

TUESDAY

TODAY & next morning
HIGH 79
 LOW **60**

Storms likely, some could be strong.

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CITRUS COUNTY

CHRONICLE

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IN BRIEF

Let's Feed Citrus at Crystal River Mall

Let's Feed Citrus will be at the Crystal River Mall parking lot on Wednesday, March 16 and 30. The drive-thru-only events begin at 9 a.m.

Watch the Chronicle for information about future dates and locations.

DeSantis endorses Ingoglia over Massullo

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is endorsing Rep. Blaise Ingoglia, R-Spring Hill, for State Senate District 11.

"Blaise Ingoglia is a strong conservative who



Ingoglia tweeted Monday. "I endorse Blaise for Senate District 11. He will be a force in the Florida Senate and will serve the people of Pasco, Citrus, Hernando and Sumter counties well."

Ingoglia will vie for the Senate seat against Rep. Ralph Massullo, R-Lecanto.

The seat will be open because Sen. Wilton Simpson, R-Trilby will be termed out and has filed to run for state agriculture commissioner.

Gas prices hit record high amid Ukraine invasion

Florida motorists paid an average of \$4.35 for a gallon of regular unleaded gas Sunday, as fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine helped drive up fuel costs, according to the AAA auto club.

The per-gallon price reached a record high of \$4.38 on Friday. Prices were up 87 cents a gallon from when oil-rich Russia invaded Ukraine and drew international sanctions.

"The surge in fuel prices was driven by global supply concerns, as sanctions and regulations against Russia (have) limited the world's third-largest oil producer from moving its oil in the market," Mark Jenkins, an AAA spokesman, said in a prepared statement. "After seven consecutive trading days, that upward momentum finally came to a halt last week.

Prices moved lower on reports that the U.S. and other countries were examining ways to increase global fuel supplies. Regardless of this, fuel prices remain extremely volatile right now, so it's hard to know what drivers should expect next month, let alone next week."

The average price for a gallon of unleaded gas was \$2.86 a year ago. The state's most-expensive gas is in the West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Ocala areas, while the cheapest is in the Panama City, Fort Walton Beach and Pensacola areas. The previous record-high price in Florida was \$4.08 a gallon in July 2008.

CCSO has plan to combat traffic crashes

Office will concentrate on stricter enforcement, safety education

By MICHAEL D. BATES
 Chronicle Reporter

The sheriff's office has pinpointed several solutions to bring down the rising number of traffic crashes and fatalities in Citrus County.

They involve everything from stricter enforcement of aggressive drivers and those driving under the influence to educating motorists and partnering with other sheriff's offices to launch programs concerning pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

This comes on the heels of a new Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) study showing Citrus County has the most traffic fatalities among 15 counties in Florida with similar populations.

The study ranked serious injuries and deaths on local and state roads from 2017-2020. Citrus was in the top 20 percent in all nine categories in the report.

Col. Justin Ferrara, with the Citrus County Sheriff's Office, said traffic fatalities in every state increased last year with few exceptions. Traffic experts, he said, blame the COVID pandemic for the 2021 increase and hoped 2021 would be better. "However, there was little change and the same ex-

planations were rehashed — blaming high-stress levels and frustration led to aggressive and unsafe driving," Ferrara said.



FERRARA

Reducing traffic fatalities and crashes does not fall on the shoulders of any single entity, he said. Rather, it must be a unified effort where data, facts and behaviors are intertwined to

create solutions, he added. "Enforcement, education, traffic-calming techniques and common sense are all areas of concentration," Ferrara said.

Some numbers: There were 1,680 vehicle crashes between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2020, on area roads, according to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FHSMV).

Of those crashes from

See CRASHES, page A6

POSTSCRIPT



In his career as a news bureau chief in Washington D.C., Norm Waggy met presidents, senators, House members and celebrities. He's shown here with President Ronald Reagan. Norm Waggy died Feb. 23 at age 92.

Norm Waggy: News was in his blood

By NANCY KENNEDY
 Chronicle Reporter

"My memory is that I never wanted to be a fireman or a cop or a pilot as I was growing up in Warren, Ohio. The only thing that piqued my interest was news. As a youngster, I listened to a newscaster named Jack Jurey on WKBN radio in Youngstown. I imagined that, one day, maybe I could do that. Little did I know that Jack Jurey was only 17 when he got that job. Little did I know what an influence he would have on me in future years."

— Norm Waggy, from his blog "NOW and Then"

All Norm Waggy ever wanted to do was be a newsman. From delivering the Warren Tribune Chronicle as a boy on his bicycle every day after school to interviewing presidents at the White House, count Norm Waggy among the fortunate people who can say they got to live



Norm Waggy worked for Storer Broadcasting Company as Washington Bureau Chief. He was one of the first to do live satellite reporting for Storer affiliate TV stations around the country.

their dream life.

The editor of the Greenbelt Gazette, the Chronicle-owned newspaper of Sugarmill Woods, Norman Otis Waggy died Feb. 23, still planning for the next edition. He was 92.

"In our family, we sit around and tell stories, and

our dad had lots of stories to tell," said Waggy's son Bill Waggy. "His amazing career started when he went to work for a man named Harold Byland."

Waggy, still in high school, had been working at a drug-store in downtown Warren, Ohio.

The store had a lunch counter, and Byland, a photographer for the Tribune, was a frequent customer.

One day he told Waggy that his apprentice was graduating from high school and asked if he would like to replace him.

Waggy jumped at the chance.

He would go to school half a day and spend the other half, the best half, at the newspaper.

"That was back in the days when cameras had film cartridges and you had to get a good shot for the paper," Bill Waggy said.

The story Waggy loved to tell was about the time he had to photograph a wedding at a Greek Orthodox Church — three couples getting married at the same time, 26 people at the church altar, officiated by the only archbishop of the Greek

See WAGGY, page A6

Citrus posts 5.0% jobless rate in January, up 1.1 percentage points from previous month

By MICHAEL D. BATES
 Chronicle Reporter

Citrus County's labor market numbers in January were something of a mixed bag: the labor force expanded but the number of unemployed rose.

The January unemployment rate in Citrus County was 5.0 percent, up 1.1 percentage points over the month and down 2.2 percentage points compared to January 2021, according to a report released Monday by the state Department of Eco-

nomic Opportunity.

Here's the breakdown of January's job numbers, compared with December 2021:

- Citrus County's labor force expanded in January by 578 to 47,549.
- The number of employed increased slightly by 48 to 45,181.
- The number of unemployed increased by 530 to 2,368.
- Compared to January 2021, when the unemployment rate was 7.2 percent, the county's labor force has grown by 594 with 1,627

more employed and 1,033 fewer unemployed.

Florida's not seasonally adjusted jobless rate — a measure that matches the way local rates are calculated — was 3.5 percent, a 0.6 percentage point increase over the month and 2.6 percent lower than January 2021.

The January and subsequent February jobs reports reflect annual benchmarking conducted annually by DEO and the US Department of Labor to realign employment estimates as

well as revise historical data. Benchmark revisions are a standard part of the estimation process and take place at this time in each state nationwide.



SKINNER

Rusty Skinner, CEO of CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion (CLM), said with the annual "recalibration" of data, it's common to see

See JOBLESS, page A2

Lawmakers OK \$112.1B budget to end session

County projects greenlighted

By JIM SAUNDERS
 RYAN DAILEY
 and JIM TURNER
 The News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Florida lawmakers passed a record \$112.1 billion budget Monday to end a legislative session dominated by fierce debates about issues such as education, abortion and immigration.

Only three lawmakers voted against the election-year spending plan, which was pumped up by federal stimulus money and higher-than-expected state tax collections. It funnels money to myriad issues, including higher funding for public schools and pay raises for state employees, and is a 10.4 percent increase from a budget approved for the current year.

"This is a good budget," House Appropriations Chairman Jay Trumbull, R-Panama City, said before the House voted 105-3 to approve the budget (HB 5001). "It's a great budget for Florida and its long-term success. This budget has record funding for many important programs and creates record reserves to position our state to weather future storms."

The session was originally scheduled to end Friday, but a delay in finalizing the budget forced lawmakers to extend until Monday. The session adjourned at 1:03 p.m., after votes on the budget and a series of related bills.

Citrus County projects

All the projects on Citrus County's legislative "want" list got green-lighted in the state budget.

- The King's Bay Restoration Project: \$10 million.
- The Homosassa River Restoration Project: \$10 million.
- The Academy of Environmental Sciences Septic-to-Sewer project: \$250,000.
- The Citrus High School Canes Construction Academy: \$162,200.
- Crystal River King's Bay Riverwalk got \$1 million. Advocates wanted \$3 million.
- Crystal River Airport runway extension and environmental assessment: \$7.1 million.

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