “Our mission statement says: ‘Make IT Work.’ We help businesses leverage technology to be competitive, drive productivity, and have a healthy bottom line. We are doubling-down on that focus. And a lot of it is built around training for companies and their employees on how to use artificial intelligence tools.”

He continued, “AI can write wonderful code. It can answer many questions. It can also be very creative and those answers may not be factual. Many employees are already using AI. But do they know how to use it properly and do they understand the liability they may bring onto their employer — not misusing it intentionally but unintentionally relying on it without understanding what it may be doing? We are finding opportunities to provide training, the basics of prompt engineering, and how to use AI in the most effective ways to produce results that benefit the company.”

Prompt engineering is the art and science of crafting specific inputs or “prompts” to guide generative AI models like ChatGPT to produce more accurate, relevant, and desired outputs.

Proctor said while there are many webinars available for AI training, “we are seeing a bit of a surge of people wanting us to do AI training in person. There is a thirst for that human connection as it pertains to AI training.”

Under its compliance work, one area where Artemis is active is helping businesses meet the federal government’s new “Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification” program standards. Artemis works with partners in the CMMC arena.

The purpose of CMMC is to verify that defense contractors are compliant with existing protections from cyber threats for “federal contract information and controlled unclassified information.”

“We are seeing activity around companies that are part of the defense industrial base. They are realizing that perhaps they need some assistance and support with CMMC compliance,” said Proctor, who will be moderating a panel on this topic.

The Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast and Alluvionic Inc. will be hosting “CMMC Level 2: Real-World Insights from Space Coast Leaders” from 9–11 a.m. Wednesday, June 25, at the Merrill Lynch

Training Room in the Riverview Tower, 6525 3rd St., Suite 400, in Rockledge.

The in-person panel discussion will feature local businesspeople who have successfully navigated the complex path to CMMC Level 2 certification, which is the advanced level.

The panelists will share insights into implementing CMMC Level 2, selecting a Third-Party Assessment Organization (C3PAO), and undergoing the C3PAO process to achieve CMMC Level 2 certification.

The speakers will be Elizabeth Huy, executive vice president of commercial services at Alluvionic; William Chivers, CEO of the RUSH Family of Companies; and Kirk Hall, CEO of Sentry View Systems.

Alluvionic is a defense contractor which achieved CMMC Level 2 certification in the first quarter of this year. Huy will talk about “compliance strategies and lessons learned.”

RUSH is a commercial general contractor whose clients include NASA. The company has achieved CMMC Level 2 certification. Chivers will discuss the “certification’s impact on business operations and contracting opportunities.”

Hall will provide “insights into preparing for the formal assessment.” Sentry View Systems is a defense contractor in the final stages of CMMC Level 2 implementation and in the selection process for a C3PAO.

This session is designed for small- to mid-sized manufacturing and technology-focused defense contractors, particularly those planning to pursue CMMC Level 2 certification. To register for this program, send an email to Events@SpaceCoastEDC.org or call (321) 638-2000.

“CMMC is not an information technology problem, it’s an organizational management challenge,” said Proctor. “It intersects and overlays with information technology. What we are finding is the most effective way to move organizations forward in meeting the CMMC challenge is to partner alongside our experts that focus on organizational culture, processes, and procedures, because that is the heavy lifting around any kind of compliance program.”

Looking to his company’s future, Proctor said Artemis is “positioned to grow and help businesses navigate the digital age. We’re excited about the future. We will strive to continue to foster long-lasting technology partnerships, like we have done in the last 30 years.”



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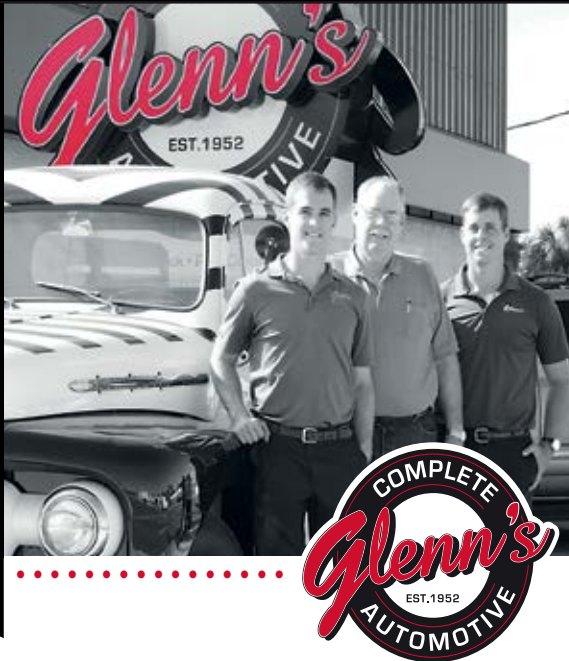
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UF/IFAS study: Drones, artificial intelligence help farmers save money, protect environment; spot differences in plant health

By Lourdes Mederos
rodriguezl@ufl.edu
Public Relations Manager
IFAS Communications
University of Florida

GAINESVILLE (May 22, 2025) — A new University of Florida study shows how drones can do more than just take aerial pictures and videos — they can help farmers grow better hemp by seeing the health of their crops with some artificial intelligence assistance.

Researchers at the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC) in Homestead used drone-based imaging to help determine how much nitrogen fertilizer hemp plants need for optimal growth and flower production.

Their findings could help growers optimize fertilizer use to save money and preserve the environment.

“Farmers are looking for ways to assess their crops throughout the year to make informed fertilizer decisions,” said Zack Brym, associate professor of agronomy at UF/IFAS TREC.

“We’ve shown that farmers with access to aerial images using red and near infrared (NIR) detection can spot differences in plant health by their color when scanning their fields,” he said.

This is crucial because timely and precise fertilizer applications can significantly impact hemp crop yield and quality, Brym said.

“Since nutrients move through the soil so fast in Florida, farmers are applying fertilizer multiple times each year. Technology like the use of drone imaging will help determine how much fertilizer might be needed mid-season, promoting more efficient use of resources and supporting sustainable farming practices,” he said.

Hemp, a plant reintroduced in 2019 for cultivation research in Florida agriculture, provides an alternate opportunity for farmers because of the potential demand for hemp products across various industries. Low-input systems for fiber production may also offer benefits to soil health and carbon sequestration.

One of the biggest challenges is figuring out how much nitrogen—an essential plant nutrient — is needed for optimal crop growth and yield. Too little, and the plant suffers with chlorosis or yellowing of the foliage, stunted crop growth and reduced yield. Too much, and the plant may grow too much leafy material with little benefit to the valuable flower production, while excess nitrogen can leach into the environment.

Brym and his team set out to study this problem using aerial imaging. They grew a popular floral hemp variety called ‘Wife’ over three years and applied six nitrogen fertilizer rates, from none to very high. Using drones equipped with multispectral cameras, they flew over the fields one month before harvest to capture images of

the crop from above. These images measured how green and healthy the plants were, indicating how well they grew under different nitrogen rates.

The study found that using a moderate amount of nitrogen — 112 to 168 kilograms per hectare or about 100 to 150 pounds per acre — resulted in the healthiest plants and greatest flower yields. Drone images picked up clear differences in plant size and color, which matched the actual amount of plant material harvested. The drone images provided real-time, accurate insights into the plant conditions on the ground.

As a final step to the research, scientists incorporated artificial intelligence (AI) technology to process the images captured by the drone flights of the canopy’s reflectance. Reflectance refers to the measure of the proportion of light or other radiation that is reflected off the surface of the hemp canopy. Reflectance is critical in remote sensing and agriculture studies, allowing researchers to analyze how much light is being reflected by the plants, which helps identify and map the canopy areas accurately.

“I was eager to see how effective the automated AI would be at identifying hemp canopy,” said Tamara Serrano, a lead author and former agroecology graduate student on Brym’s team. “To my surprise, the process wasn’t as seamless as expected and required manual corrections to address errors in canopy identification.”

This research is especially important in Florida, where fast-growing crops and shallow soils mean nutrients like nitrogen can easily be lost to runoff. Using drones for in-season monitoring could help growers fine-tune fertilizer use, reduce waste and improve profits, all while practicing environmental stewardship. With the hemp industry still evolving, these insights offer a valuable step forward.

“Despite the challenges they faced with AI technology, weed intensity and weather, the data consistently demonstrated a strong positive correlation between canopy size and aboveground biomass across years,” said Serrano. “This shows that drone-based aerial imaging can effectively monitor crop growth and health in field-grown flower hemp and inform nutrient management decisions for growers.”

● About UF/IFAS

The mission of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (ifas.ufl.edu, @UF_IFAS) is to develop knowledge relevant to agricultural, human and natural resources and to make that knowledge available to sustain and enhance the quality of human life. With more than a dozen research facilities, 67 county Extension offices, and award-winning students and faculty in the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, UF/IFAS brings science-based solutions to the state’s agricultural and natural resources industries, and all Florida residents.

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JM Real Estate Inc.

Continued from page 13

typically involve shared living accommodations. People who choose coliving complexes pay rent for a private bedroom and bathroom but share common spaces, such as kitchens, living rooms or lounge-type spaces.”

She added, “An investor or group of investors might purchase a home with three or four bedrooms and convert it into six or seven bedrooms. There are different coliving models for investors.”

The National Association of Realtors says coliving properties are an “emerging trend, driven by factors like remote work, high housing costs, and a desire for the community connection.”

Commercial real estate experts say coliving spaces can generate higher revenue per square foot than traditional apartments by accommodating more tenants within the space.

According to one report, coliving spaces bring in 44 percent more income per square foot than regular apartments through higher unit density and shared amenities.

Building costs also work in coliving’s favor. These developments usually cost 25 to 35 percent less than traditional office-to-apartment conversions.

“We are also seeing investors purchase old hotels and convert them into coliving spaces,” said Gomes. “There are opportunities to do that in this market.”

In recent years, the hospitality industry has seen a significant shift with a growing number of hotels being transformed into coliving spaces. Gomes said the length of the conversion process “depends upon the extent of the construction required.” She added that the process involves permitting and compliance with ordinances.

Another way to diversify a real estate portfolio and generate income is by investing in recreational vehicle and mobile home parks.

Mobile home parks are quietly “emerging as a compelling asset class” in real estate investments.

These communities, once associated primarily with retirees or those seeking an alternative lifestyle, are now attracting a new generation of investors.

Mobile home parks can provide a consistent cash flow because of recurring rental income from tenants, she said.

“RV and mobile home parks are sometimes overlooked as investment opportunities,” said Gomes. “Last year, I became part of a large investment group that is buying RV and mobile home parks around the nation. Some of these parks are rundown and need to be improved, but they present an investment opportunity.”

More than 20 million Americans live in manufactured or mobile homes, according to data from the Manufactured Housing Institute. And 54 percent of mobile home owners have lived in their current home for more than 10 years.

Mobile home parks address the growing demand for affordable housing, making them an attractive investment. “With the right mobile home park, purchased at the right price, in the right location, it can yield substantial returns,” she said, adding, “I enjoy working with people who are buying or selling mobile home parks.”

“Investing in mobile home parks can be less expensive per unit compared to traditional single-family homes,” added Gomes.

Investing in commercial real estate offers several potential benefits, she said.

- **Capital appreciation:** Commercial properties, especially in prime locations or growing markets like Brevard, have the potential for significant appreciation, further boosting investment returns.

- **Inflation hedge:** As a tangible asset, commercial real estate can serve as a hedge against inflation. Rental rates and property values tend to rise with inflation, protecting

the investment’s value.

- **Tax benefits:** Commercial real estate offers various tax advantages, including depreciation deductions and mortgage interest deductions.

- **Higher earning potential:** Commercial properties often offer higher returns than residential real estate because of factors like longer lease terms and higher rental rates per square foot.

“I work with all types of real estate investors,” said Gomes. “I love what I do in real estate. And my colleagues

at JM Real Estate have been wonderful. Everybody in this office has been helpful as I settle in. We are busy. I believe the second half of the year will hold steady. I don’t think we are going to see a lot of change from the first half.”

She added, “This county continues to see growth in the technology, defense, space, and aviation sectors, which creates demand for commercial real estate. Good economic conditions, population growth, and robust employment also create demand for commercial facilities. And that’s pretty much a snapshot of Brevard County. It’s being discovered.”



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Hippo Roofing

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are happy with the work we do for them. And ABC Supply helps me do that," said Cardenales, who after 20 years of working for the government in New York City retired and moved to Florida. "I still love New York City. I have a lot of family members there."

With the storm season underway, it's highly recommended that homeowners have their roofs inspected. An inspection can identify potential problems, like loose shingles or damaged flashing, before they become major issues during a hurricane. This allows for repairs to be made ahead of time, minimizing potential damage and insurance claims.

Have the inspection done by a licensed and bonded contractor to make sure the roof will withstand winds and torrential rainfall.

"A roofing professional can pinpoint problems like missing, cracked or curling shingles, which can be exacerbated by strong winds and rain," said Bill Stillwell.

The Insurance Information Institute recommends reviewing your insurance coverage. Make sure you have the right type and amount of property insurance. To make your property more resilient, the organization suggests "risk mitigation investments, such as roof tie-downs, wind-rated garage doors, and storm shutters, to harden your property against wind damage."

Forecasters with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predict above-normal hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin this year.

Shearer said ABC Supply is prepared for "its busy season. We are stocked up on specific materials that are commonly used in storm damage repairs."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's outlook predicts a 30 percent chance of a "near-normal season, a 60 percent chance of an above-normal season, and a 10 percent chance of a below-normal season."

The agency is forecasting a range of 13 to 19 total named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher). Of those, six to 10 are forecast to become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including three to five major hurricanes (category 3, 4, or 5, with winds of 111 mph or higher). NOAA says it has a "70 percent confidence in these ranges."

"Every year, residents face the potential wrath of powerful storms, yet many properties remain vulnerable because of outdated or inadequate roofing," said Bill Stillwell, who along with Justin Stillwell operated a hail-damage repair business in the Midwest before moving to the Sunshine State.

He said the difference between a roof that "withstands the assault and one that falters can amount to countless dollars in repairs and a lot of heartache."

Hippo Roofing experts offer these tips:

- Choose materials with a proven track record of high-wind resistance, such as metal roofing or impact-resistant shingles.
- Ensure that your roofing contractor follows the latest Florida Building Code standards specifically designed for hurricane-prone areas like Brevard County.
- Consider installing a second water barrier to provide an extra layer of protection against water infiltration during a storm.
- Regular inspections and maintenance are critical. Have your roof checked by a professional roofer at least twice a year, especially before hurricane season.

Hippo Roofing has completed more than \$100 million of roofing projects, ranging from installations to restorations.

"We are consultants and innovators, but most importantly we have been a trusted roofing ally for hundreds of homeowners in Brevard County over the years," said Bill Stillwell. "The Hippo Roofing team takes great pride in its work. We've been here a long time. That is a testament to the quality of work we do."

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Hippo Roofing LLC

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"They do a super job of working with contractors," said Stillwell, whose company is gearing up for the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 through Nov. 30.

"Our success is the result of an unwavering focus on a single and simple guiding principle — treat contactors (large and small) with respect and give them the products and services they need to build their businesses," said Shearer.

Roofing in the United States is a big industry. In 2024, roofing contractors tallied nearly \$76 billion in sales. The industry is driven by new construction, infrastructure projects, and weather-related damage, leading to both new roof installations and repairs.

"Most people don't pull into their driveway and say 'I need a new roof.' Most people don't drive to ABC Supply or Hippo Roofing and talk to someone about a new roof. Most people need a weather event, such as a hail storm or a tree falling on their home, or a letter from their insurance company, to get them to move to action. Roofs are expensive, but they keep water off your head," said Stillwell.

The ABC Supply facility was constructed by HLI Partners of Winter Park, a commercial real estate and development firm.

ABC Supply grew rapidly by acquiring other distributors, as the Hendricks benefitted from a consolidating industry. They led the way, building a more than \$20 billion-in-revenue company.

In 1975, Diane was selling custom-built homes for a builder in Wisconsin and Ken was a roofing contractor. They married and became business partners.

They started their business in 1982, in Beloit, Wisconsin, where the company is headquartered today. That year, the U.S. economy was in a deep recession. The Hendricks chose to take a risk and acquired three supply centers in that state. They were the first locations of their new company, American Builders and Contractors Supply.

By 1984, ABC Supply had 25 locations. When Ken Hendricks died at age 66 in 2007, ABC Supply had grown to 373 locations around the nation. His wife continued to expand the enterprise in a big way.

She led ABC Supply to make the two biggest acquisitions in its history, buying rival Bradco Supply Co. in 2010 and building materials distributor L&W Supply in 2016.

Today, ABC Supply has more than 1,000 locations and over 20,000 associates. There are nearly 50 ABC Supply locations in Florida.

"It's an incredible entrepreneurial success story," said Shearer, whose facility was designed to accommodate growth and expansion. "Diane is a businesswoman extraordinaire. ABC Supply is the most amazing company you could work for. Our core values are respect, opportunity, family, give back, and American pride. Those values built the foundation for the company's success."

Shearer came to ABC Supply through the Bradco Supply acquisition. Bradco Supply at the time had nearly 2,000 employees and 128 locations, including locally. Shearer started working for Bradco Supply in Rockledge in 2005.

"Bradco Supply was about one-mile down the road from ABC Supply's new office. We occupied an 18,000-square-foot building. There were only five parking spots at that site," he said, adding, "That acquisition by ABC Supply was one of the greatest things that ever happened to me career-wise."

ABC Supply has been awarded the "Gallup Exceptional Workplace Award" for 19 consecutive years. This award recognizes companies that prioritize employee engagement in their business strategy. ABC Supply is one of only two companies globally to consistently receive this award every year, according to Gallup.

ABC Supply is privately owned by Hendricks. In the

2024 Forbes "List of America's Richest Self-Made Women," Hendricks held the No. 1 spot (\$20.9 billion).

Meanwhile, the Stillwell family has built a reputation in the region for excelling in its industry. In addition to Bill and Wanda Stillwell, husband and wife, the Hippo Roofing team includes Justin Stillwell, production manager, quality specialist and license holder for the company; and Mona Stillwell, communication and marketing manager.

"It's definitely a family business," said Justin Stillwell, a graduate of Ball State University. "We love the roofing business and working with customers."

Their company has earned national recognitions, including the prestigious "Peak Award."

Several years ago, "Metal Construction News," a nationwide trade publication, honored Hippo Roofing with that award. Only three companies in the nation were recognized, with Hippo Roofing receiving the honor in the "residential metal roofing classification."

For 2025, Hippo Roofing earned a top honor from Google. The company was presented with a "National Best of the Best Award for Customer Satisfaction." These awards are based on customer reviews. To earn this distinction, a company must have more than 500 Five-Star Google reviews.

The writeup says: "At Best of the Best, we care most about our independent research and recent reviews from real customers. It's all about the reviews. The reviews about Hippo Roofing are fantastic. They have over 500 awesome reviews on Google alone."

Originally from the Midwest, and a business graduate of the University of Nebraska, Bill Stillwell has been able to expand his firm into Central Florida from its base in Brevard.

"We now operate in seven counties — Brevard, Indian River, Volusia, Flagler, Seminole, Orange, and Osceola," said Bill Stillwell, a U.S. Air Force veteran.

"We're headquartered in Brevard, and that market is our focus, but we also have offices in Volusia and Flagler counties. We expanded into those Central Florida counties over the last couple of years. It was a big project for our firm. Carlos Matus is the regional manager. He's doing a great job introducing people in that region to Hippo Roofing."

Bill Stillwell has spent years educating consumers on the advantages of metal roofs, and even trademarked the phrase "Metal Roof Same Price as Shingles."

Many insurers offer reduced premiums for homes with metal roofs, recognizing their superior protection against common weather threats. And there are other factors. A metal roof in Florida can typically last between 40 and 70 years, depending upon the type of metal used, quality of installation, and maintenance.

"Many people think that metal roofs cost two to three times as much as shingle roofs," he said. "By introducing that trademark slogan, we were able to get in front of people and explain the positives of a metal roof."

One advantage is energy savings. Years ago, Florida Power & Light Co. did a "landmark" study which confirmed what many homeowners in the Sunshine State have thought for years — the "whiter, and therefore, more reflective roof, the lower the electric bill."

In the first study of its kind, FPL sponsored a "tightly controlled" test project that compared commonly used residential roofing materials to evaluate the relationship to home-cooling costs.

The four-month study quantified cooling performance on identical residences during "realistic weather conditions." The six roofing materials evaluated were: dark gray shingles, white shingles, white flat tile, white S-shaped tile, terra cotta S-shaped "Spanish" tile, and white metal.

The study proved that dark gray roofs reflect a "mere 8 percent" of the heat associated with sunlight, while white shingle and terra cotta tile roofs reflect 24 and 34 percent,

respectively. White metal and cement tile roofs provide the most dramatic results, reflecting 66 to 77 percent of the sun's energy.

"The results of the study clearly demonstrate that white, galvanized metal roofing materials save the most energy as a result of the high reflectance and superior ability to cool quickly at night."

"With metal roofs, the customer is getting a longer lifecycle, greater protection against Florida's harsh weather, and energy savings," said Justin Stillwell. His company has a "DefenderRoof" metal-roofing system that combines affordability and strength using high-grade stainless steel and aluminum for "excellent" resistance to Florida's intense weather.

Hippo Roofing's DefenderRoof system involves installing a metal roofing system over an existing shingle roof with synthetic underlayment. This layover approach eliminates the need for a full tear-off, which can be a significant expense.

According to Roofing Contractor's "2025 State of the Industry Report," the residential metal roofing market is "surging, with a significant increase in sales expected."

The trend reflects the evolving landscape of the roofing industry, with contactors adapting to new technologies and market demands.

"Staying on the cutting edge of this industry is very important, and we do that," said Bill Stillwell.

Years ago, his company was known as Architectural Exteriors and Design, which was a hard name to remember, said Bill Stillwell. "After being in business for several years, I knew I had an issue with the company name. So we decided to come up with a new name. I asked the staff to provide suggestions. Most of their suggestions had 'Brevard' or 'Space Coast' in the name, which is common around here. I did not want a common name. I thought of the word 'hippo.' I really like that name. It wasn't popular among staffers. We took a vote and I was the only one in favor of that name. We moved forward and renamed the company Hippo Roofing. If it didn't work, we could change our name to something more common. It worked. People loved it."

"It's been a great branding tool for the company," said Justin Stillwell. "The name is memorable. It's remarkable the number of times customers and the public asked us about our company name."

The roofing business runs deep in the Stillwell family. Brittany Cherup, Bill and Wanda Stillwell's daughter, runs Pit Crew Roofing and Repair, based in Melbourne with a second location in Panama City. She is the founding partner of that business. A University of Central Florida graduate with an MBA degree, she owns and operates the business with husband Adam.

"Pit Crew Roofing and Repair and Hippo Roofing are two different companies, but we work together and we train together," said Bill Stillwell. "The two companies have a great working relationship."

"Pit Crew Roofing and Repair leans more toward the commercial market than Hippo Roofing," said Justin Stillwell.

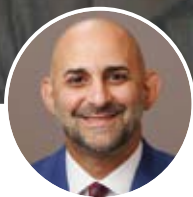
The two firms partnered with Synergy Learning Systems, which has provided training for more than 1,000 small businesses and many large companies, including General Electric Corp. Synergy Learning Systems offers comprehensive customized training programs across all departments for contractors, including customer service and sales.

At Pit Crew Roofing and Repair, Donny Cardenas has one of the company's key jobs. He is the quality control manager, ensuring customer satisfaction and project success.

"It's a role I cherish. I have to make sure our customers

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