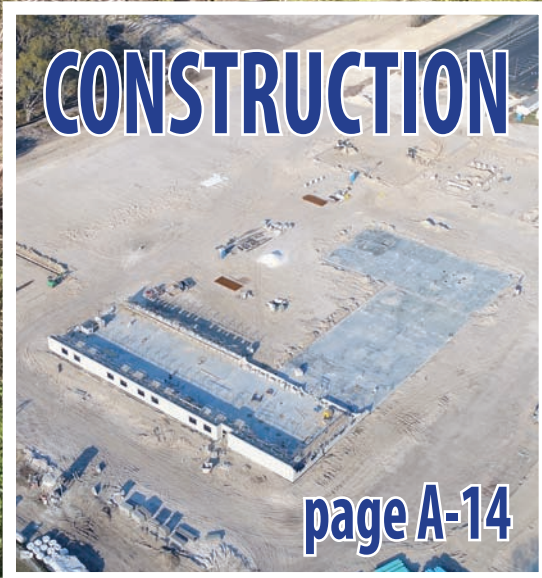
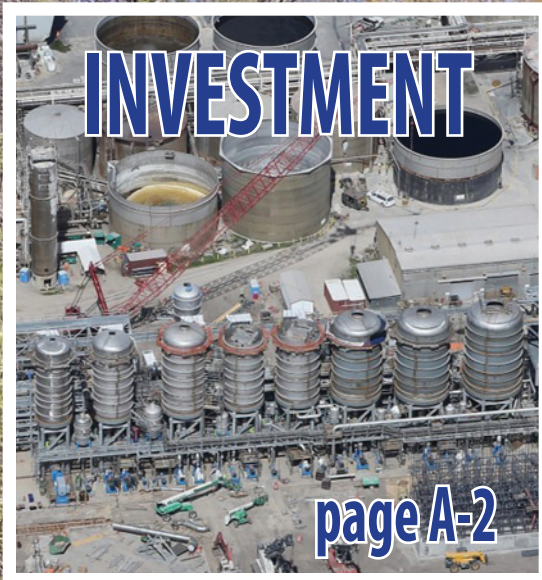


Progress 2018



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Progress 2018

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Progress 2018 provides a look at the past year's success stories as well as developments on the horizon for Taylor County and the communities within.

This special edition also serves as a guide for visitors and residents alike on what Taylor County has to offer -- from fishing, hunting and recreation to unique shopping opportunities and entertainment.

EDITION PHOTOS BY:

Angela M. Castelucci, Aaron Portwood, Mark Viola, Sarah Harden, Valena Driggers and Shannon Courtney

Creating a team to make an impact on our future

I am so very pleased to serve as your 2018 Chamber of Commerce Board chairman. It is gratifying to be a part of this vibrant, growing community, and I believe the future holds much promise for us.

It is the Chamber's goal to unite businesses, community and government to form a powerful team and have a positive impact on the future that we all share. Thank you for being part of our community and our Chamber family.

- Through the Chamber, our Small Business Development Center has created many jobs and helped local businesses borrow more than \$1,500,000 in Small Business Administration loans. If you would like to find out how you can benefit more from this free service, please call the Chamber (584-5366).

- Our Chamber was recognized again by the Southeast Tourism Society and awarded for having one of the TOP 20 Events in the Southeastern United States: The Florida State Bluegrass Festival scheduled this year for April 5-7.

- Our Chamber has 345 members, representing more than 5,740 individuals in the local workforce for Taylor County.

- The Florida State Bluegrass Festival and the Southern Pines Blues & BBQ Festival have a combined economic impact of more than \$3 million to the local economy, with many visitors planning return trips.

- The Chamber secured several tourism grants from VISIT FLORIDA to help with promoting Taylor County, which includes Steinhatchee, Keaton Beach, Shady Grove, Econfina and Perry.

- Through the Tourism Development Council (TDC), we have supported the following events: Fall Trout Tournament, the Nauti Girls Fishing



Jennifer Arnold

Tournament, Fiddler Crab Festival, the Optimist Club Tournament, the Steinhatchee Fishing Tournament, the inaugural Big Bend Brewfest, as well as events put on by the TDC and Chamber, such as the Florida State Bluegrass Festival, the Forest Festival and the Smokin' In The Pines BBQ Festival & Competition.

Thank you for supporting our Chamber and for being a part of what is and will be a very bright future for Taylor County. We need you, and believe that together, we can sustain a great community for work and play.

Jennifer Arnold

2018 Chamber Chairwoman

Georgia-Pacific continues to invest hundreds of millions of dollars into Foley Cellulose Mill

By **SCOTT MIXON**

Public Affairs Manager, Foley Cellulose Mill

Georgia-Pacific's Foley Cellulose mill creates value by making special fibers found in products that people around the world use every day, including clothing, tires, shampoo, diapers, filters, and mobile devices.

One of our highest priorities as a business is to focus on our customers, meeting their needs and expectations every day. We couldn't accomplish this and other priorities without the more than 500 skilled employees from Taylor and 10 other surrounding counties, along with more than 200 contractors and 1,000 independent logging workers who provide service jobs associated with the Foley mill's production.

Fenholloway Water Quality Project

Our commitment to the environment and our community begins with our families. We are committed to meeting clean water standards so our families can continue to enjoy rivers like the Fenholloway and the beautiful Gulf of Mexico.

To date, more than \$250 million in mill environmental improvements have resulted in improved water quality in the river. Since the river flows directly into the Gulf of Mexico, these improvements have a direct and positive effect on the water quality of both bodies of water.

In accordance with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) direction, Foley Cellulose continues to make progress towards completing the Fenholloway Water Quality Project.

Foley is spending more than \$56 million to modify and upgrade our wastewater treatment system. Construction began in March 2017, and the project is 60% complete.

Despite Hurricane Irma, the project remains on schedule, and we plan to meet our startup date in the fall of 2018. With the below ground pipe installed and concrete structures poured, we are now moving forward with mechanical and electrical equipment installation.

Foley is also spending approximately \$80 million to replace four sets of existing black liquor evaporators -- equipment that evaporates water from byproducts of the pulping process. The new evaporators will make the mill more energy efficient and reduce its groundwater use.

Construction of this project is proceeding, with startup scheduled prior to the wastewater modification startup. All evaporator bodies are installed with a massive new steel pipe rack in place.

With the installation of process piping, we are also moving forward with mechanical and electrical equipment installation.

Following completion of the wastewater treatment system modification, Foley Cellulose will relocate the treated effluent away from the freshwater portion of the



A delegation from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) observes construction progress of the Black Liquor Evaporator (BLE) project during a tour of the local Foley Cellulose mill provided by Fenholloway Project Leader Chet Thompson. Shown above are: (l to r) Greg Strong (FDEP), Jim Maher (FDEP), Thompson and FDEP Secretary Noah Valenstein.

Fenholloway River to the brackish tidal portion of the river at mile marker 1.5 by March 2021.

The pipeline will be approximately 15 miles long, buried underground and permitted along a route intended to have the least impact to the environment and the public. The United States Army Corps of Engineers and the FDEP have already renewed the necessary construction permits for the pipeline.

Georgia-Pacific Invests for the Future

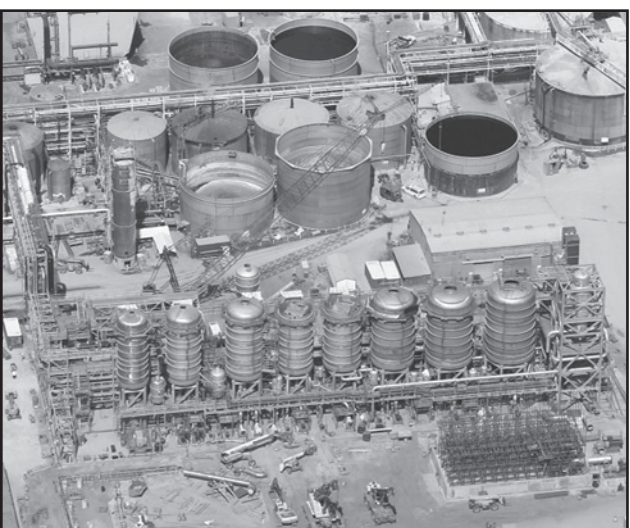
To strengthen our competitive advantage in the market place for the future, Foley Cellulose will continue to rely on our talented work force and invest in new technologies that will allow them to help us create a safer and more efficient operation.

Over the next three and a half years, Georgia-Pacific will invest in new technology and automation at the mill. We will also maximize the mill's value and capability by entering new markets in other parts of the world with high quality specialty fibers produced right here in Taylor County.

Education, Environment, Entrepreneurship and Community Enrichment

At Georgia-Pacific, we believe that our future success at Foley Cellulose is also determined by our success in the Taylor County community as a strong and responsible neighbor.

→ Please see page 3



An aerial photo shows the construction site for Foley's \$80 million black liquor evaporator replacement project.

2018 PERRY-TAYLOR COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	Doctors' Memorial Hospital Employees: 309	American Aluminum Accessories/Cam-Locker Employees: 110+
TAYLOR COUNTY'S TOP EMPLOYERS	Chemring Ordnance, Inc. Employees: 300	Taylor County Board of County Commissioners Employees: 107
Taylor County School Board Employees: 554	Walmart Super Center Employees: 243	RDS Manufacturing, Inc. Employees: 84
Taylor County Correctional Institution Employees: 552	CURT Group Employees: 184	Ware Oil Supply Company Employees: 84
Georgia-Pacific Employees: 525	Yates Construction Employees: 166	AMTEC Less-Lethal Systems Employees: 72
	West Fraser Employees: 130	

University study shows mill supports 1,500 jobs for community

GEORGIA-PACIFIC
Continued from page 2

We believe that we must earn the right every day to operate our facility in this community where we work and live.

In part, we continue to do this by supporting local/regional non-profit organizations that help create value for our community and its citizens. This includes more than \$100,000 annually to the community, charities and schools. Foley Cellulose, and our employees, through payroll deductions, donate close to \$100,000 to the local United Way campaign annually.

Economic Impact

In 2016, the Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce released a study conducted by the University of Florida's Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation illustrating the impact the Foley Cellulose Mill has on the local economy.

According to the study, the local mill represents more than 17 percent of all jobs in the county.

Foley Cellulose supports an estimated 1,500 workers, with more than 500 people employed directly by the mill, more than 400 jobs supported through indirect spending by businesses supporting the mill and as well as another 500 jobs sustained by household spending as a result of the mill's operations.

This results in close to \$132 million in labor compensation in Taylor County.

The study included the impact from indirect employment, household spending, labor compensation, goods and services, contributions to charitable organizations and how future projects will impact the area over the next five years.



According to a 2016 study conducted by the University of Florida's Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the Foley Cellulose Mill has a major impact on the local economy, representing more than 17 percent of all jobs in the county. Foley Cellulose supports an estimated 1,500 workers, with more than 500 people employed directly by the mill and more than 400 jobs supported through indirect spending by businesses supporting the mill, as well as more than 500 jobs sustained by household spending as a result of the mill's operations.

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TCDA's Economic Development Results in Job Creation!



A "Quick Action Team" formed by the TCDA, City of Perry and other local agencies moved swiftly to address the news that Snyder-Lance was closing. Within just a few weeks a broker was contacted and soon identified a buyer for the facility. Amrouch Snacks purchased the building and equipment last month and held a job fair in March that attracted more than 200 potential workers. Plans call for 150 workers to be hired by 2021.



"The collaboration and partnership between both the county and city has been phenomenal and an incredibly smooth process for which we are eminently grateful," Duke Energy Florida President Alex Glenn said during a groundbreaking for a new 22,000-panel, 5-megawatt solar panel facility located across from Taylor County Elementary School.



TCDA's Preferred Site Sign Campaign has already resulted in several major local properties being purchased. To heighten awareness of the availability of retail and commercial properties for site location consultants interested in Taylor County, signage was designed and placed in front of local buildings and available sites. The campaign has enabled the TCDA to form strategic alliances with the commercial brokerage community and led to the sale of the former Pepsi distribution center on Hwy. 98 soon after the campaign launched.



NORTH FLORIDA'S RISING STAR

Amrouch Snacks buys former Snyder's-Lance building, hopes to employ 150 people by '21

Taylor County's economic outlook grew much brighter in March when news broke that Amrouch Snacks had finalized a deal to purchase

the former Snyder's-Lance potato chip plant in Perry and planned to re-open the shuttered facility that closed in September 2017.

The family-owned company has a facility in Miami that produces private label snacks for stores like Family Dollar and plans to open here with a workforce of 40 individuals.

Amrouch Snacks President Mahmoud Amrouch told the Perry City Council his company plans to offer salaries ranging from \$13-\$29 per hour. Projections call for the total number of employees to reach 60 by November, and long-term goals include employing a total of 150 people by 2021.

"We have been looking all over the Southeast for a new facility. The challenge at our Miami facility is space, and that is why the plant here is such a good fit. It would allow us to go after the bigger contracts," President Mahmoud Amrouch said.

The company also has a factory in Istanbul, Turkey, with 300 employees.

"We initially produced packaging (for snack foods) and we are using profits from that line to grow our business. Our first year in the U.S., we had 10 employees. We almost tripled that number in just two years," Amrouch said.

When Taylor County Development Authority (TCDA) Director Scott Frederick announced the sale, he recognized key community stakeholders who worked on the project.

"Special thanks to the Taylor County Board of County Commissioners and Chair Pam Feagle, as well as Perry Mayor David Sullivan and the city council for taking time

to engage in one-on-one meetings with Amrouch executives," Frederick said. "Additionally, I want to also recognize Mark Wiggins, Taylor County Tax Collector, for his assistance in this initiative.

"Like they say, economic development is a team sport, and you can't win without teamwork." Under Amrouch's plan, the Perry plant will produce a full line of products, including potato chips and extruded snacks for private labels (store brands).

The Snyder's-Lance plant was employing 101 people when the company

announced in July it was closing the plant. The last bag of potato chips left the line on Sept. 27.

Just days following the plant closure, the TCDA formed a task force to identify new food-related companies that could move or expand operations in Perry.

After four months of communicating with national real estate firms specializing in food properties from New England to California, Amrouch Snacks was identified as a good fit for both the building and the community.

Company executives made several visits to Perry to tour the facility, and soon after a broker signed a binder to purchase the property and equipment.

The TCDA was engaged in final negotiations with the company and facilitated the actual sale closing near the end of the first quarter of 2018. In addition to opening a food manufacturing plant here, the company is reportedly considering building a packaging plant on site, which could have a positive impact on the number of employees it would need to effectively operate both plants.



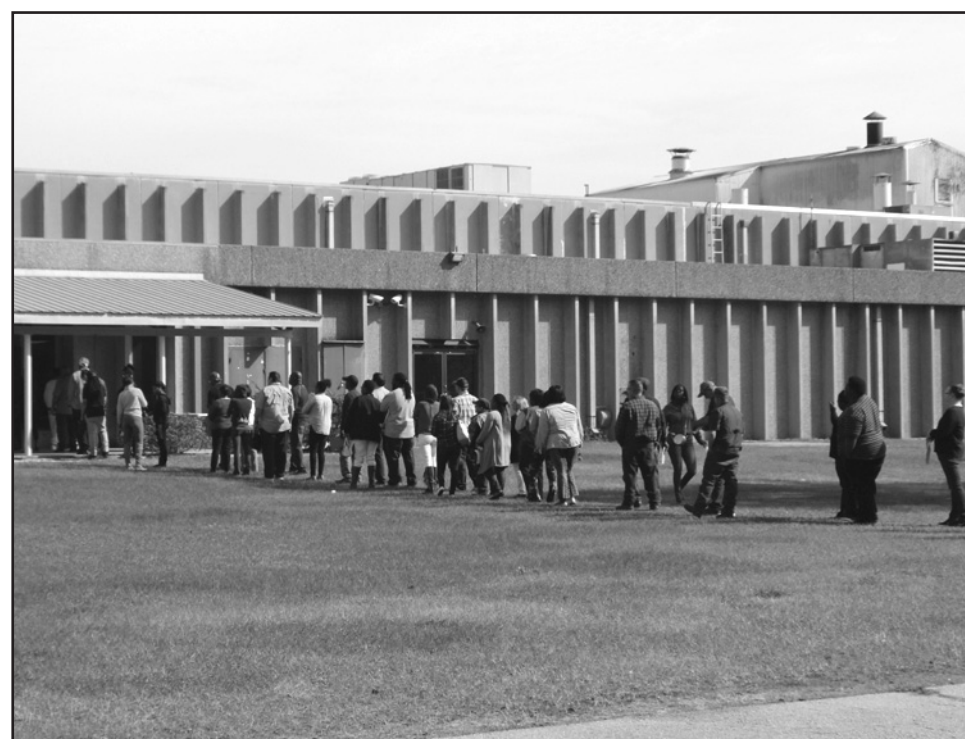
Family-owned Amrouch Snacks hosted over 200 job applicants during a job fair held at the local plant in March. Short-term goals are to hire 40 workers, with that number expected to swell to 60 by November and possibly as many as 150 by 2021. Company officials indicated that workers could earn between \$13-\$29 per hour.



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Hundreds of potential employees lined up outside and filed into the former Snyder's-Lance potato chip plant for a job fair held in March. The TCDA helped locate and recruit Amrouch Snacks, which purchased the building and equipment in February, just four months after the previous owner shut down operations.

Applied Gaia nearing start for 'first of its kind' biochar plant

Nearly two and a half years after it was first announced that Applied Gaia was interested in constructing a \$60 million dollar biochar plant that could eventually employ hundreds of people in Taylor County, it appears the company may finally be close to breaking ground.

News of the proposed plant was first announced in September 2015, with members of the Taylor County Commission and Perry City Council in attendance, along with representatives of the Taylor County Development Authority (TCDA), Enterprise Florida and North Florida Career Source.

At that time, the company entered in an agreement with the City of Perry to purchase a 55-acre parcel on County Road 30 that was

once considered the future site of the BioNitrogen project. The sale price was to be \$1.3 million.

Company officials originally hoped to break ground in February 2016, but that date came and went as Applied Gaia and its subsidiary Florida Natural Technologies struggled to secure the financing necessary to move forward.

However, city and county officials now say the necessary funding is finally in place, and work could begin as soon as this spring.

"They have all of the financing in place and the money is in escrow," City Manager Bob Brown said. "They just need to finalize their feed stock agreements and the off-take agreements, which is the sale of the final product."

Company representatives were in Perry in early March 2018 talking with potential raw material suppliers, as well as an engineering firm to discuss construction of the proposed plant.

Taylor County Commissioner Jim Moody, who has been the commission's liaison with the company, provided a similar update to his board at the county's March 5 meeting.

"County Administrator Ted Lahey and I met with Applied Gaia representatives today, and they are getting really close to coming," Moody said.

"They have hooked up with Mark Massey's group and they have drawings and plans for a building. They will be hiring soon," Moody said. "They have met with Four Rivers Land & Timber and local loggers, as well as the group that will construct the plant and the city."

"It has been a long time coming -- two years or more -- but it looks like it will soon be a go. This will be good for Taylor County. It looks like they will be hiring a local contractor to build their plant, use the local technical school to teach and train students to trouble

shoot and work on the machines they will use and local loggers have provided them with some of the wood chips so they can test and see if they will work. It is a win-win situation," Moody continued.

Applied Gaia officials -- now working under the name Florida Natural Technologies -- have said their plant would utilize hardwood timber chips to produce "biochar" fertilizer (which has uses in soil remediation and fertilizer, along with numerous other retail applications), which they hope to transition from a niche market into a "mainstream" and viable commercial product.

The plant was originally expected to house 50 to 72 of Applied Gaia's pyrolysis machines, which convert biomass into syngas, producing electricity to run the plant, as well as gas for sale.

"They have a product that no one else has and they can use our hardwood chips to make it," Moody told his fellow commissioners.

City and county officials have been working to make the proposed plant a reality for more than two years.

In September 2015, on a motion by Feagle, second by Moody and a unanimous vote, the county commission agreed to release \$100,000 in "incentive funds" from TCDA reserves to the TCDA for Applied Gaia.

The \$100,000 was released within a month of the September 2015 announcement that the Texas-based Applied Gaia Corporation planned to construct a \$60 million plant in Taylor County, which company officials stated would eventually employ 300 people with a total annual salary topping \$12.4 million.

At that time Frederick said the plant would provide "good-paying \$20 an hour manufacturing jobs" with an estimated \$106 million total economic impact to the community.

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NOW ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS AND WALK-INS

Chamber of Commerce added 22 new members

The Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce welcomed 22 new members in the past year.

According to Director Dawn Taylor, the newcomers brought the chamber's total enrollment to 345 members.

The new members included: Infused O2, Dorman's Pest Control, B & T Paranormal, Taco Bell, Plantation Bookkeeping & Payroll Services, LLC,

Taylor County CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vinyl Vault, Looking Sharp, Big Bend Outfitters, LLC, Piddlers Pointe RV Resort & Campground, Air & Opportunity, The ParkSide Café & Coffee, LLC, Dead Man's Float Kayak Rentals, Walter B's, Sun Pools of North Florida, LLC, North Florida Home Improvement Center, Thigpen & Associates, LLC, Back 40 Hydrographics, Schmidt Reforestation Services, Inc., Perry Masonic Lodge 123, Perry Shrine Club, Gamble Farms and Team Williams Printing & Signs.



Two nationally-recognized fast food restaurants popped up along a busy stretch of Highway 19 through the heart of Perry this past year. Thanks to the efforts of the Taylor County Development Authority (TCDA), City of Perry and Taylor County Commission, Taco Bell and Popeye's now offer both locals and travelers additional dining choices while in Perry.



The Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce welcomed North Florida Home Improvement Center to its membership ranks with a ribbon-cutting held in conjunction with the business' open house in July 2017. Chamber members, friends and family joined owner James Ferguson, center, for the event. The business was one of 22 new members to join the chamber in the past year.



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TCDA celebrates a year of successes

This past year has been one of remarkable success for the Taylor County Development Authority (TCDA).

The local economic development agency helped locate two major restaurant chains here, actively recruited a \$21 million high-end apartment complex and led the effort to salvage more than 40 jobs by finding a company to purchase and re-open the former Snyder's-Lance chip plant after it closed in September 2017.

The TCDA also continues to pursue several other major projects that could dramatically shape the local economy in years to come, including the recruitment of two manufacturing companies that plan to locate operations in Taylor County and an assisted living center for elder care community to be constructed and operated next to the local hospital in Perry.

TCDA Economic Development Director Scott Frederick reports that Taylor County saw unprecedented growth in prospect, national site consultant and real estate broker visits in 2017.

"Our organization has evolved into an entity that stretches beyond its traditional role of industrial recruitment to also include retail, restaurant, commercial and workforce housing business attraction," Frederick said.

Other recent TCDA successes include:

- Frederick credits the TCDA's launch of a new "TCDA APPROVED" signage program for assisting in generating new leads and inquiries from interested sources passing through town. In fact, this program helped net two national chain restaurants (Popeye's and Taco Bell) that opened here in December. The campaign also expedited the sale and purchase of the former Pepsi Cola distribution center on Highway 98.

- TCDA has ongoing communications with CEOs and CFOs from a pair of manufacturing companies that plan to locate their operations in Taylor County. Each is projected to hire, at full capacity, between 50 and 70 full-time employees with full benefit packages and pay equivalent to Taylor County's current largest employer.

- To help grow the community and expand its efforts in attracting additional workers, the TCDA has teamed up with developers and investors from South Florida to build new workforce housing. One of those development prospects – the Perry Apartment Initiative – closed on a piece of property in mid-December and plans to begin construction on 160 new apartment units within a matter of weeks.

- Duke Energy selected Perry as the first location for their new solar panel farm roll-out in Florida. The project has already been completed and is currently in operation.

"The TCDA continues to grow and evolve as a full-service economic development operation," Frederick said.

"The TCDA functions as a proactive business attraction entity that continuously evaluates and assesses the community's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to develop and implement the best recruitment strategies possible," says TCDA Board Chairman Randy Newman.

"The TCDA's mission is to advance successful economic development in Taylor County while strengthening the economic capabilities in order to enhance our economic vitality and quality of life for all citizens," Newman stated. "It's a process in which the private sector and governmental sector have formed a strategic



The 2018 TCDA Board of Directors includes: City of Perry Mayor David Sullivan, Auley Rowell, Matt Eckel, Don Everett Jr., Marvin Brooks, Brandon Fletcher and Chairman Randy Newman. Not pictured are: Alan Dodimead, County Commission Chairman Pam Feagle and City Councilman Mike Deming.



Duke Energy Florida officials were credited for "putting their money where their words are," when they fulfilled a promise to build a solar facility in Taylor County. The new 22,000-panel facility is located across from Taylor County Elementary School (TCES) and near the site of the new Perry Primary School now under construction. Duke Energy Florida President Alex Glenn noted that the new facility represented 17 football fields' worth of solar. "By 2018, we are looking at 120 football fields of solar throughout the state and we plan to double that by 2024," Glenn said.

alliance in order to create a more competitive business recruiting environment to fuel economic growth and prosperity by creating new employment opportunities for our citizens."

"Local economic development is a highly competitive and complex process. Success is not

about waiting for something to happen, rather it is about going out and making things happen," said Newman, operations manager at Consolidated Communications. "To do this effectively requires significant dedication and commitment, a broad and diverse range of experience and expertise, and significant human and financial resources."

"I'm excited about the addition of four new board members (Marvin Brooks, Matt Eckel, Auley Rowell and City of Perry Mayor David Sullivan) and look forward to incorporating their experiences in continuing to propel our organization forward in a positive manner," Newman stated. "All four embody the spirit of community and bring talent, expertise and energy to the table. We are very fortunate to have them by our side as we continue to strengthen our community."

Mayor David Sullivan said, "I look forward to serving on the TCDA board and being a part of improving our community by working with developers and other key decision makers to help them understand what a unique and interesting opportunity they can have by placing

their new business here in Perry and Taylor County. There are good things happening right now and better opportunities to come."

Marvin Brooks, vice-president at Citizens State

experiences building a factory here and what I see other communities doing to attract development. Taylor County is a special place that is very business friendly. You will be hard-pressed to find communities



NORTH FLORIDA'S RISING STAR
TAYLOR COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Bank, stated, "My heart is in Taylor County, and I want what is best for our community and our residents – to see us all prosper together. The decisions we make will affect all Taylor Countians, so it is imperative that we make the right decisions for our continued long-term success."

Matt Eckel, Director of Business Development at AMTEC Less-Lethal, stated, "I have a unique career that has allowed me to live in Taylor County and travel our country and world. I hope to be a good resource for the TCDA Board by sharing my recent

of our size with so much manufacturing. Manufacturing adds value, brings stable employment, and decent pay. Our community weathered the last recession pretty well because we are a community that grows, processes and builds things. Taylor County's products are always in demand and not as subject to becoming irrelevant by the next technology shift. We want all responsible companies to feel welcome here. Our board and executive director's role is to support current enterprises and present a business-friendly environment for our next new neighbors."

New board member Auley Rowell said, "As a sixth-generation Taylor Countian, I have a continuing interest in sound economic development in Taylor County to provide a good tax base and good-paying jobs for our people. I believe in the American free enterprise system that is encouraged and supported by the community. Efforts should also be made to encourage and support the growth of existing industry."

Alan Dodimead, American Accessories national sales manager (law enforcement), added, "I joined the TCDA Board to help bring new businesses and job opportunities to Taylor County. I want to ensure Taylor County has something to offer our next generation so they have the opportunity to stay and raise their families here."

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Developers to build a new \$21 million, apartment complex

Developers of a proposed \$21 million apartment complex hope to begin construction later this year on what will be the largest residential development ever constructed in Taylor County.

The gated, high-end apartment housing complex project will generate much-needed new revenue streams for the county, city and public school system as well as providing workforce housing -- the cornerstone of successful economic development programs.

"This is very significant, because the last large-scale apartment complex built here was in 1971," Taylor County Economic Development Director Scott Frederick said. "Workforce housing is a major component of economic development, and we are nearing success in this endeavor."

Financing for the project is "in the final stages, pending approval of proposed local support," Prospect Development Group representative Saul Crafton said when addressing Perry City Council members at the unveiling of the project.

The complex would be located on Highway 19 South behind Holiday Inn Express and is planned to be built in two phases, Crafton said.

"The plan for Phase I, with a projected cost of \$15 million, calls for 160 units. It will be a gated community with a fitness center, community center with pool, an on-site management office and on-site maintenance personnel," he said. "You will have an entrance from U.S. 19 and an exit at Old Dixie Highway."

→ Please see page 9



Developers should soon begin construction on a proposed \$21 million apartment complex behind Holiday Inn Express between Highway 19 South on Old Dixie Highway in what will be the largest residential development ever constructed in Taylor County.



City Manager Bob Brown and TCDA Director Scott Frederick posed with some of the building materials delivered to Perry in preparation for the beginning of construction on the new high-end apartment complex.

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The Keaton Beach canal will be the first of five public canals to be dredged as part of a \$4.7 million project funded mostly from administrative fines and civil penalties resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. County officials plan to apply for the grant funds in May.

County about to set sail on \$4.7 million, 15-year odyssey to dredge coastal canals

After more than a decade of talks, plans and false starts, the county will begin dredging its coastal canals this year, starting with the Keaton Beach canal.

Using more than \$4 million dollars in funds generated from administrative fines and civil penalties from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Taylor County Commission has approved a 15-year plan to dredge, restore and enhance five miles of canals and channels along the Taylor County coast.

In November 2017, commissioners voted 5-0 to submit their "Multi-Year Implementation Plan" to the Department of Treasury, which oversees the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (RESTORE Act) and administers two grant programs that counties can

use to "restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands and economy of the Gulf Coast region."

Taylor County's plan for its share of RESTORE Act funds includes five canal restoration and enhancement projects along the local coast totaling an estimated \$4,750,900. The plan calls for the county to provide \$674,764 in matching funds.

The county's "Multi-Year Implementation Plan" was met with approval by federal officials, allowing the county to move forward with its first project, the Keaton Beach canal.

According to County Grants Coordinator Melody Cox, the county is working on its application for funding for the Keaton

Beach project and hopes to apply in May. The approval process is expected to take up to 90 days.

Cox said that they will have enough funds in the county's federal RESTORE Act account to accomplish the project in April, and will be ready to begin the project once they receive approval.

Under the implementation plan, the county agreed to contribute \$11,145 in its current budget as a match to the Keaton Beach canal dredging overall project cost of \$1,061,550. This county match represents about 1% of the total project cost.

The plan's "objectives" call for the Keaton Beach canal system to be dredged to an elevation of -4 feet mean low water (MLW), which calls for the removal of an estimated 31,700

cubic yards of total dredge volume.

"Taylor County's coastal communities, particularly the coastal community of Keaton Beach, have experienced numerous problems with canal systems due to inaccessibility during low tides," the plan states.

"The need for dredging due to large limestone formation in the main canal at Keaton Beach has created boating traffic constrictions with frequent 'bottle necking' in the main canal, restricted hours of operation for commercial fishing businesses and boater safety issues. The side and finger canals can only be accessed by larger boats during high tides due to the accumulation of sediment. Boat traffic in general is increasing

due to population growth, growth in the commercial fishing industry, increased tourism, new residential developments and increased pressure from public and private boat ramps and docks."

The plan states the dredging would, "improve overall conditions of the Keaton Beach canal system for water flow, water quality and public accessibility for the commercial fishing trade, recreational fishing and boating and tourism development."

While work will begin this year, the entire five-phase dredging project will likely not be done until 2032, due to how the RESTORE Act funds are distributed over a 15-year period.

A 2016 engineering estimate projected the

canal dredging projects would cost an estimated \$5.9 million. Cox said the county expects to receive \$4,076,136 in RESTORE Act funds spread out over 15 years (approximately \$271,742 per year), while the county will provide \$674,764 in matching funds for a total of \$4,750,900.

Cox said the county would secure a spoil site, perform hauling of the dredge material and contribute some engineering and other in-kind services to help offset the \$1.1 million difference between the RESTORE Act funding and the projected total cost.

After Keaton, the commission-approved priority list includes Steinhatchee, Dark Island, Cedar Island and Dekle Beach.

Taylor County Clerk of Courts Office

Taylor County Clerk of Courts, Annie Mae Murphy, and her staff are here to serve you!



Kneeling: Clyde Hendry, Leandra Borklund, Crystal McMullen, Jessica Brock, Laura Brock, Connor Stengel, Terri Young, Wendy Cassidy, Marti Lee, Vickie Chaffin. **Second Row:** Kevin Robinson, Glenda Mathews, Phyllis Hendry, Ralph Carlton, Annie Mae Murphy, Robin Starling, Vivian Cash, Dale Allbritton, Virginia Levingston. **Back Row:** Dannielle Welch, Gary Knowles, Betty Hendry and Salina Ford. **Not Pictured:** Cindy Mock, Cindy Hunt and Tammy Taylor.

The Clerk of Courts' responsibilities are:

Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts.

Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, including serving as accountant, auditor and custodian of county funds.

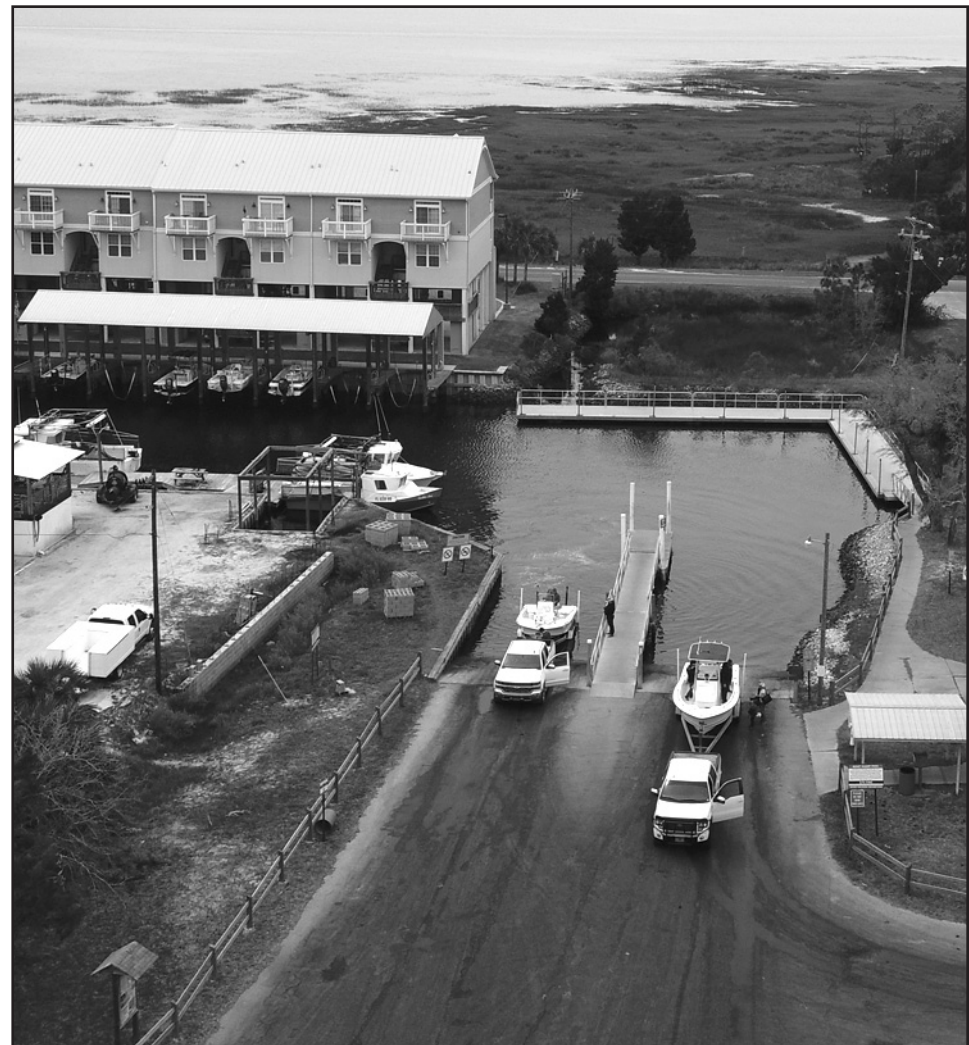
County Recorder and Record Keeper.

Your Clerk's Office is the official source for:

- Court Information
- Jury Information
- Traffic Citation Payments
- Child Support Payment Information
- Marriage Licenses
- Public Notices
- Tax Deeds
- Misdemeanor/Traffic/Felony Case Information
- Official County Records
- Official Court Records
- Other Public Records

Voters of Taylor County elect the clerk to a four-year term. Clerk of Court Annie Mae Murphy was first elected to office in 1992.

108 North Jefferson St., Suite 102, Perry, FL 32348
(850) 838-3506
www.taylorclerk.com



The Keaton Beach main canal begins at the public boat ramp, which sees heavy usage throughout the year, but especially during the summer when the annual scallop season draws thousands of visitors to the Taylor County coast.

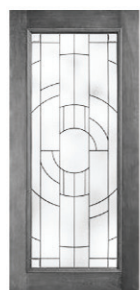
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2018 is the year of construction

City of Perry has several major projects underway

This year looks to go down as the year of construction for the City of Perry.

Site work has started at the location of new \$13.4 million wastewater treatment plant to replace one built in the 1950s.

The project is being funded by three major sources: \$6.1 million in grants, a \$2.9 million 38-year low interest loan and a \$4.4 million 30-year zero interest loan.

"The loans will be repaid using the existing one-cent sales tax," City Manager Bob Brown said.

The new facility was designed with an eye on the future and will be able to support increasing capacity as businesses and residents locate within the city limits.

In related infrastructure news, the city is currently

seeking bids to upgrade its Water Well #3, which provides potable water for the city.

The bids will be opened March 30.

According to Brown, the city conducted a draw-down test on the well several years ago to confirm it could handle the increased capacity.

The project, which is expected to last a few months, will install new equipment, including upgraded electrical components, to expand the well's capacity.

This will be the first in a multi-phase series of projects scheduled over the next five to eight years to upgrade the city's water supply, Brown said.

Phase #2 will replace the water filters in what officials call Perry's "new" Water

Plant, which was built in 1993.

Phase #3 will include digging a new water well at a site yet to be determined.

Finally, Phase #4 will be the construction of a new water plant to replace Perry's "old" Water Plant, which was constructed in the 1950s. Brown said there will be grant funding associated with the various projects, which must each be finished and closed out

prior to the city applying for the next phase of funding.

Also underway are three central street resurfacing projects. The Florida Department of Transportation is overseeing new paving on Jefferson Street while the city is directing resurfacing projects on Center Street, Church Street and numerous other city side streets.

In total, 7.1 miles of streets will have received

paving "facelifts" once the projects are complete.

Finally on the board is one of the last pieces of the downtown revitalization plan – a canopy/balcony project that will encompass much of the courthouse square and adjoining blocks.

Bid packets are being prepared for the first phase of construction which will include the installation of "bump outs" at each major intersection on Jefferson

Street and the installation of canopies and balconies along the city block that fronts the courthouse (from Main Street to Green).

Canopies and balconies (for two-story buildings) will be added during the second construction phase. The canopies will be freestanding (not attached to any privately-owned building) with lighting and signage.



Bid packets are being prepared for the first phase of city's downtown revitalization project, which will include the installation of "bump outs" at each major intersection on Jefferson Street and the installation of canopies and balconies along the city block that fronts the courthouse (from Main Street to Green).

Largest residential investment in Perry's history

APARTMENT Continued from page 7

The complex would have one-, two- and three-bedroom units, with the average rent ranging from \$700 to \$900 per month.

"There will be no subsidies. These are units at the market rate, with no government subsidies," Crafton said.

"The project would create an estimated 100 jobs during construction, and local vendors would be utilized," he added. "The project location is under contract with a cash binder; a feasibility study has been completed; the preliminary architecture and site plan has been completed; financing concept meeting is complete;

financing is in the final stages, pending approval of proposed local support; property re-zoning is in progress and the financing appraisal has been ordered and is in process."

The City of Perry approved an economic incentive package based on the project's taxable value, and the Taylor County Commission voted in favor of an economic development ad valorem tax exemption for the project.

"No upfront funds are required, and all support is performance-based. The property currently produces no ad valorem revenues for the city," Crafton said. The end result, he noted, would be "a positive economic impact to the local economy

without any reduction in local revenues."

"They have agreed to utilize city utilities – natural gas, water and sewer – at the complex. The projected revenue for the city is \$300,000 per year from utilities," City Manager Bob Brown said.

"None of the incentives will kick in until the project construction is well underway. They will have spent millions of dollars on site work before we begin installing gas pipelines.

"Also they have to give us proof the taxes have been paid before they receive the incentive. So you are looking at a \$35,000 tax incentive and \$300,000 in projected revenues."

"It is a self-funding project

with no risk to City of Perry taxpayers," Councilman Mike Deming said.

If successful, the project represents the largest residential development in the history of Perry, and when fully built out, will be valued at more than \$20 million. It will also be the community's first gated residential development.

"No longer will prospective employers ask, 'Where will our construction workers or employees live?' No longer will restaurants and other retail prospects say, 'You don't have enough people living within a two-mile radius of our best building sites' before they go on to locate in other communities," said Frederick.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES DIRECTORY

Law Enforcement

Emergencies 911
 Perry Police Department 584-5121
www.perrypolice.net
 Taylor County Sheriff's Office 584-4225
www.taylorcountysheriff.org
 Taylor County Jail 584-4333

Fire Departments

Perry Fire Department 584-3311
 Taylor County Fire-Rescue 838-3522

City Government

www.cityofperry.net
 City Hall 584-7161
 Public Works 584-7490
 Recreation 584-3029
 Planning & Zoning 584-7161

County Government

www.taylorcountygov.com
 Administration 838-3500
 Public Works 838-3528
 Environmental Services 838-3533
 Animal Control 838-3525
 Veteran Services 838-3513
 Emergency Management 838-3575
 Building & Planning 838-3500 ext. 1
 Public Library 838-3512

Constitutional Officers

Clerk of Court 838-3506
www.taylorclerk.com
 Supervisor of Elections 838-3515
www.taylorelections.com
 Tax Collector 838-3517
www.taylorcountytaxcollector.com
 Property Appraiser 838-3511
www.taylorcountypa.com

Utilities

City of Perry 584-2721
 Taylor Coastal Water & Sewer 578-3043
www.tcwsd.org
 Big Bend Water Authority 352-498-3576
www.bigbendwaterauthority.com

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LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

American Aluminum still growing after 29 years



In 2017 American Aluminum partnered with Realtree to offer its Cam-Locker toolbox with a hydro-dipped lid featuring six different Realtree Camo patterns like camo.

Local, family-owned American Aluminum Accessories Inc. has grown five-fold over the past 10 years – expanding its line of a wide variety of aluminum products to include several new lines, while increasing its staff to more than 110 employees.

Founded by Robert R. Swain in 1989, American

Aluminum has steadily grown over the past 29 years.

The aluminum manufacturing business specializing in secure transport equipment expanded into a second manufacturing plant dedicated solely to making high-quality CamLocker toolboxes in 2009.

The company has since continued to evolve and expand to include an extensive line of products designed to meet the ever-

changing needs of the law enforcement community.

In 1992, the company introduced the very first in-vehicle E/Z RIDER K-9 Container to meet the demand for safe, secure transport for a nearby law enforcement department's canine officer.

In 2014, Swain's children Gail Lawson and Tom Swain assumed ownership and Swain's granddaughter

→ Please see page 13

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This K9 officer and his Marion County deputy partner both walked away from a serious wreck that destroyed their patrol vehicle thanks to the quality and design of American Aluminum's in-vehicle E/Z RIDER K-9 Container.

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Since May 2014 Big Top has been under new ownership with Jeff Merschman as President & CEO. Big Top has a highly trained team consisting of administration, sales, field techs, engineering, marketing and production.

Big Top is prepared for future growth and to service the needs of their present and future customers.

Thank you,
The Big Top Team

TCDA offers DMH land for assisted living facility

As part of an effort to recruit and locate an assisted living facility (ALF) here, the Taylor County Development Authority (TCDA) recently advertised for proposals from qualified entities to construct, and operate an ALF here.

On behalf of the City of Perry and Taylor County, the TCDA is soliciting proposals from firms interested in building on five or more acres donated by the county commission near Doctors' Memorial Hospital (DMH) as a potential site for the economic development project.

The Taylor County Commission indicated their willingness to donate approximately five acres located adjacent to the local hospital to a successful ALF bidder. DMH is located on the Florida-Georgia Parkway (U.S. Hwy. 19/27) within the City of Perry in Taylor County, which currently does not have an ALF.

"The closest such facility is located 40 minutes away, so there is a significant need for an ALF in the community," said TCDA Economic Developer Scott Frederick. "The TCDA believes many local families would utilize a quality, local facility to serve their loved ones."

"In addition to premium, no-cost land to site the ALF, the facility would enjoy expedited permitting and building inspections. Big Bend Technical College is

located within four miles and provides programs for Practical Nursing, Nursing Assistant, Patient Care Technicians and Medical Administrative Specialists. Significant Qualified Target Industry (QTI) and Quick Response Training incentives are also available.

"The site is serviced by Duke Energy for electricity, and by the City of Perry for water, wastewater and natural gas utilities," Frederick added.

An assisted living facility (ALF) is designed to provide personal care services in the least restrictive and most home-like environment. These facilities can range in size from one resident to several hundred and may offer a wide variety of personal and nursing services designed specifically to meet an individual's personal needs.

Most ALFs or residential care facilities provide housing, meals, personal care and other support services to the elderly, disabled adults who are unable to live independently.

ALFs can include adult family care homes, adult day care centers and nursing homes, as well as "step down" housing offering a bridge between those who are discharged from around-the-clock hospital care and those able to live independently with no assistance.

Although ALFs differ by state, services can include:

assistance with daily living activities (bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, etc.) as well as educational and recreational activities.

Inquiries should be directed to Frederick by calling (850) 584-5627.

Proposals (eight copies) must be received no later than 12 noon on April 2, 2018 and must be mailed

to: Taylor County ALF RFP, c/o Scott Frederick, Director, TCDA, 103 E. Ellis Street, Perry, FL 32347.



Proposals are due by April 2, 2018 for qualified firms interested in locating an assisted living facility (ALF) here. The TCDA and county commission has offered to donate five acres of property adjacent to Doctors' Memorial Hospital as a potential site for the economic development project. The location would be within the white bordered boundaries on the parcel above. Doctors' Memorial Hospital can be seen on the bottom right of the parcel near Highway 19. The entire parcel is 68.02 acres.

Doctors' Memorial provides wide range of services

Doctors' Memorial Hospital (DMH), a 48-bed not-for-profit acute care facility, has been serving the North Florida communities of Taylor, Madison, Dixie and Lafayette counties since 1957.

The hospital is located at 333 North Byron Butler Parkway, just north of Perry.

In 2014, the leadership of DMH and Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) announced that they had finalized an agreement

creating an equal-governance partnership between the two institutions.

DMH and its medical staff offer a wide range of services, including cardiopulmonary, home health, imaging, laboratory, physical therapy and surgical.

The hospital provides Emergency Medical Services (EMS) for the county and maintains a 24-hour emergency room.

Doctors' Memorial Hospital also provides extensive diagnostic imaging services administered by nationally-registered and Florida State-licensed imaging professionals and interpreted by board certified radiologists.

The Imaging Services Department is located on the main floor and offers the following services: bone density testing (DEXA), computed tomography (CT scan), diagnostic radiology (X-Ray), mammography, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), nuclear medicine, ultrasound general, ultrasound vascular (Echo)

and digital radiography. The hospital also operates the DMH Medical Plaza,

which houses most of its physicians, located at 555 N. Byron Butler

Parkway, as well as family clinics in Steinhatchee and Mayo.



Doctors' Memorial Hospital and its medical staff offers a wide range of services, including cardiopulmonary, home health, imaging services, laboratory, physical therapy and surgical.

Taylor County is home to first health department in Florida

Taylor County has the honor of having the first health department in Florida, opening in 1930.

"We strive to deliver quality and caring medical and environmental health care to the citizens and visitors of Taylor County," officials said.

The Florida Department of Health in Taylor County is located at 1215 North Peacock Ave.

The department offers a

wide variety of services to the citizens and visitors of Taylor County, including family planning, OB services, HIV testing and counseling, septic tank permitting, water testing, immunizations, birth and death records, and many other medical and environmental services.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (850) 584-5087.

Additional information

about services and programs is available at <http://taylor.floridahealth.gov>.

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Marshall offers short-term and long-term care

Marshall Health and Rehabilitation Center is a 120-bed skilled nursing center located at 207 Marshall Dr. off Ash Street in Perry.

The facility provides the following services: 24-hour skilled nursing care;

care for medically complex patients; Alzheimer's and dementia care; long-term care services; discharge planning program; physical, occupational and speech therapies; comprehensive post-acute care; and short-term rehab.

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LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Marion County K-9 officer credits transport system with saving his life and his partner's

AMERICAN ALUMINUM
Continued from page 10

Jennifer Arnold took over as president.

The company has continued to grow under the second and third generation of Swain family leadership.

American Aluminum now operates its Cam-Locker tool box division, as well as a Law Enforcement product division (www.ezrideronline.com) that includes American Aluminum K9, Inmate Transport and Vault Systems.

Operating under the motto "Protecting Those Who Protect Us Since 1989," American Aluminum's Law Enforcement division is dedicated to manufacturing secure transport products for the law enforcement community.

Products include secure Inmate Transport systems for corrections and jail vans, as well as "Vault Systems" that provide for secure transport and storage of law enforcement officer weapons, and the product the company is most widely-known for – an in-vehicle K9 transport system.

"My grandfather Robert Swain designed the first

K9 transport system over 20 years ago," said Arnold. "To this day, after much modernization of equipment and many engineering reviews, we are proud that we still produce this product as he first designed them -- with safety and security foremost in mind."

That design and manufacturing is credited with saving both lives and property.

A K9 unit officer in nearby Marion County, Florida credits the quality and design of the K9 transport system insert in his SUV for saving the lives of both him and his police canine.

"Thank you guys for making such a great product! Not just on the day-to-day performance, but when things go bad!" said Marion County Sheriff's Office K9 Unit Deputy J. Nix "I have no doubt that if I did not have your system, this would have been a lot worse. Thanks to the kennel, the SUV that hit me didn't come further inside the vehicle than it did. The dog was completely uninjured and I walked away with some minor bumps and bruises."

In 2017, the company



The motto "Protecting Those Who Protect Us Since 1989" was put to the test recently when American Aluminum's in-vehicle K9 transport system was credited with saving the lives of a K9 officer and his canine partner in a serious accident in Marion County, Florida. The canine was completely uninjured and the deputy walked away with only minor bumps and bruises.

partnered with Realtree, allowing CamLocker's toolbox plant to offer toolboxes with a hydro-dipped lid featuring six

different Realtree Camo patterns.

"This partnership also helped expand Back40 Furnishing to Back40 Hydrographics, which moved into our third facility on Highway 98," Arnold said.

"At the first thought of partnering CamLocker and Realtree together, we saw success and a perfect fit, as we both serve the same type of customer, bringing them top quality and purpose-driven products," Arnold said.

"Together we can give them a superior toolbox with the classy touch of Realtree Camo. We all love to have products we use in work and

play to have a personal touch that remind us of what we enjoy most. In addition to the business fit, both of our companies were founded by great men with endless determination to see their visions become a success. They both wanted to supply their customers with the best products to succeed at work and at home, all the while maintaining a family focus," Arnold said.

In January, CamLocker continued to expand its offerings by releasing a new line of boxes for the UTV side-by-side market.

"We have continuously grown and expanded our products, catering to the needs and wants of our

valued customers and high-profile clientele. Over the years as their needs have changed, we have evolved and expanded our products to include Inmate Transport Systems, K-9 Training Aids, K-9 Inserts, Contraband Containment and Animal Control Systems, to name a few," Arnold said.

"My grandfather's intuitive mind, drive and dedication has provided us with a strong company that we are beyond proud of, and one that we can continue to grow for many years to come. It brings me great joy that he is here to watch us daily honor the very gift he created for us," Arnold said.



In January 2018, American Aluminum released a new line of boxes designed for the UTV and side-by-side market. The new SxS CamLocker box features a custom Realtree Camo hydrographic-dipped lid by Back40 Graphics, owned by Tim and Atesa Lundy and family in Perry.

SBDC has helped 56 businesses since 2004

Now in its 14th year at the Perry/Taylor Chamber of Commerce, the Taylor County Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provides private and confidential counseling, loan preparation assistance and education resources for new and existing businesses.

According to Chamber Director Dawn Taylor, since opening in 2004, the SBDC has been credited with helping to create 52 jobs in Taylor County and assisting businesses in receiving \$1.2 million in Small Business Administration loans.

In that time, the SBDC

has worked with 15 new businesses and 41 existing businesses, with a total of 490 clients assisted and a \$3.8 million economic impact to Taylor County.

The only one of its kind to be located in a chamber of commerce in the state, the local center offers periodic workshops on subjects ranging from "starting your own business," "how to prepare your own business plan," "small business loans" and more.

The Florida Small Business Development Center Network -- a statewide partnership

between higher education and Floridians -- has been recognized, endorsed and funded as Florida's premier source for small business assistance.

The network serves as the statewide single point of contact for the advancement of an entrepreneurial environment; thus, creating a positive foundation

for the development and growth of micro, small and medium enterprises in Florida.

The SBDC program is the most experienced

economic development network serving Floridians statewide, Taylor said.

For more information, please call 584-5366 or visit www.floridasbdc.com.

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\$19.2 million school to open doors in '19



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An artist rendering, submitted by CRA Architects, depicts what the new \$19.2 million school may look like.



Construction is underway at the site of the new Perry Primary School. In a move to cut costs, a decision was made to move the site closer to the existing Taylor County Elementary School. A retention pond will also be added, shown at the top right.

By SARAH HARDEN

Foundations have been poured and walls are going up at the site of the new \$19.2 million Perry Primary School (PPS), located adjacent to Taylor County Elementary School.

It is a project some 10

years in the making, and construction should be wrapping up next year.

The school will house 788 students, and if all goes according to plan, K-2 students should be walking into the doors of their new school in 2019.

The team tasked with the project has jumped over hurdle after hurdle -- most of them budget related -- but now construction is full-stream ahead.

The old PPS was built in 1975, and is beginning to show signs of its age.

In a presentation to the DOE site review team in 2014, former Superintendent Paul Dyal highlighted a number of maintenance and safety concerns with the old school.

They included: the fact that the district had "outgrown" the school, with nine portable classrooms on site; a lack of an onsite kitchen; the school's open design, which Dyal called "not conducive" for learning; traffic concerns at the parent pick-up lot; and safety concerns over the school having "too many" entrances and exits.

The state's site review team determined Taylor County was "a district in need of a new school" and accepted the request for funding.

Despite the district being ranked number two out of five districts in the state competing for funding, the DOE did not include the project in the 2014 budget recommended to the governor.

Later that year, local officials began lobbying legislative members for their help to secure funding in the 2015 budget. With their support, Taylor County was included in funding under special facilities in the state's budget.

Unfortunately, the funding received for the project was based on 2013-14 building costs, and inflation after two

years had failed to be considered, Dyal explained. So local officials implored legislative members once more to help get funding.

Dyal retired in 2016, handing the reins over to Superintendent Danny Glover Jr., who continued to work with legislators. When Florida Governor Rick Scott released his 2015-16 state budget, Taylor County's proposed new PPS was included.

According to Greg Kelly with Clemons, Rutherford and Associates, Inc. (CRA), the architectural firm hired by the school to design the school, the district is to receive \$5.8 million per year each July for three years from the DOE's Special Facilities Construction Account.

The district is also required to dedicate a portion of its capital improvement tax receipts to the project.

The new school is designed to serve 788 students, a figure determined by DOE, Kelly said. The current PPS serves 626 students, but does so by utilizing multiple portable buildings.

Creative steps were taken in order to get the plans for the new PPS down to a tight guaranteed maximum price (GMP) of just over \$16 million.

Scott Brewer, project executive with Allstate Construction, presented the GMP estimate to school board members at an October 2017 workshop. The total project, including construction, would cost \$19.2 million.

"We have to build what we can for that amount of money," Brewer explained.

The decision was made in the beginning of 2017 to request additional funds from the DOE, however the request was only partially fulfilled.

Just over \$1 million was received. In January 2017, Brewer sat down with

➔ Please see page 15

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Perry-Foley Airport: From World War II base to the future of energy production?

With hundreds of thousands of dollars in upgrades over the past decade, the future of Perry-Foley Airport looks brighter, and it could be even brighter as local officials continue to look into the possibility of siting a solar facility there in the future.

The airport, which dates back to World War II when it was an Army Air Corps training base, has received numerous grants from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), including the resurfacing of its primary runway in 2013.

This year will see improvements to the airfield lighting system, also funded by FAA and FDOT.

In 2016, the Taylor County Commission approved a joint participation agreement with FDOT for the state agency to fund a feasibility study to look at options to construct a solar photovoltaic farm on the airport grounds.

The results of that report were provided to the county in February 2017 by its consultant, AVCON, and the commission unanimously agreed to seek third-party companies interested in constructing and operating a solar facility at the airport.

Through the study, AVCON has indicated

a solar farm could be financially feasible and generate income in areas of the airport which have no uses other than vegetation and will have no impact on proposed development over the next 20 years," County Grants Coordinator Melody Cox said.

The county recently

agreed to seek proposals to harvest 36.5 acres of mature timber, along with 58 acres of miscellaneous timber and covert the property to grassland so it would be viable as a potential site for a solar farm.

A new aircraft hangar, which was designed to be able to house a fixed-based

operator in the future, is located between the existing t-hangars and the Taylor County Fire-Rescue building. The \$425,000 project was 100-percent grant funded, and the county subsequently received a second grant to fund the construction of restrooms for the building, a project

that was completed in 2017.

The facility has already been leased to Georgia-Florida Aviation Search Team (G-Fast), a non-profit company specializing in search and rescue operations.

Perry-Foley Airport's Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS), which was also

recently upgraded, reports wind, ceiling, visibility, temperature, dew point and altimeter settings. Pilots may obtain the weather and flight conditions via radio communications several miles from Perry. The public can access current weather conditions by calling 838-3526.



In 2016, the Taylor County Commission approved a joint participation agreement with FDOT for the state agency to fund a feasibility study to look at options to construction a solar photovoltaic farm on the airport grounds. The county commission recently agreed to seek proposals to harvest 36.5 acres of mature timber along with 58 acres of miscellaneous timber and covert the property to grassland so it would be viable as a potential site for a solar farm.

Preparing the next generation

More than 2,800 students, ranging from pre-kindergarten to high school seniors, attend Taylor County's public schools.

Overseen by the Taylor County School Board and Superintendent Danny Glover Jr., the school district

includes Taylor County Pre-K (221 students), Perry Primary School (626 students), Taylor County Elementary School (719 students), Steinhatchee School (82 students, including Pre-K), Taylor County Middle School (545

students) and Taylor County High School (606 students).

For more information on any of the schools or the district as a whole, visit www.taylor.k12.fl.us.

Additionally, Big Bend Technical College (BBTC), which currently

has a total of 269 students, offers programs in a wide range of career and technical fields, including diesel maintenance, diesel systems, electronic technology, millwright,

nursing assistant, patient care technician, practical

nursing and welding. The school also provides adult education on site as well as at Steinhatchee School.

BBTC can be reached by calling (850) 838-2545 or online at www.bbtc.edu.

In addition to the school district, local private

school, Point of Grace, offers a Christian-based education to kindergarten through 12th grade. The school is accredited by the National Association of Private Schools. For information, visit www.pointofgracechristian.com.

Construction underway despite hurdles

SCHOOL

Continued from page 14

Facilities and Maintenance Coordinator Dan Anderson and the design team with CRA, to begin discussions to "squeeze things down" to fit into the limited budget.

A decision was made to relocate the new school. Original plans had the school being located between Taylor County Elementary School (TCES) and the district's softball fields.

Under the current plan, the school is being constructed closer to TCES. This move helped to reduce square footage and cut site development costs.

The plans were stripped down to achieve a base price, which would include an up-to-code, functioning school, without some of the "bells and whistles" originally included.

Some of the "must-haves" included in the plans were: a courtyard configuration, a standing seam metal roof system consistent with the existing school, a masonry veneer system similar to the existing school, extra roadway to combat traffic build-up, a full service kitchen and an emergency power system.

Glover, along with school board members, have expressed a strong desire to obtain as much local participation in building the school as possible.

"We really worked the local community diligently. I'm proud to say that masonry labor, the whole concrete package and the site work are all local participation, and that is in excess of \$4 million worth of work," Brewer said. "This is all money that will stay within the local community."

Ground broke on the new PPS in November 2017, and construction has steadily

moved forward.

"In building this school we really listened to our parents and community members. We made sure to put in some extra roadway. We have an extra large parking lot for plenty of parking. We also wanted to make sure we build a school that is going to be efficient and conserve energy because we want to remember our taxpayers in this school as well," Glover said during the groundbreaking ceremony.

"I feel like we're going to build a very good school here. We're very excited to break ground and get started."

Since breaking ground, construction has hit a few snags, such as finding veins of clay in the dirt, forcing dirt to be imported to the site, which quickly became expensive.

Also, funding was cut by \$391,000, according to Brewer at a March school board meeting, after the DOE refused to recognize any funding beyond the

"allowable cost per student station."

The "cost per student station" is a formula used by the state to determine funding for school construction projects.

The formula is based on the number of students projected to attend, which poses a problem for small towns with a low population of students. "The formula works better when you have more students," Anderson explained.

Originally, the legislature awarded the project an increase in funding, per their own recommendation, according to Anderson.

However, because the increase was over the cost per student station amount, the DOE refused to allow the additional funds. Therefore \$391,000 was revoked.

Local officials yet again knocked on the door of the legislature, pleading with Senator Montford to help get the money back.

However, at the March board meeting, Brewer gave the news that the money had

not been reinstated.

"We are short \$391,000, in round numbers. We are looking at what the impact is. Sen. Montford said that this has been the toughest session. Nothing from Lake City to Pensacola got funded, basically. All the money went to South Florida, it's been very frustrating," Brewer said.

"We're not cutting any square footage," Brewer said. "We're looking at ways to overcome the deficit. We're close enough that we're going to make this work."

"There may be some cosmetic changes, like the front of the school may be adjusted in appearance," Glover said.


"It will not affect the

education of the kids,"

Anderson explained. The school district and the team tasked with the project continue to move ahead, determined to cross any and every hurdle necessary to make the best school

they can for their students.

"We're going to build the best school we can, and it's going to be a safe school. It's going to be here for a long time. We just want to make sure it's right for the kids," Glover said.



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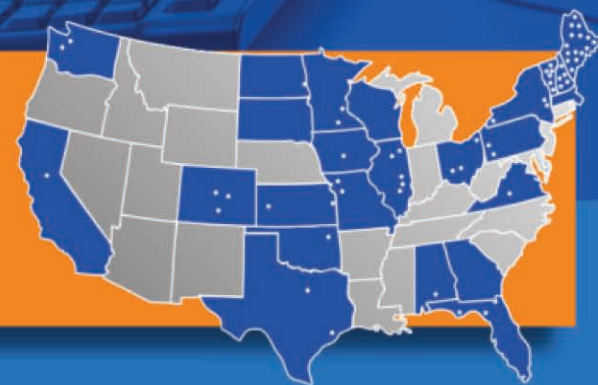
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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

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If you enjoy hunting and fishing, Taylor County has an abundance of the very best outdoor recreational opportunities Florida has to offer for you to enjoy year-round.

Experience the Big Bend Gulf at its finest!

Whether you are airboating on the unspoiled Aucilla River, fishing on the scenic Econfina River, crabbing or birdwatching at Hickory Mound Impoundment, kayaking out of Yates Creek, scalloping from Keaton Beach or steering your boat to fish offshore out of Steinhatchee, exhilarating saltwater adventures await.

Cast a Line: Fabulous Fishing in Taylor County

Taylor County is home to nearly 60 miles of Gulf of Mexico coastline, four rivers, numerous streams and creeks, natural springs, a border on the Apalachee Bay, both natural and artificial saltwater fishing reefs and quick access to the Gulf of Mexico.

Featuring more than 45 miles of undeveloped coastline – the longest such stretch in the State of Florida – it's no surprise that anglers come from all

over to cast a line and reel in trophy-size catches of speckled seatrout, redfish, flounder, Spanish mackerel, cobia, jack crevalle and even an occasional tarpon in our nearshore waters.

Offshore anglers can visit natural live bottom, limerock ledges, natural and artificial reefs to target gag and red grouper, as well as red snapper, amberjack, king mackerel, dolphin, black sea bass, shark, pinkmouth grunt, sheepshead and barracuda.

Saltwater anglers can fish from land, off a 700-foot pier, from your own boat or as a guest on a guided charter to experience some of the finest grass flats fishing in the state of Florida.

The mouth of the **Econfina River** is a great spot for flats fishing on the Gulf. Econfina, a Native American word for "natural bridge" (pronounced ee-con-fee-nee) provides some of the best trout fishing on Florida's west coast, as well as a chance to reel in Spanish mackerel, mullet and redfish.

The **Steinhatchee River** is another great fishing spot, especially during the fall months of October and

November, when spotted seatrout invade the river in huge numbers. The Steinhatchee is a fish-and-people-friendly river, so inexperienced anglers are almost always bound to get lucky. You can usually find out about current "hot spots" by asking around at local marinas and bait shops.

There is always lots of action at the mouth of the **Aucilla River**, as it is home to a variety of habitats, including seagrass beds and oyster bars, which in turn are intermingled with tidal channels and deeper holes. The river is known for some of the best redfish and trout fishing in the state, so often you need do little more than cast out a hook or plug before you're reeling in a boatload of fish. The surrounding flats are teeming with trout, reds, Spanish mackerel, flounder, tarpon and more.

Freshwater fishing in abundance!

The numerous lakes, ponds, rivers and streams in Taylor County hold common species such as largemouth bass, Suwannee

→ Please see page 2



Six-year-old Robby Allen landed his first red fish while fishing in Steinhatchee – a 32-inch keeper! (Photo courtesy of Simply Steinhatchee)



Scalloping has been likened to hunting Easter eggs...underwater.

Scalloping opens early in local coastal waters

Taylor County is one of the few places in Florida where you can participate in Mother Nature's biggest Easter egg hunt – harvesting your own scallops!

You will find scalloping opportunities along our entire coastline, including Keaton Beach, Hagen's Cove and Steinhatchee.

For the second straight

year, scallopers will get the chance to dive in two weeks early off much of Taylor County's coast.

Scallop season runs June 16 through September 10.

In February, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) approved regionally-specific bay scallop season dates for 2018, which

included most of Taylor County and all of Dixie County (including Keaton Beach and the Steinhatchee area) opening two weeks early on June 16 through Sept. 10.

This region includes all state waters east of Rock Island near the mouth of

→ Please see page 2



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Paddling offers great opportunities for both anglers and wildlife viewers. A quiet, observant paddler can enjoy excellent wildlife viewing from an on-the-water perspective.

Be sure to bring along binoculars and a waterproof camera to document your adventures and capture the abundance of wildlife and colorful wildflowers that flourish along our local waterways.

We have paddling trails for all skill levels – ranging from beginners to experts. There are also local outfitters and guides in the area who will be happy to help beginners enjoy a safe paddling experience.

Taylor County is bordered to the east by the tea-colored, tannin-stained waters of the scenic Aucilla River – home of the **Aucilla River Paddling Trail**. Multiple access points and a short stretch of rapids make this iconic river a favorite of local paddlers.

A section of the well-loved **Florida National Scenic Trail**, popular with hikers, meanders along the river banks. You can go

online to order an excellent map to explore the **Rivers of AWE** (Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfina) – a surprisingly wild experience for intermediate and experienced paddlers is the Econfina River, ending at **Econfina River State Park**.

You'll find a coastal paddling adventure with exceptional wildlife viewing and excellent fishing along the **Big Bend Saltwater Paddling Trail** (BBSPT). Suitable for experienced kayakers, it weaves along the Gulf from St. Marks River southeast to the majestic Suwannee River.

Glide over unspoiled habitat preserved by the **Big Bend Aquatic Seagrasses Preserve** -- the foundation of the coastline's exceptional fishing.

Permits are required for primitive campsites accessible by sea kayaks only. Order a guide book and explore tidal creeks and small fishing villages tucked along the coastal marshes, including Spring Warrior, Dekle Beach, Keaton Beach and Steinhatchee.

The spring-fed Fenholloway River and pristine Dallis Creek within the **Big Bend Wildlife Management Area** offer more paddling opportunities.

The state-designated **Steinhatchee River Paddling Trail** begins just below Steinhatchee Falls, a popular picnic spot and historic river crossing where wagon ruts of early settlers are visible.

While enjoying your Taylor County waterways remember to wear your life jacket to stay safe and have fun!



Back to life

After more than a year of planning and countless hours of volunteer effort, the Steinhatchee community celebrated the "re-opening" of Stephens Spring in 2017.

The major restoration project was spearheaded by the Steinhatchee AARP Chapter 4064 and funded through a \$97,000 grant from the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD). The local AARP chapter also provided a \$32,000 in-kind match for the grant.

"This community park brings back the memories of the people who swam in the spring 60 to 70 years ago," Project Manager Stan Ridgeway said.

The spring, also known as Eva Spring, is located near the intersection of Third Avenue North and Stephens Street, and has been in use by the public for nearly a century as a place for gatherings and swimming.

In September 2017, dozens of people arrived to swim and enjoy refreshments during a ribbon-cutting ceremony, with Ridgeway and Project Engineer Neal Aikenhead cutting the ribbon.

The restoration project, which was conducted by Underwater Mechanix Services, LLC, of Jacksonville, included the removal of 200 cubic feet of sediment; stabilization of the spring bank; construction of a storm water retention area; construction of a sod parking area; placement of large rocks around the perimeter of the parking area; and planting of native vegetation in the natural areas disturbed by the construction.

The AARP also erected a privacy fence around the park which will include signs honoring people and families from Steinhatchee's past. According to Ridgeway, two signs have already been installed and three more are in the process of being printed so they can join the others.

"The park is being used extensively by both residents and visitors," Ridgeway said.

Small shells, big economic impact

SCALLOPING

Continued from page 1

the Fenholloway River in Taylor County and north of Alligator Pass Daybeacon

#4 near the mouth of the Suwannee River in Levy County.

The remaining waters off northern Taylor County and westward to

Franklin County (including Carrabelle, Lanark and St. Marks) will be open July 1 through Sept. 24.

This region includes all state waters from the

westernmost point of St. Vincent Island in Franklin County to Rock Island near the mouth of the Fenholloway River in Taylor County.

Dive in: Taylor County has Scallop-Rich Coastal Waters

This unique activity is fun for the whole family and requires minimal resources. It's relatively simple, and after spending an afternoon in the water searching for scallops, you can enjoy the fruits of your labor that evening for supper.

Basically, the only materials you need for scalloping are a snorkel, mask, fins (or water shoes) and a mesh bag to hold your catch.

Once you're geared up, you'll need a boat to take you out, a diver's flag to snorkel in the water and a recreational saltwater fishing license to keep things legal (the license is relatively inexpensive and easy to acquire).

Scallops congregate in shallow water and attempt to hide in manatee and turtle grass. If you see a large group of boats in a certain area, chances are they've found a "sweet spot" with lots of scallops. If you see one scallop shell, there's bound to be more around.

(Hint: Before you head out, ask around to find out

where the hot spots are for the season. Word travels fast in a small town, so most of the locals that hang out around the docks and the marina employees should be in the know.)

Those who aren't yet ready to dive and snorkel can try their luck at Hagen's Cove, where you can wade shallow waters in search of scallops.

After you've pulled in your limit of two gallons of whole scallops, or 1 pint of meat, per person (or the boat limit of 10 gallons of whole scallops or 1/2 gallon of meat), head back to shore to get them cleaned.

Before you begin the task of cleaning your catch, be sure to get some instructions. You might have thought it easy enough to get them out of the water, but it's not so simple getting scallops to come out of their shells.

You will need a knife or other sharp flat object to open the shell, a spoon to scoop out the scallop meat and a container to hold it.

Although it can take up to three hours to clean a boat's limit of scallops, most folks find that the time passes much faster with a little music, a few cool drinks and lots of good friends in the shade.

Should you take the easy way out and miss all the excitement, there are usually a few locals hanging around the docks or marinas that will do your dirty work for you for a small fee.

Whatever means you choose, the outcome will be the same – a delicious meal of succulent scallops that you caught yourself.

Small Shells Have a BIG Economic Impact!
The abundant scallop grounds off Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach are no longer a secret, as thousands of people flock to the Taylor County coast each summer.

Preliminary results from the most recent 2017 season indicates visiting scallopers had a huge economic impact on local businesses.

Researchers with the Taylor County Extension Office, FWC and the University of Florida undertook a survey effort at both the Keaton Beach and Steinhatchee public boat ramps throughout scallop season.

Based on the responses, visiting scallopers spent between \$90 (Keaton Beach public boat ramp) to \$250 (Steinhatchee) per day locally during their visit.

Although the final economic estimates are still being calculated, the economic impact from scalloping will ultimately fall somewhere between \$3.5 million and \$5 million.

Taylor County is also working hard to make sure scalloping remains a sustainable resource.

Local County Marine Extension Agent Victor Blanco is working with the Nature Coast Biological Station to restore seagrass beds, and with FWC biologists to find local volunteers willing to hang scallop spawning and monitoring cages from their private docks or place them in the Gulf to help maintain and restore scallop populations.

If you are interested, contact Blanco at (850) 838-3508 or e-mail BayScallops@MyFWC.com. Learn more about bay scallop regulations at MyFWC.com/Fishing, click on "Saltwater Fishing," "Recreational Regulations" and "Bay Scallops."

Like to hunt?

GREAT OUTDOORS

Continued from page 1

bass, bluegill, shellcracker, catfish, crappie and redbellies.

Hunting opportunities abound!

From September to April each year, hunters have ample opportunity to track and take whitetail deer and wild hogs, in addition to smaller game like duck, quail, dove, rabbit, squirrel and turkey.

More than 70,000 acres are open to the public for hunting each year with the proper permits, and Taylor County offers several of the largest tracts of private hunting clubs in the Southeast.

Birdwatching

Loon, heron, pelicans, eagles and ospreys are just some of the bountiful birding opportunities along our pristine coast.

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PLAY BALL!

Local leagues offer softball, baseball, football, soccer, basketball and more!

Several organizations in Taylor County offer a variety of recreational opportunities for both youngsters and adults.

The Taylor County Recreation Department runs programs year-round, including baseball and softball leagues for boys and girls, ages 5-18.

The Boys & Girls Club offers youth football and cheerleading through its War Eagles' program, with more than 75 youth participating each season.

The county also offers adult softball for both men and women on the numerous ball fields and parks throughout the community.

For more information on recreation leagues or the sports complex, contact Taylor County Recreation Coordinator Pat Dew at (850) 584-3029. As for the War Eagles, visit "Taylor County War Eagles" on Facebook.

Hundreds of youngsters are also involved in the

Perry Soccer Association youth league each spring and fall. Leagues are divided by age groups starting with five-year-olds. For more

information, visit "Perry Soccer Association - PSA" on Facebook.

Many of the programs take place at the Taylor

County Sports Complex, which is one of the finest such facilities in North Florida.

This 74-acre site is

situated just north of town on U.S. 19 among majestic oaks and a tranquil creek. The complex offers several recreational opportunities

ranging from baseball to a scenic paved walking trail.

Facilities include: baseball fields (2-330 feet and 2-205 feet); soccer fields (3 regulation size, 3 youth size); basketball courts (2); tennis courts (2); playground (2); paved walking trail and five picnic pavilions.

The latest additions to the facility include shade coverings for the playgrounds as well as adult exercise equipment along the walking trail.

Taylor County has an active 4-H program that offers a variety of activities for kids, including summer camps. The 4-H program can be reached by calling (850) 833-3508.

The Upward Basketball League keeps kids and adults busy during the winter months. For more information, visit "Upward Sports Perry" on Facebook.

The Boys & Girls Club offers year-round programs and maintains a membership of more than 500.



The 74-acre Taylor County Sports Complex features baseball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, a walking trail, two playgrounds and five picnic pavilions.

...or Tee Off

Thanks to many recent and ongoing improvements, Perry Golf & Country Club (PGCC) continues to offer golfers one of the most challenging and affordable small courses in North Florida.

Originally opened in 1952, the nine-hole course measures 3,055 yards from the longest tees and plays to a challenging par 70, featuring three par fives, five par threes and 10 par four holes.

Fairways are lined by towering pines, granddaddy oaks and numerous second-growth trees. Well-bunkered and recently-refurbished greens are not only beautiful, but can be extremely challenging due to numerous undulations and subtle breaks.

In addition to a driving



range, practice chipping area and putting green, PGCC offers rental carts and cart sheds and recently installed "senior tees" for older players to make the course more fun for the 65-plus crowd.

The semi-private facility is open year-round, and guests are welcome.

The course is located about five miles south of Perry off U.S. 98 west at 4991 Golf Course Road. Call (850) 584-3590 for more information or to reserve a tee time.

Your local forecast... nothing but blue skies!

While the rest of the country remained in deep-freeze well into spring, Perry and Taylor County enjoyed a relatively mild winter in comparison. Cool mornings quickly gave way to bright skies and mild temperatures.

The annual average temperature for the county hovers around 70 degrees. Though the summers can be hot, the Gulf of Mexico runs the entire length of the county, providing cooling breezes for the hottest months and moderating ones in the cooler months.

According to national climate data, Perry receives an average of 57 inches of rain per year. The wettest year on record was 1956, when the area was bogged down with 91.6 inches of rain, and the driest was 2000 with only 35.2 inches recorded.

In addition to 50 miles of coastline, Taylor County also has an abundance of springs, lakes and rivers.

Steinhatchee River Chamber of Commerce

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Rosehead Park



(Photos, clockwise) Rosehead Park features boardwalks, a walking trail, splash pad and a lighted lake fountain. Decorative signs posted throughout the park direct visitors. Community events are held on an almost monthly basis, ranging from fireworks shows, movie screenings, fundraisers and community yard sales. The picnic pavilions are often filled with birthday parties or family reunions.



A lake, a park & so much MORE

Rosehead Park was conceived as more than merely a place for families and friends to gather for recreational fun.

The visionaries behind it saw the park as a key element in the City of Perry's extensive downtown revitalization economic development initiative – one that would attract not only visitors to Perry's historic downtown, but also more businesses and jobs.

Their hope was that it would also be a valuable tool in recruiting major employers to locate in Taylor County.

More than five years ago, the park was simply a series of lines drawn on paper. Today, it is a vibrant addition to downtown Perry that spans three city blocks.

On Jefferson Street, visitors can seek shelter under a Grand Pavilion,

cool off at the Splash Pad and watch their children scamper over a playground set that is not only wheelchair accessible, but can accommodate up to 125 children at once.

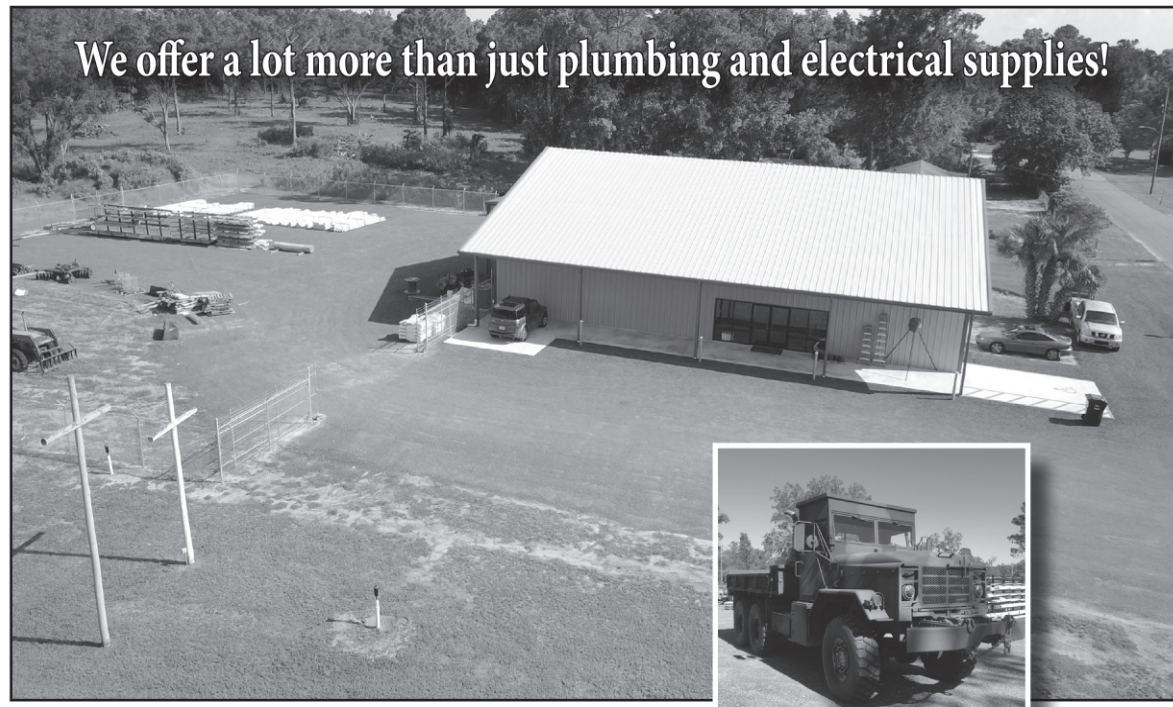
A short stroll across the street reveals an amphitheatre equipped with a state-of-the-art sound and light system and a walking trail that encircles Rosehead Lake. Picnic facilities, a gazebo, benches and bathrooms accent the greenway.

An antique fountain greets visitors from the Washington Street entrance, and a fountain placed in the middle of the lake puts on a nightly light show.

One street over features a dog park and springhead. Furry friends are welcome, and the adjacent park is a perfect spot to escape the hustle and bustle of a hectic

schedule. The park is home to a number of events throughout the year, ranging from fireworks on New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July to family reunions and community fund-raisers.

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Gulf Gateway

Since the Steinhatchee public boat ramp opened during the summer of 2011, it has seen steady use from both local residents and tourists. The 5.2-acre property includes the riverfront marina site along with the parcel north of Riverside Drive between 2nd Street East and 1st Street East, which now includes a parking lot, picnic pavilion and soon-to-be completed restrooms.

2018 Fishing Tournaments

- March 10 Elite Redfish Challenge/Florida Pro Redfish Series
- March 24 Steinhatchee Community Tournament
- March 31 Ira Carter Lodge #150 Inshore Fishing Tournament
- April 7 Hooked on Heroes
- April 14 Kim Smith's Reeling for Rescues
- April 14 Special Olympics Fishing Tournament
- April 21 Fishing for Gold
- April 28 UF Health Shands Fishing For Kids
- May 5 Optimist Club Saltwater Tournament
- May 5 Florida Lure Anglers Fishing Tournament
- May 12 Elite Redfish Challenge/Florida Pro Redfish Series
- May 19 Greg Bishop Memorial Fishing Tournament
- May 26 Cerberus Fishing Tournament
- May 26-Sept. 3 CCA Star Tournament
- June 1-2 Reeling for Kids Tournament
- June 9 Steinhatchee NautiGirls Tournament
- Sept. 8 Lady Raider's Inshore Tournament
- Sept. 15 Hooked on Heroes
- Sept. 22 Elite Redfish Challenge/Florida Pro Redfish Series
- Sept. 29 "Trash Tournament"
- Oct. 6 Cerberus Fishing Tournament

(Photo courtesy of Simply Steinhatchee)



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Birds of a feather flock here!

Get out your life lists! In Taylor County, part of Florida's Nature Coast, birders have the opportunity to view numerous species in a variety of habitats.

So that you don't spend the majority of your vacation tracking migration patterns, we've compiled a list of some of our best birding spots.

About 25 miles west of Perry is the **Hickory Mound Impoundment**, part of the **Big Bend Wildlife Management Area** that is home to green- and blue-winged teals, northern pintails, buffleheads, hooded and red-breasted mergansers, common goldeneyes and many more.

Besides the ever-present wading birds, there have also been sightings of bald eagles, ospreys, Mississippi kites and other raptors.

Along the coast, marshlands and sandy flats at **Adams Beach** provide a home for numerous seaside sparrows and the occasional clapper rail and Wilson's plover.

Farther down the coast is **Keaton Beach**, where you're apt to see a variety of shorebirds in the bay. A good viewing spot is at the public park at the end of the road heading to the beach.

South of Keaton Beach is **Hagen's Cove**, which has been called one of the "premier shorebird locations on Florida's Gulf Coast." Look for signs on CR 361. The best viewing can be found in the observation tower, which provides spectacular views of the surrounding pine islands, beaches and mud flats.



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Entire litters of puppies are often transported to area rescues.



Forest Capital Humane Society's thrift store is located at the corner of Jefferson Street and Church Street.

Pet Friendly Care for animals in need

Taylor County's four-legged residents have four volunteer advocate groups working for their benefit.

Volunteers organized the Forest Capital Humane Society in 2015 and the group continues to develop a thriving network of foster and rescue supporters.

Proceeds from its "Second Chance Thrift Shop," located at the intersection of Jefferson Street and Church, supports its rescue efforts.

Donations, and volunteers, are always welcome.

The Forest Capital Humane Society may be contacted at (850) 371-4120 or (850) 556-6460 or by emailing admin@fchstc.org.

Helping Hands of the Shelter, founded in 2006, is a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the adoption rate of shelter animals, educating residents about animal overpopulation and raising awareness of spay/neutering efforts.

The non-profit group holds fund-raisers throughout the year, including discount vaccination clinics (in conjunction with the local veterinary association), a Pet Parade and yard sales.

Steinhatchee volunteers supports P.A.W.S. (Pets Are Worth Spaying), a non-profit organization focused on pet spay/neuter efforts in the coastal community.

Hearts for Hometown Dogs (HFHD) may be the new kid on the block when it comes to animal advocacy, but it is making strides daily.

Last year, the group facilitated the transport of nearly 1,000 dogs, cats, puppies and kittens from the local animal shelter to no-kill rescues throughout Florida.

Volunteer "freedom drivers" make runs almost weekly transporting adoptable pets.

For more information on HFHD, visit their organization page on Facebook.

Civic PRIDE

Local organizations have a long-standing tradition of serving others

Civic-minded volunteers are a driving force in Perry and Taylor County.

Service organizations like the Perry Women's Club, Rotary, Optimist Club and Kiwanis each have a long and proud history of working for the betterment of the community. Many support scholarship efforts benefitting local students and are always ready to lend a helping hand when needs arise.

Getting involved is easy – just reach out to any club member and they'll gladly welcome you to the group.

Active clubs and their meeting schedules include:

- AARP: last Wednesday of each month, 10 a.m. at the Perry Shrine Club.
- Kiwanis Club: every Wednesday, noon, Perry Elks Lodge.
- NAACP: first Sunday of the month, 5 p.m., at Jerkins Community Center.
- Optimist Club: every Thursday, noon, at Mama's Italian.
- Perry Garden Club: each third Wednesday, 10 a.m.; club building is located in Forest Capital Park.
- Perry Elks Lodge: each second and fourth Tuesday, 7 p.m.
- Perry Lodge #187: each first and third Tuesday, 6 p.m., Masonic Hall.

• Perry Masonic Lodge #123: each first and third Monday, 7:30 p.m.

• Perry Shrine Club: every fourth Thursday at 7 p.m. The club house located on Courtney Road off Highway 19 North.

• Perry Women's Club: each second Wednesday, noon; the club building is located on North Jefferson Street.

• Rotary Club: every Tuesday, noon, at Holiday Inn Express.

• Taylor County Leadership Council: each second and fourth Friday, 7 p.m., Jerkins Community Center.

• Vogue XIII: every Monday, 7:30 p.m. Please call (850) 584-2404 for location.

Veteran organizations also take the lead in the community: • AMVETS Post 20 & AMVETS Riders: AMVETS, last Saturday of the month, 9 a.m.; Riders, second Friday, at 10 a.m.

• American Legion Post #291 (Steinhatchee): every second Thursday, 7 p.m.

• American Legion Post #96: first Tuesday, 7 p.m., American Legion Hall on Center Street.

• Sons of Confederate Veterans: fourth Thursday at North Orange Street. Please call (850) 584-5725 for times.

• VFW Post #9225: every second Tuesday, 7 p.m., American Legion building.



This year will mark the 63rd annual Florida Forest Festival. Taylor County's signature festival recognizes the community's forestry industry, and volunteers work to make sure that each event is "a memory in the making." The festival's annual Kids Parade is a family favorite. (Above) 2017 Miss Florida Forest Festival Rylee Hudson joined Little King Davis Read and Little Queen Madison O'Neal in leading the parade through downtown Perry.

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Saturday - 7:00a.m.-4:30p.m.

'Festival Capital of the Big Bend'

While Taylor County holds the title "Tree Capital of the South," it also boasts a reputation as "Festival Capital of the Big Bend." With four major festivals filling the calendar from February to October, the next great festival adventure is always only a few months away.

The coastal community of Steinhatchee kicks off the year with its annual Fiddler Crab Festival held every third weekend in February. Now in its 10th year, the event attracts more than 10,000 visitors for three days of tournament fishing, fiddler crab racing, live entertainment and its signature "Swamp Water Cook Off."

A parade, poker run and river tours, coupled with miles of arts and craft vendors lining the streets, round out the schedule. For more information about the event, visit the Steinhatchee River Chamber of Commerce's website at steinhatcheechamber.com. The 16th annual Florida State Bluegrass Festival has become a leading event not only in North Florida, but in bluegrass circles across the south. Held the first weekend of April at Forest Capital Park, the event welcomes spring with three action-packed days filled with live music from nationally recognized bluegrass artists, a chili cook-off, arts and crafts, food vendors and a Kidz Fun Zone. MoonPie princesses and Bluegrass sweethearts (ranging in age from 5 to 9) preside over the festivities. This year's event will be held April 5-7. Admission is free for all Taylor County residents. Three-day passes for non-residents is \$20 (pre-sale). For more information, please contact the Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce at (850) 584-5366. Every fourth weekend in September brings the "Smokin' in the Pines" festival, two days of BBQ contests and live music. Formerly the Southern Pines Blues & BBQ Festival, the event was revamped to broaden to include Southern Rock and Outlaw Country sounds. Coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce, the festival awards more than \$10,000 in prizes during its BBQ competition. The granddaddy of all Taylor County festivals -- the Florida Forest Festival -- reigns supreme in October. The month-long salute to the community's forestry industry features pageants, parades, heavy equipment shows, fireworks, live music and more. ➔ Please see page 7

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BIRDS
Continued from page 5

This recreation area abounds with shorebirds and wading birds year-round, including sandpipers, dunlin, whimbrel, reddish egrets, plovers, marbled godwits and many more of our feathered friends.

Forgot your binoculars? Don't let your feathers get ruffled! A variety of birds roost along the Steinhatchee River that are easily seen and identified without the aid of binoculars. You're likely to encounter egrets, blue herons, swallow-tailed kites and many more species up close and personal.

Historical GEM

One of Taylor County's most recognizable historical landmarks, the Cracker Homestead at Forest Capital State Park, received a major facelift in 2016 and 2017, ensuring the 154-year-old structure will be preserved for future generations. When Wiley Whiddon built his home in the wild woods of Taylor County in 1864, he had no way of knowing that the building would become a focal point of Florida's first state museum dedicated to the forestry industry. The Whiddon homestead – now known as the "Cracker Homestead" – is a local and state effort to pay homage to Taylor County's heritage as the "Tree Capital of the South." The house (aerial photo, right) has two rooms separated by a breezeway. Porches run the front and back of its 60-foot length.



Need info? Call 584-TREE

FESTIVAL CAPITAL

Continued from page 6

entertainment and the "World's Largest Free Fish Fry."

An army of volunteers,

overseen by a dedicated board of directors, coordinates dozens of events and thousands of details.

Now in its 63rd year, the festival's "Big Day" is

held each fourth Saturday in October. Additional information on the event is available through the festival office, which can be reached by calling (850) 584-TREE (8733).



Whether it's Bluegrass Sweethearts handing out MoonPies, children cheering on fiddler crabs in races or students wide-eyed as lumberjacks pit their skills against one another, the goal of every festival is the same...to make each moment a memory in the making.



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ANNUAL EVENTS

February: Fiddler Crab Festival
Annually, On Presidents' Day

April: Florida State Bluegrass Festival & Chili Cook-off
Annually, 1st Weekend in April

June 16 - September 10: 2017 Scallop Season

September 22 - Smokin' in the Pines BBQ Festival
4th Saturday

October: Florida Forest Festival
Annually, 4th Saturday in October

Keaton Beach visitors now have another coastal park to enjoy



Keaton Beach Coastal Park

Hodges Park

Ten years after Taylor County acquired the land to construct the Keaton Beach Coastal Park (inset above), which includes overflow parking for the adjacent Keaton Beach Public Boat Ramp, work is just one step away from being complete. The most recent additions, finished in 2017, include a playground and walking trail. Other amenities include restrooms, bat houses, nature observation deck, butterfly garden and a 2.4-mile paved walking trail from Keaton Beach Coastal Park to Dark Island. The improvements are part of the county's 10-year management plan with the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) Program for the park. The county acquired the 44-acre site in 2008 through a \$3 million FCT grant and is now one step away from satisfying the terms of the grant contract. According to County Grants Coordinator Melody Cox, the only outstanding requirement is the installation of one additional form of recreation. Meanwhile, Hodges Park (main photo above) is awaiting FEMA reimbursement funds to repair and replace the 700-foot fishing pier damaged during a hurricane last year.

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New Shady Grove Community Center

After two years of planning, the Shady Grove Community Center is now close to becoming a finished reality. The county commission held a groundbreaking ceremony for the building on Dec. 14, 2017. The \$324,520 construction project was awarded to Michael Lynn Construction. Once completed, the "Cracker-style" facility will be available not only for Shady Grove community events, but also to residents of the entire county. The county-owned facility -- located at the southwest corner of the Shady Grove Park property bordering Alton Wentworth Road -- features a kitchen, stage and room for such events as family reunions, weddings, receptions, plays, sings, auctions, business meetings, etc. The facility also features a playground (above) and a wrap-around porch to socialize or just watch the children play.

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If you like the feel and smell of a newspaper, Perry Newspapers, Inc., can accommodate your need for local news twice a week with deliveries through the mail.

If you prefer reading the news at your computer, e-editions of the **Taco Times** (Wednesday edition) and **Perry News-Herald** (Friday edition) are exact digital duplications of the print editions for online reading via computers or your smart phone.

E-editions can be found by clicking the "E-Edition" tab at the top of the Perry Newspapers, Inc., website: www.perrynewspapers.com. In addition to current issues, back copies are also available.

E-editions are available to all existing and future subscribers, who can request access to the e-edition through a form on the website at no additional charge.

The website content (excluding the e-editions)

is available to everyone.

However you prefer your newspaper, Perry Newspapers, Inc., delivers county-wide coverage of governmental meetings, school activities, sports, weddings and events of community concern.

The newspapers have a paid circulation of more than 5000.

News items for publication should be sent to newsdesk@perrynewspapers.com.

You may contact the newspaper office at (850) 584-5513 Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. To transmit a FAX, please call (850) 838-1566.

The newspaper's physical address is 123 S. Jefferson St. in the downtown district.

The **Taco Times** was founded in 1963. The **Perry News-Herald** was established in 1889. Together, the award-winning publications have a combined 184 years of covering Taylor County.



Welcome Home

Habitat celebrates milestone dedication, looks to Steinhatchee for next project

Taylor County's Habitat for Humanity celebrated a milestone moment for its 2017-18 year on March 17, holding dedication ceremonies for its first newly-completed home in more than a decade.

Habitat supporters gathered at the site to "shower" the new homeowner with a wealth

of well wishes. The family contributed 400 "sweat equity" hours toward construction of the home, working alongside a brigade of volunteers. "Habitat for Humanity exists to uplift people in the community -- our community -- by building decent, affordable housing in partnership with them.

In doing so, it builds unity through a shared concern that many people endure deplorable living conditions. Following the teachings of Jesus, we practice compassion, service and love. We seek to meet people where they are and understand and, at the same time, help them to acquire the skills to sustain home ownership in the future," said Executive Director Patricia Meyrin of the program, which "recharged" its organization about three years ago.

"Partnership is the key. Our board of directors has worked to build a sustainable organization that can mobilize resources and steward them faithfully for the purpose of making an impact on the community in the area of making decent affordable home ownership more available," she said.

"It is all about partnerships -- with the homeowners, local businesses, the community and volunteers. And we stay with our families through the family nurturing program, working with them to be part of the community and to be a responsible homeowner.

"The homes are not free -- the families have to meet a very specific criteria in order to qualify and must have the ability to make timely (interest-free) mortgage payments," she added.



Taylor County Habitat for Humanity broke ground on its first home project in 15 years on Dec. 2, 2016. Just over a year later, on March 17, 2018, the group held dedication ceremonies for the completed home. Looking to keep the momentum going, plans are already underway for the next build -- which will take place in Steinhatchee. Applications for qualifying families are currently being accepted. For more information or to learn about volunteer opportunities, please contact the Habitat office at (850) 584-3838.

Moving ahead in 2018, Habitat is now accepting applications for its next home build, which is planned to take place in Steinhatchee.

Applications are available at the Steinhatchee branch of Citizens State Bank and the Habitat for Humanity office located on

Drew Street in downtown Perry.

The following criteria is considered when a Habitat family is selected:

- Need for adequate shelter due to substandard housing.
- Financial ability for a family to re-pay the zero percent interest loan.

• Willingness of the family to partner with Habitat for building the home.

For additional information, please contact the local Habitat office at (850) 584-3838.

The office is open during limited hours throughout the week at its 203 E. Drew Street location.



Homeowner Angela Blair (above) and her son, Brendon Newham, contributed more than 400 hours of "sweat equity" during the construction of their new home.

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TAYLOR COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Where the *Past* and *Present* Meet

The Taylor County Historical Society has been the leading advocate in preserving and protecting one of the county's greatest resources – its vibrant past – for nearly five decades.

Its two-story museum, housed in a stately century-old former bank, has a collection as varied and diverse as the community itself.

From a hand-made Civil War-era Masonic ceremonial apron to a mural that once hung in the state Capitol, each of the items on display has a rich and storied past.

"Our goal is to bridge the past and present," President J.T. Davis said.

Recent additions to the collection include a large portfolio of photos and documents related to the Brooks-Scanlon and Foley mills as well as the town of Foley.

Outreach events have included a Heritage Pageant, Downtown Ghost Tours, document and photo "Scan Days" and community yard sales.

One of its largest events is the "Rocking New Year's Eve" party held each Dec. 31 at Rosehead Park, complete with fireworks.

The first celebration was organized in 2016 to commemorate the county's 160th founding anniversary.

In 2017, the Society joined forces with the Chamber of Commerce to coordinate the annual Downtown Christmas Open House & Christmas Parade. The Society's downtown museum was Santa's official "stop," where children were able to share their Christmas "wish lists" with Old St. Nick himself.

Plans are already underway for this year's celebration, Davis said.

Coming up for the group is its annual awards banquet planned in May.

Volunteers are also working on the 21st installment of the "They Were Here Series," which serves as a memorial collection filled with individual profiles.

Membership is only \$15 per year. The program year runs from September through May, with monthly meetings.

More information is available online at www.taylorcountyhistory.com and on the group's Facebook page.



The Historical Society was the official "stop" for Santa at the Downtown Open House.

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Fireworks lit the skies over Rosehead Park in March. The display was part of a "Family Fun Night" hosted by the Historical Society.



A film crew profiled several local residents, including Izell Montgomery (left) and Sarah Hall, while filming a historical documentary here.

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Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce

2018 MEMBER DIRECTORY

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850-584-4460
Jim Davis, CPA
Mr. Jim Davis
1733 Old Plank Road
Crawfordville, FL 32327
850-224-2087
Doris Ernestine Sparkman CPA
213 E. Green St.
Perry, FL 32347
850-584-2500

Adoption

Partnership for Strong Families
5950 NW 1st Place
Gainesville, FL 32607
352-244-1634

Advertising

Lamar Advertising
4706 Capital Circle SW
Tallahassee, FL 32310
850-877-4184

Air Conditioning/ Heating

Advanced Refrigeration & A/C
520 W Hampton Springs Ave
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-3626

Lee Heating & A/C

3495 Boyd Rd.
Perry, FL 32347
850-584-6207

McGuire Heating & A/C

3480 Carlton Rd.
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-6787

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American Aluminum Accessories
3291 US 19 South
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-3969

CURT Group

606 Industrial Park Dr.
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-3448

Gulf Coast Fabricators

3482 Hwy. 19 South
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-5979

RDS Manufacturing

300 Industrial Dr
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-6898

Animal Rescue

Subway Dixon Rescue Fund
3364 Foley Cutoff Rd.
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-2944

Apartments

Woodridge Apartments
709 W. Church St.
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-5669

Attorney

Angela-Ball Attorney
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Perry, FL 32347
850-584-8960

Bishop Law Firm

PO Box 167
Perry, FL 32348
850-584-6113

Curtis Law Firm, PA.

103 N. Jefferson Street
Perry, FL 32347
850-584-5299

G. Cline Moore Attorney at Law

107 East Green St.
Perry, FL 32347
850-584-3300

Marie A. Mattox PA

310 E. Bradford Rd.
Tallahassee, FL 32303
850-383-4800

Smith & Smith

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Perry, FL 32348
850-584-3812

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Perry, FL 32348
850-584-5434

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O'Reilly Auto Parts
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Perry, FL 32348
850-584-4111

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Motorvations FL

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Perry, FL 32348

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850-584-6221

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850-584-2118

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Perry, FL 32348

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Yarbrough Tire Company

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Perry, FL 32347

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850-584-2057

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850-584-4411

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850-584-5977

Jacks Boats & Trailers

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850-584-2162

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Book Mart

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Perry, FL 32348

850-584-4969

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Payroll Services

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& Payroll Services, LLC

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850-843-0259

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Hugger's How 2 Have Fun Rentals

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Perry, FL 32348

850-584-4759

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Proper

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Perry, FL 32348

850-838-6282

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850-584-3519

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Comcast Cablevision

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Perry, FL 32347

850-584-4249

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850-295-1632

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KOA Campground

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Perry, FL 32347

850-584-3221

Old Pavilion RV Park & Camp

20771 Keaton Beach Dr.

Perry, FL 32348

850-578-2484

Piddlers Pointe RV

Resort & Campground

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Steinhatchee, FL 32359

352-498-5979

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850-843-4162

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Perry, FL 32347

850-584-2532

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850-584-1121

Chamber of Commerce

Madison Chamber of Commerce

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Madison, FL 32341

850-973-2788

Monticello Chamber of Commerce

420 W. Washington St.

Monticello, FL 32344

850-997-5552

Perry-Taylor County

Chamber of Commerce

428 N. Jefferson St.

Perry, FL 32347

850-584-5366

Steinhatchee River Chamber

1013 Riverside Dr. East

Steinhatchee, FL 33062

352-356-8185

Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce

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Tallahassee, FL 32302

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Guardian ad Litem

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Live Oak, FL 32064

850-948-2741

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Healthy Start Coalition

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Greenville, FL 32331

850-948-2741

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Perry, FL 32347

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Evangel Christian Fellowship

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Perry, FL 32347

850-838-3222

Cornerstone Community Church

PO Box 272

Perry, FL 32347

901-378-9812

Civic Organization

AARP Chapter #4033

5183 Woods Creek Rd.

Perry, FL 32347

850-584-2690

Apalachee Center

Perry knows how to have a frightfully good time

Watch out for goblins! The fifth annual "Trunk or Treat" Halloween extravaganza is shaping up to be "spooktacular."

Last year's event saw thousands of costumed children and adults alike roaming downtown Perry in search of a bounty of

treats. More than two dozen "trunks" lined the courthouse square on Jefferson, Main and Green streets.

A number of churches and organizations also held organized events.

The Perry/Taylor County Chamber of Commerce

annual costume and pumpkin-carving contest anchored the north end of

Jefferson. This year's event is planned Halloween night, Oct. 31.



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Our 60 bed facility is conveniently located in Mayo, Florida. This premier 4 star skilled nursing and rehabilitation center will serve all of Lafayette and its surrounding counties. Lafayette Nursing & Rehabilitation Center specializes in short-term rehabilitation such as orthopedic recovery, post surgical care and skilled nursing services. In addition, there is private rehabilitation unit dedicated to our rehabilitation patients that are here for just a short-term rehab.

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One of Taylor County's fastest-growing events, the "Trunk or Treat" Halloween extravaganza is drawing thousands of people to Downtown Perry each year.

Find books & more at Taylor Co. library



The library's Summer Reading Program offers weekly programs through much of June and July.

While the Taylor County Public Library has a wide selection of books for children and adults, the services it provides to the community go well beyond reading material. The library's collection also includes periodicals, reference materials, DVDs and more.

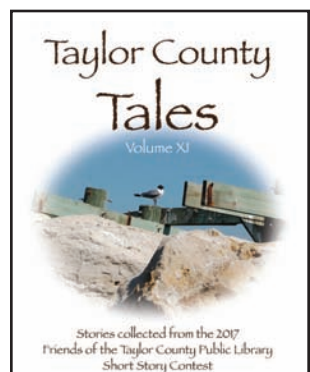
In 2010, the county joined the Three Rivers Regional Library System, connecting the library with those in Dixie, Gilchrist and Lafayette counties.

The membership allows local library patrons with active memberships to request books from any of the libraries' collections, as well as check out or return materials from any location.

Additionally, patrons have access to a collection of free e-books and audio books online through Overdrive, which can be found through the Three Rivers website: <http://3riverslibrary.com>.

Taylor County Public Library has 14 public access computers available for using the internet, doing research, word processing, spreadsheets and creating power point presentations.

The library and its programs are supported by the Friends of the Taylor County Public Library, which meets the last Monday of each month, with guest speakers including local and regional authors and artists.



The winning entries in the Friends of the Taylor County Short Story Contest are collected into a commemorative booklet which is available for purchase at the library.

The Friends also host an annual short story contest for writers of all ages. The deadline is in late April each year. The full rules can be found at the library or on the Friends' Facebook page.

The library's hours are Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and Sunday, closed. It is located at 403 N. Washington St. and can be reached at (850) 838-3512.

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Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce

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MEMBER DIRECTORY

Continued from page 11

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Tree Capital Credit Union
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 1709 S Jefferson St.
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 850-584-3981
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Big Bend Service Unit
 2655 Capital Circle NE Suite 7
 Tallahassee, FL 32308
 850-942-0671
Education - College
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 325 NW Turner Davis Dr.
 Madison, FL 32340
 850-973-1613
Saint Leo University Madison
 126 SW Sumatra Ave. Suite A
 Madison, FL 32340
 850-973-3356
Education - Public Schools
Taylor County School District
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-838-2500
Education - Training
Character Education NOW, LLC
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-843-0646
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Big Bend Technical College
 3233 S. Byron Butler Pkwy.
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 Tallahassee, FL 32301
 850-342-2248

Tri-County Electric Cooperative
 2862 West US 90
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-584-3422
Dekle Beach Fishing Charters
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 Perry, FL 32348
 850-838-6870
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 352-318-2138
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 Perry, FL 32348
 850-584-9145
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 Steinhatchee, FL 32359
 352-222-4085
Something's Fishy Charters
 PO Box 814
 Steinhatchee, FL 32359
 352-356-2554
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-584-2425
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-843-5487
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Forestry Company
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 Perry, FL 32347
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-838-2929
Burns Funeral Home

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 Perry, FL 32348
 850-584-2222
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 850-584-5212
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 Perry, FL 32348
 850-584-3590
Government
North Central Florida Regional Planning Council
 2009 NW 67th Place
 Gainesville, FL 32653
 352-955-2200
Representative Halsey Beshears
 2191 S. Jefferson St.
 Monticello, FL 32344
 850-251-1929
Taylor County Emergency Management
 591 E. US Highway 27
 Perry, FL 32347
 850-838-3575
Taylor Co. Supervisor of Elections
 PO Box 1060
 Perry, FL 32348
 850-838-3515
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 1224 N Peacock Ave.
 Perry, FL 32347
 850-223-8387
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-584-7382
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-584-2411
Steinhatchee Ace Hardware
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 Steinhatchee, FL 32359
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New Deminions Health & Fitness
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Davita
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 Tallahassee, FL 32308
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Health - Wellness
First Fitness
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 850-843-0071

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 Perry, FL 32348
 850-584-9200
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 Perry, FL 32347
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Covenant Hospice
 Ms. Lori Fitzpatrick
 1921 Capital Circle NE
 Tallahassee, FL 32308
 850-575-4998
Hospital
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 333 N Byron Butler Pkwy.
 Perry, FL 32347
 850-584-0800
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 Perry, FL 32348
 850-223-3000
Holiday Inn Express
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 Perry, FL 32348
 850-584-3200
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 850-223-0003
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 3949 Contractor Rd.
 Perry, FL 32347
 850-584-1955
Insurance
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 Perry, FL 32347
 850-584-3160
Brad Burns Insurance
 112 W. Green St.
 Perry, FL 32348
 850-584-3050
Lilliott Insurance Agency
 Ms. Lauren Lilliott
 1306B S. Jefferson St.
 Perry, FL 32348
 850-223-3300
Perry Insurance Agency
 1000A S. Jefferson St.
 Perry, FL 32348
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 850-584-7732
Swann Insurance Agency
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 850-584-5800
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 850-223-0999
Jewelry & Accessories
Paparazzi Accessories
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 850-843-5550
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Mitch's Gold & Diamonds, Inc.
 267 Ring Power Rd.
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 850-584-5200
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CareerSource North Florida
 705 E. Base St.
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 866-212-9618
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 Tallahassee, FL 32304
 800-770-4922
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Dead Man's Float Kayak Rentals
 15729 Beach Road
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 805-816-5742
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 850-584-2250
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Taylor County Tourism Development Council

Festivals, eco-tourism inject \$16 million into local economy

Local festivals, cultural events and eco-tourism highlighting Taylor County's pristine natural resources helped generate an estimated \$16 million dollars in economic impact for Taylor County last year, according to Tourism Development Council (TDC) officials.

Taylor County's tourism development tax generated \$440,845 for the county in 2017, according to Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Development Executive Director Dawn Taylor. That total was a 6.6-percent increase over 2016, Taylor told county commissioners during a Feb. 5 presentation.

The local option "Tourist Development Tax" – also referred to as "tourist tax"

or "bed tax" – is a 5% charge on the revenue from rentals or room rates paid

for period of six months or less. These "transient rental

accommodations" include all hotel and motel rooms, condominium units, single-family homes, apartments, mobile homes, beach or vacation houses, campground sites and trailer or RV parks.

According to Taylor, bed tax revenues have increased 60% since the local option bed tax was first implemented in 1998.

"Bed tax collections have steadily increased each year due to our aggressive marketing initiatives and our partnerships with Visit Natural North Florida and Visit Florida," Taylor told commissioners. "This shows us that promoting our area is working."

According to information presented to commissioners, Taylor County has a total of 635 hotel rooms. With an estimated 52% occupancy rate last year, paying a conservative average nightly rate of \$50, visitors spent an estimated \$6 million on overnight or vacation rental stays here.

Based on the average visitor spending an estimated \$135 per day in Taylor County, tourism generated an economic impact of \$16 million dollars last year.

Taylor told commissioners the following local major events and festivals had an estimated \$6 million dollar impact on the local economy, including:

- Florida Forest Festival (\$1.25 million),
- Florida State Bluegrass Festival (\$1.147 million),
- Smokin' in the Pines BBQ Festival (\$860,000),
- Fiddler Crab Festival (\$370,000).

The TDC promotes Taylor County through marketing efforts targeting: fishing and boating, scalloping, cultural events and festivals, coastline and rivers, bird watching, the Big Bend Saltwater Trail, resorts and parks, camping and RV parks, biking and horse trails.

Promotional efforts include: print advertising, social media, radio and television advertising, brochures, events and festivals.

TDC staff attended 16 travel shows held throughout the United States in partnership with and using grant funds from Visit Florida and Visit Natural North Florida.

"We appreciate all of the numbers and information. They are quite impressive," Commissioner Malcolm Page said. "We appreciate all of the hard work you do to promote Taylor County."

"You can really tell that it is working," Commissioner Jim Moody added.

"Keep up the good work," Commissioner Thomas Demps said.

During budget workshops for the 2016-17 fiscal year, the county passed a two-year ordinance that appropriated

53% of bed tax revenues be used for "operations," 37% be allocated to the TDC for "Tourist Promotion, Development and Administration" and 10% be used for "Capital/Infrastructure."

The TDC receives the first "two cents" of bed tax revenues (approximately \$150,000), using \$94,000 for tourism promotion, marketing and development efforts and \$50,000 to help fund two full-time administrative staff positions, office and overhead expenses (shared with the Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce).

The "3rd cent" (10% or approximately \$42,924) of bed tax revenues is allocated to "Capital/Infrastructure," which can include: "the acquisition, construction, extension, enlargement, remodeling, improvement and repair of one or more parks, museums, auditoriums, sports complexes, beach parks, nature centers and/or fishing piers, or other venue which have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the activity, service, venue or event to tourists."

The most recently-adopted "4th and 5th cents" of bed tax revenues (53% of the total collected) is being used to offset tourist-related expenses that were previously paid for out of the county's General Fund (funded by local ad valorem tax dollars).

By law, the 53% of bed tax levies for "operations" can include: "repair, maintenance and operation of one or more parks, auditoriums, sports complexes, beach parks, nature centers, museums, fishing piers or other venue which have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the activity, service, venue or event to tourists."

In Taylor County, this includes, but is not limited to operating: Hodges Park, Taylor County Sports Complex, Keaton Beach Coastal Park and Forest Capital Hall.

During the most recent 2017 fiscal year, Taylor County received \$429,249 in tourism tax revenues, with \$158,822 allocated for TDC promotion, marketing, development and administration; \$227,502 for the county's operation of various local parks, sports complex and Forest Capital Hall and the remaining \$42,924 for capital infrastructure.

Under the ordinance adopted by the county last year, any money not used in the TDC or "Operations" budget each year shall be carried forward into the county's "Capital" budget for the next fiscal year.



Taylor County features numerous pristine rivers and creeks -- like Spring Warrior (above) -- that feed into the Gulf of Mexico and produce excellent tourism-related opportunities, such as fishing, boating, kayaking, birdwatching, scalloping and more.



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One of the newest events supported by the Tourism Development Council was the Perry Rotary Club's Big Bend Brewfest. The event, held at Rosehead Park in Perry, drew about 200 people from as far as way as Orlando to sample about 45 craft beer from 14 regional breweries.



2018 MEMBER DIRECTORY



Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce

MEMBER DIRECTORY Continued from page 13

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Perry, FL 32347
850-838-8636
Steinhatchee Family Medicine
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Steinhatchee, FL 32359
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Medical Center - Nursing Home
Marshall Health & Rehabilitation
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Tallahassee Orthopedic Clinic - Perry
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Perry, FL 32347
850-584-0241
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Burns Monument Company
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Perry, FL 32348
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317 N. Byron Butler Pkwy.
Perry, FL 32347
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