

**TUESDAY**

TODAY & next morning  
**HIGH 81**  
**LOW 65**  
 Partly sunny with showers possible.

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CITRUS COUNTY

# CHRONICLE

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<b>Past Due Amount</b>	<b>\$138.82</b>
<b>Amount Due by 02/22/2022</b>	<b>\$353.01</b>
<b>Amount Due After</b>	<b>\$370.34</b>
<b>Total Due</b>	<b>\$491.83</b>

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## Family of local boy with cancer needs help

Seven-year-old begins stem-cell treatment, chemotherapy

By NANCY KENNEDY  
 Chronicle Reporter

Jace Brunton is like any normal 7-year-old boy. He likes building things; he likes artsy things, draw-

ing and making clay figures. He likes dinosaurs and Transformers and Chinese food.

About a year ago, this normal little boy started having headaches and nosebleeds.

He had been staying with his great-grandmother, Brenda Hatton, who was doing Jace's hair one morning, getting him ready for kindergarten, when she found a knot on his forehead.

"After that, we got the worst news anyone could get," Hatton said. "It was a brain tumor, cancer, and it was even worse — the cancer was throughout his whole body."

Jace was diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma cancer and for the past year, he has been undergoing treatment at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg.

On Tuesday, March 8, he begins stem cell transplant treatment, which includes high-dose chemotherapy

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Jace Brunton, 7, has stage 4 neuroblastoma cancer and for the past year, he has been undergoing treatment at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg.

Special to the Chronicle



### IN BRIEF

#### Attend a workshop about new Suncoast Parkway

Citrus County has a unique opportunity to shape its future given the extension of the Suncoast Parkway and the associated development potential that extension brings. Citrus County Growth Management Areas (IMA) at Cardinal Street and State Road 44.

A workshop focused on the S.R. 44 IMA will be held from 5:30-7 p.m. on March 9 at the Realtor's Association of Citrus County, 714 S. Scarborough Ave., Lecanto.

There are many ways to get involved and provide input about these IMAs. To learn more about the projects, visit cardinalstreetima.com and stateroad44ima.com.

For more information, contact Michael Sherman, Growth Management director, at 352-527-5221 or michael.sherman@citrusboccc.com.

#### Supervisor of Elections to be at Citrus Springs Library

The Supervisor of Elections office invites the public to visit them at the Citrus Springs Library from 10 a.m. to noon on March 10 at the Citrus Springs Library, 1826 W. Country Club Drive, Citrus Springs.

This is a convenient way to register to vote, make changes to voter records, or request a vote-by-mail ballot. Information to apply for election worker positions will also be available.

To learn more, visit votecitrus.gov, email vote@votecitrus.gov or call 352-564-7120.

#### CF Foundation holding meeting and workshop

The CF Foundation would like to announce two upcoming meetings to be held during March.

The CF Foundation Executive Committee will be having a meeting at 4:30 p.m. on March 9 at the College of Central Florida, Enterprise Center, Foundation Office, 3001 SW. College Road, Ocala. The meeting will cover general business of the CF Foundation Executive Committee.

The CF Foundation Board of Directors and College of Central Florida District Board of Trustees will be holding a joint workshop to give a preliminary 2021 update of both groups. It will be held at 6 p.m. on March 24 at the College of Central Florida, Webber Center at the Ocala Campus, 3001 SW. College Road, Ocala.

## Man takes 15 year deal to end child sex case

By BUSTER THOMPSON  
 Chronicle Reporter

A Beverly Hills man resolved his child-sex case by agreeing to spend 15 years in prison on an amended charge.

In exchange for the sentence, 49-year-old John Joseph Fortson pleaded no contest Monday, March 7, to attempted sexual battery of a child 12 years old or younger.

After he's released from custody, Fortson must serve 15 years of sex-offender probation, and will also live with the designation of sexual predator.

Citrus County Circuit Court Judge Richard Howard ratified Fortson's plea and adjudicated him guilty. Fortson was due to stand trial the following week.

Fortson was originally facing a charge of sexual battery of a child 12 years old or younger, an offense punishable by a mandatory life sentence if convicted.

For Fortson's sentence from Monday to be legal, prosecutors with the State Attorney's Office amended his charge to a lesser crime of attempted sexual battery, which is punishable by up to 30 years.

Authorities arrested Fortson in June 2021 for trying to sexually abuse a 2-to-3-year-old girl that month.

Howard on Monday rescheduled Trinity Hannah Estevez's trial for the week of May 23, when a jury will hear accusations the Tampa 21-year-old videotaped sexual acts between her and a young child while living in Citrus County.

Estevez was slated to stand trial next week on charges of lewd and lascivious molestation of a child younger than 12 years old, and promoting a sexual performance by a child.

Paul Decailly, Estevez's lawyer, told Howard on Monday he filed a motion to continue his client's trial because the prosecution last week disclosed three new witnesses, including an expert.

Assistant State Attorney Kevin Davis told the

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Blair Hensley and his brother operate the Florida Cracker Riverside Resort in Old Homosassa.

## Business branches out into Citrus

Brothers open Florida Cracker Kitchen at Old Homosassa resort

By MICHAEL D. BATES  
 Chronicle Reporter

Hernando Countians are already familiar with the Florida Cracker Kitchen, a staple for the past 10 years and one of the most popular breakfast-lunch eateries in Brooksville.

Brothers Blair and Ethan Hensley — owners of that place — hope lightning strikes twice in Citrus County.

They recently opened their second Florida Cracker Kitchen on the grounds of — where else — the all-new Florida Cracker Riverside Resort in Old Homosassa. The building that now houses the restaurant was formerly used for resort guest services and banquets.

Blair Hensley said he has been more than pleased with the reception he and his staff have received from the community.

"Coming into Old Homo-



The Florida Cracker Kitchen prepares food fresh when ordered. Popular items include shrimp and grits and corned beef hash. "It's the best corned beef hash you will ever eat," one patron remarked while finishing his breakfast.

sassa the community has welcomed us with open arms and it's refreshing to see everyone work together and come together and help us out and support what we are doing at Riverside," Hensley said.

This is part of the complete overhaul of the venue formerly known as the Homosassa Riverside Resort. It's now called Florida Cracker Riverside Resort

and the Hensleys have added a new bar and new gift shop to go along with the new restaurant.

Patrons will find pretty much the same menu as its Brooksville counterpart: "cracker-inspired meals harking back to Old Florida, where everyone is treated like family, with true Southern hospitality."

"We want our guests to feel like they are walking

into their grandma's kitchen," Hensley said.

Open from 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., you'll find such authentic breakfast fare as MeMa's giant cinnamon roll and shrimp with grits to lunches featuring Papa Gator's brisket and a Cracker House salad.

Blair Hensley said the eatery is a "true scratch

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## State to recommend against COVID vaccines for healthy kids

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE  
 Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo said Monday that the state will formally recommend against COVID-19 vaccinations for healthy children.

Ladapo made the announcement at a roundtable event organized by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis that

featured a group of doctors who criticized coronavirus lockdowns and mandate policies.

The new guidance would run counter to recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that all children ages 5 to 7 should be vaccinated. Although children are generally less likely than adults to become severely ill with COVID-19,

public health experts have underlined that vaccines further reduce their risk and help prevent them from infecting others.

It was not immediately clear when the state would release its health guidance, and Ladapo didn't elaborate on the details.

"The Florida Department of Health is going to be the first state to officially recommend against the

COVID-19 vaccines for healthy children," Ladapo said at the end of the roundtable discussion.

The move was Florida's latest break from White House coronavirus policy. The Food and Drug Administration cleared the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine in children as young as 5 based on a study showing the child-size doses were 91 percent effective

at preventing symptomatic COVID-19. The CDC has said the vaccines gives children 5 and older strong protection against hospitalization and death.

"I'm really concerned that this is going to make parents question what they are hearing from every other source — pediatricians, the American Academy of Pediatrics,

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