

# Tennis: Citrus boys fall to Jesuit at state meet / B1

**THURSDAY**  
 TODAY & next morning  
 HIGH **84**  
 LOW **60**  
 Partly sunny and breezy.  
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# CITRUS COUNTY CHRONICLE



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## Home prices soar but market is cooling

By **MICHAEL D. BATES**  
 Chronicle Reporter

The median price for an existing single-family home in Citrus County in March was \$280,000.

That's up 30 percent from the same month last year when it was \$216,000, according to new data from Florida Realtors.

Statewide, the median price in March was \$396,558.

Other than the huge rise in prices, the local and state markets are showing signs of cooling off and analysts attribute it in part to rising interest rates, a limited supply of homes for sales and continued rising prices.

In Citrus County, there were 19 fewer closed sales for the month (a 4 percent drop from a year ago).

Pending sales are down 14 percent and inventory of homes for sale are creeping

up. "Housing affordability remains a challenge, and higher mortgage rates may mean some buyers who had previously qualified under a lower rate are forced to rethink their plans, Florida Realtors President Christina Pappas said.

One thing that didn't change in March: existing single-family homes are selling almost as fast as they are listed. The median time

to a contract in Citrus County is only 12 days, down 48 percent from last year. And sellers are getting 100 percent of their asking price.

"Mortgage rates have ratcheted up dramatically over the past few months, and historically such large movements have ended with a housing slowdown," said Doug Duncan, chief economist with Fannie Mae. "Consequently, we expect home sales, house

prices, and mortgage volumes to cool over the next two years."

Here are other highlights from the March report:

■ There were 171 buyers who paid cash for their homes (up from 141)

■ New listings were down 5 percent, from 393 last year to the current 372

■ New pending sales went down 14 percent, to 377

■ The inventory of homes

was 295 in March, down from 301

### Habitat to the rescue

George Rusaw, president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Citrus County, said it is hard for Citrus Countians working in the service-oriented sector to buy expensive homes.

"They simply don't make a lot of money and can't

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## LHS student appointed to Air Force Academy



Cadet 1st Lt. Nick Post received a number of medals and ribbons for his accomplishments with the Lecanto High School U.S. Army JROTC program.

Nick Post has been preparing for military service throughout high school

By **GEORGIA SULLIVAN**  
 Chronicle Reporter

Nick Post isn't just aiming high, soon he'll be ready to fly, fight and win for the United States.

The Lecanto High School senior and JROTC Cadet First Lieutenant was recently appointed to the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, via nomination by Florida Congressman Daniel Webster.

The process to be appointed to one of the prestigious military academies is no easy feat and to receive appointment means that Post stands out above thousands of other applicants.

To be admitted, Post had to submit two different applications, one to the academy and one for the congressional nomination. The academy won't admit anyone until they receive a nomination. The last step is an interview process, said Post, in which several different judges ask about the candidate's experience in high school and plans for the future.

Post has known for years that he wanted to join the military after high school since he knew it's a guaranteed job, he can retire early and if there's something he wants to do, they'll let him do it if he has the experience.

"That's not really anything you can find anywhere else," said Post.

So, he joined JROTC his fresh-



Nick Post, a cadet first lieutenant of the Lecanto High School U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, left, is inspected by Cadet Lt. Col. Evan Brady. Post, a graduating senior, was appointed to the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, after being nominated by Florida Congressman Daniel Webster.

Photos by Chronicle

man year to see if he would actually like it.

"I started a little freshman not knowing anything, completely unknowledgeable," Post explained. "It was a little hectic because we had all these rules on us that we had to do every morning or afternoon, you had to do the creed, the pledge and stand in the weird position. It was uncomfortable at first. A lot of us were like 'I don't want to stand like this,' but as you got used to it wasn't much of a big deal."

He came to realize that this was something he really enjoyed doing and being a part of.

He then found out about the clubs for JROTC, Raiders and Drill. He did Raiders for a time, which he described as a "superficial track team that's less about running and more about physicality," but soon realized that it clashed with his basketball schedule, having played on the LHS team all four years.

"Nick has been an outstanding influence on all of our program," said David K. Brown, retired lieutenant colonel and senior Army instructor of Lecanto High School JROTC. "He's always in his academics, he's studying when other kids are playing around and he's setting a really good example for our cadets to follow on what success looks like in an educational, academic and extracurricular environment. It was a very good academy appointment choice."

Post plans on majoring in astronomical engineering at the academy with a few possible career choices in that realm in mind for the future, including pilot.

Just like how the application process isn't easy, neither is the academy.

"It's going to be tough because they like to set the tone early, like don't be stupid, be on point and just focus on studying," said Post.

Although, he mentioned that Colorado Springs has a ski resort that he is excited to check out once he's there.

After the four years spent at the academy, Post will then have to serve a minimum of five years. As of right now, he hasn't decided whether or not he will continue serving after the required time since it's so far in the future.

He'll be one of the first in his family to join the military, alongside his great uncle who served, and the first to be appointed to an academy.

Herbert Neeld, Post's stepfather, is very proud of Post, as he said, "This has been quite the process, but the determination and hard work and dedication has finally come into fruition. Our family motto has always been and will continue to be 'don't talk about it, be about it.'"

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## County gives go-ahead for animal shelter design

Money from will come from unrestricted donations

By **MICHAEL D. BATES**  
 Chronicle Reporter

County commissioners Tuesday voted 3-2 to award a contract to TO-COI Engineering for the design of the new animal shelter.

Cost for the design: \$986,737 and funding will come from

unrestricted donations specifically earmarked for the shelter.

Commission Chairman Ron Kitchen Jr. voted against.

"I've heard so many people in the community thinking this is totally outrageous to spend \$1 million on a design for this," Kitchen said.

Other people, he said, asked him whether others have built animal shelters in Florida and why reinvent the wheel on a design?

Commissioner Scott Carnahan agreed the price was excessive.

But Commissioner Ruthie Schlabach, who is

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KITCHEN

## Local brewer excited to enter craft beer for CASA fundraiser

By **BUSTER THOMPSON**  
 Chronicle Reporter

Sean Skelonis used to make potions when he was a child, mixing grass and bugs in jars to study what would happen.

His knack for concoctions stuck because, decades later, the 42-year-old is brewing a reputation for himself as one Citrus County's most popular creators of craft beer.

"It's something to do," he said.

A brain tumor at around 7 years old, and the radiation and chemotherapy treatments that followed, impacted Sean's verbal and motor skills, but his disability hasn't stopped him from learning about and doing whatever interests him.

"He gravitates to certain things, and we try not to stand in his way," Sean's father, Carl Skelonis, said. "He wants to do it, and he'll try it. We just try to be careful he doesn't get hurt."



Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor

Sean Skelonis is a member of the Inverness Brewers Union and will participate in the upcoming Hops for Hope Craft Brew Fest this weekend. The benefit will aid the Citrus Abuse Shelter Association.

Sean thinks he's brewed over a dozen different beers with his dad's help since he started the hobby roughly 18 years ago.

He's hoping people will enjoy his latest batch of beer — a blonde vanilla porter — while tasting Saturday, April 30, at the Inverness

Brewers Union's second annual Hops for Hope charity to benefit the Citrus County Abuse Shelter Association, or CASA.

Hops for Hope, which is part of Craft Brew Fest '22, will be from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Nine State Brewery, 200 Tompkins St., Inverness.

For \$25, a person can get unlimited tastings of more than 45 beers from local craft brewers throughout the fundraiser. Tickets, which sold out last year, were still on sale as of Wednesday, April 27, at [tinyurl.com/yt7sm5y5](http://tinyurl.com/yt7sm5y5).

CASA provides lifesaving, around-the-clock services and a shelter for victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse and human trafficking.

CASA staff assisted more than 1,200 individuals and their children last year, according to the nonprofit's CEO, Sunshine Arnold.

"The event is named Hops for Hope because that is what the money raised will

do," Arnold said, "provide hope to those who are victims of domestic violence and feel they have nowhere and no one to turn to."

For more information about CASA, visit [casaf1.org](http://casaf1.org). Need help? Call CASA's 24-hour hotline at 352-344-8111.

"Very often that is what an abuser will tell a victim of domestic violence — that no one else cares and no one would help them," Arnold said. "We have a large array of services to help a victim of domestic violence to rebuild their life and make the transition to survivor."

More than 400 attendees of last year's Hops for Hope raised \$10,000 for CASA, and the upcoming fundraiser will offer more space, food trucks and live music from the Strutt Dance Band. "Without compassionate groups like the Inverness Brewer's Union and giving businesses like Nine State,

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