

THURSDAY
 TODAY & next morning
 HIGH **84**
 LOW **60**
 Morning fog then mostly sunny, warm.

CITRUS COUNTY
CHRONICLE
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NEWS BRIEFS

School boards bill put on hold

A controversial House bill that would impose eight-year term limits on school board members and increase scrutiny of school library books and instructional materials has temporarily stalled in the Senate.

The Senate Rules Committee had been scheduled Wednesday to consider the bill (HB 1467), but Education Chairman Joe Gruters, R-Sarasota, requested to postpone it. The House passed the measure on Feb. 10 in a 78-40 vote on nearly straight party lines.

Along with proposing term limits for county school board members, the bill is largely aimed at increasing access for parents and members of the public to the process of selecting school books. Under the bill, committees that meet for the purpose of "ranking, eliminating or selecting" school instructional materials would be required to include parents of students in the school districts. School boards also would be required to publish to individual schools' websites the procedures used in developing media center collections.

House Democrats this month objected to the parts of the bill dealing with books and learning materials.

"Giving a racist who lives anywhere in the world the opportunity to infiltrate our communities and to spread their hatred by banning a book that my child might read, that might redirect them, is wrong," Rep. Mike Gottlieb, D-Davie, argued. Republicans, however, have argued that the bill is aimed at providing increased transparency about materials that students might encounter in classrooms.



GOTTLIEB

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Attend a community panel in honor of Black History Month

The Old Courthouse Heritage Museum will host a community panel discussion in celebration of Black History Month. The panel brings together long-time residents of Citrus County and pillars of the community to discuss their lived experiences in their own words.

The event will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. Feb. 26 at the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum, 1 Courthouse Square in Inverness.

The event will feature four panelists: Bailey Wise, Ray Joyner, Alida Langley and Mable Sims Halloway. Donna Lucas of the Afro-American Club of Citrus County will moderate. These pillars of Citrus County's black community will share their experiences, personal stories and recollections of their lives in Florida.

This panel is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. Guests can join in-person at the museum or watch live on YouTube. Sign up at cccourthouse.org or call 352-341-6428 for more information.

No-build group lobbies commission

Crowd opposes northern turnpike connector

By **MICHAEL D. BATES**
 Chronicle Reporter

The proposed northern turnpike connector has touched a raw nerve from folks who worry the road will venture too close to

their home, destroy sensitive environmental areas and waste tax dollars.

Opponents have turned up in force at previous speaking opportunities and they did so again during the county's commission's 5:30 p.m. public input session.

Many carried green "no-build" signs or wore shirts saying, "Rural Florida says no toll roads."

After two hours, commissioners thanked the crowd for being considerate and assured them there will be other speaking opportunities. The board hasn't taken a stand yet on the connector issue.

But they did get one backer of their cause.

Commissioner Scott Carnahan, who last month said the extension is driven by growth and the goal was to

"get ahead of it," said after listening to the impassioned pleas Tuesday, he now sides with the no-build folks.

"There are many other existing corridors that are already here that can be used to get people where they need to go," Carnahan said.

Improving Interstate 75 to make traffic flow better is one option, he said.

"Leave us alone," he said. "We don't need it."

Hoping to alleviate traffic, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is planning to extend the Florida Turnpike where it now ends at Interstate 75 in Wildwood along four different corridors.

Two of those corridors would affect Citrus County. But for protestors, there remains a fifth alternative

See **TURNPIKE**, page A2



Special to the Chronicle

Citrus County Sheriff's Office Deputy Nancy Suto poses in January 2019 with a bloodhound. Suto retired from the law enforcement agency Feb. 10, 2022, after a little over 32 years of service.

Nancy Suto retires from sheriff's office after 32 years

By **BUSTER THOMPSON**
 Chronicle Reporter

"Sometimes, there's not a lot we can do but we can always do something."

Nancy Suto did her best to put her words into practice when she protected and educated her neighbors against crime and emergencies for 32 years and almost four months with the Citrus County Sheriff's Office.

"I hope that's the lasting thing I've left with the community — is that I really did care," she said. "I couldn't always make a difference, but I think caring always makes a difference."

Suto retired from the local law enforcement agency Feb. 10, two days before her birthday. She had trouble afterwards realizing she wasn't "ditching work."

"But I don't miss it; I don't want to put on the uniform, the vest, the gun belt and go out and take calls," she said before smiling, "and I realize how poorly everybody drives now that I'm out in my own vehicle and not in a patrol car ... and I'm like, 'Oh my gosh, where's a deputy when you need one.'"

Suto grew up in Citrus County since she was 7 years old, after her family moved from upstate New York.

"This is my home; I never want to leave," she said, praising the county for its



Buster Thompson / Chronicle Reporter

Citrus County Sheriff's Office Deputy Nancy Suto poses in front of her patrol car in May 2017, after the cruiser was painted half as a taxi cab to send a message to motorists not to drink and drive.

rivers and quaintness. "It's that small-town feel where you know people, you know the business people, and the people trust each other."

Suto was 23 years old when she decided to join the sheriff's office on Oct. 23, 1989, when Charlie Dean Sr. was sheriff.

A handful of sheriff's office investigators then, including the late Marvin Padgett, convinced Suto to apply when they were classmates together in a psychology class at what's now known as the College of Central Florida in Lecanto.

At the time, Suto was also a supervisor for a local metal fabricator, where she worked since graduating from Crystal River High School. Her plan was to finish college "and then go onto bigger, better and

greater things."

"Well," she said, "that didn't work out that way."

Suto didn't become a deputy right after the sheriff's office hired her.

Before they could patrol the roads, a sheriff's office employee had to have at least two years experience as either a communications officer (a call-taker or dispatcher) or corrections officer at the county jail, which was run then by the sheriff's office.

Suto decided to become a communications officer, a role she had for a little over three years until there was a vacancy for a deputy and someone able to relieve her.

Suto's transition to a deputy was challenging. While Suto had support from

See **SUTO**, page A5

Officials: More than 80 starving manatees in rehab across U.S.

By **CURT ANDERSON**
 Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG — More than 80 rescued Florida manatees are in rehabilitation centers across the U.S. as wildlife officials try to stem starvation deaths by the marine mammals because of poor water quality.

The latest numbers were released Wednesday by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of an unprecedented effort to feed starving manatees and treat those in distress.

The state has provided about \$1.2 million for the treatment effort, officials said, with the rest of the increasing costs borne by facilities such as the Sea-World rescue program in Orlando. There are 13 such locations at aquariums and other facilities in Florida,

Texas, Ohio, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

"It's a huge effort and they do a fantastic job," said Terri Calleson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "A lot of it is happening on their dime."

The response comes as manatees continue to die along Florida's east coast because the sea grass on which they normally feed during cold winter months is disappearing. The main reason is polluted water from sources such as agricultural fertilizer runoff, wastewater discharges and urban sources.

Last year, more than 1,100 manatee deaths were recorded largely due to starvation, well above the typical five-year average of about 625 deaths. In 2022 through last week, 326 manatee deaths have been listed, only seven from

See **MANATEES**, page A2

POSTSCRIPT

Bill Young went from humble beginnings to mental health advocate

By **NANCY KENNEDY**
 Chronicle Reporter

Although Dr. William Young had all kinds of letters after his name, including M.Div and Ed.D, he didn't go to high school.

That was something he never kept a secret.

When Young was 15 his father died, said Tommie McGee, Young's companion of 22 years.

"There were four other siblings, so Bill had to go to work at the A&P. Then he worked as a paperboy," she said. "They couldn't afford to get the newspaper, but they fascinated him and he'd read old copies from the neighbors."

"He used to say he got his education from the Florida Times Union — he grew up in Jacksonville," she said. "His mother encouraged him to take his G.E.D. and heaced it."

Young, who died Jan. 25 at age 95, went on to get an education from New Orleans Baptist Seminary, Stetson University and Mississippi State University, among other schools.

When World War II started, Young wanted to be an Army Air Corps pilot, but when he went to sign up he was told they had too many, McGee said. So, he signed up as a cadet and

then served as a chaplain during the Korean War years.

"When he got out of the service, he didn't know what he wanted to do, so he went to seminary and became an ordained minister," McGee said. "He started preaching at little churches in Louisiana. He said some were so small there weren't any screens on the windows."

Big on education, Young was a lifelong learner, with a passion for mental health.

He served on the Florida Board of Health and was part of Rep. Maxine Baker's team that developed the Baker Act.

He was involved with the Child Development Centers, the Psychiatric Out-patient Centers of America and lectured throughout Florida and the Southeast on the topics of mental health, mental retardation, pragmatic religion, public health, and volunteering.

Young was also a former college professor and director of Comprehensive Mental Health Centers in Alabama, Texas and Florida.

He helped start Mental Health Service Centers in Lecanto, Ocala, Sarasota and Demopolis, Alabama.

He was an avid letter to the editor writer and a published author, a psychotherapist and a Guardian Ad Litem case representative.

See **YOUNG**, page A5

