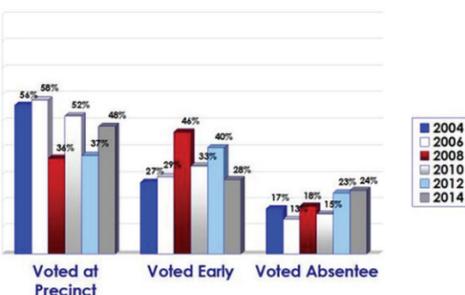




### How Did You Vote In Highlands County?



COURTESY GRAPHIC/HIGHLANDS COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS OFFICE

Voting in person has decreased slightly over the years and early voting has been up and down, but voting via mail-in ballot has shown increasing popularity among local voters.

## Post your vote

### Mail-in ballot requests up this time

By PHIL ATTINGER  
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — If you want to vote by mail this year, you're not alone.

Highlands County's Supervisor of Elections Penny Ogg has received requests for and mailed out 13,000 mail-in ballots for the primary taking place in a couple of

weeks.

Usually she gets requests for 8,000-9,000 ballots, but it's up this year, she said, because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As with all other public events at this time, the primary on Aug. 18 and general election on Nov. 3 will observe distancing and other guidelines to protect against

transmission of the virus.

Early voting for the primary is still set for 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Aug. 6-15.

General election early voting will be during those same daylight hours from Oct. 22-31.

Mail-in ballots, to avoid gathering with others and prevent risk of catching a virus, have been the big

change this year.

Will it affect turnout? No, according to Ogg.

"We always get a good return on the mail-in. [We get] about 50% of those back," Ogg said.

How do people like it? "People tell us they like the fact they can sit

and research, and find

VOTE | 10A



FILE PHOTO

Ben Hill Griffin III is seen here with son, Ben Hill Griffin IV, or "Hill" for clarification. Ben Hill Griffin III died Saturday at his Frostproof home.

## Ben Hill Griffin III, 'Florida icon,' died Saturday

By KIM MOODY  
STAFF WRITER

FROSTPROOF — Ben Hill Griffin III, 78, died peacefully at his Frostproof home on Saturday. Across the Heartland and the state, Griffin was known as a giant in the citrus and agriculture industries. He was well known as a businessman, a philanthropist, and a champion for higher education.

Griffin was the only son out of five children of Ben Griffin Jr. and L. Frances Griffin and was born on March 3, 1942 in Lake Wales. Griffin was a Frostproof High School athlete and class president for years before

graduating. After graduating, Griffin attended university of Florida but eventually graduated from Central Florida Community College with an associate's degree. He also served in the Florida Army National Guard.

Griffin learned the agriculture business from the ground up. He did manual labor in orange groves and rounded up cattle on horseback while he was still in grade school, according to the Florida Agriculture Hall of

GRIFFIN | 8A

## Like no other celebration



RUTH ANNE LAWSON/STAFF

Graduates pour out of the Lake Placid Green Dragons helmet and scatter to find their loved ones.

## LPHS graduates in unique fashion

By RUTH ANNE LAWSON  
STAFF WRITER

LAKE PLACID — The graduation ceremony of Lake Placid High School's class of 2020 was anything but traditional. After missing several weeks of traditional schooling, having athletic events canceled, going through quarantine and not knowing if they would even have a graduation at all, the Lake Placid Green Dragons finally came together one last time as One Dragon for a graduation to remember.

As most classes enter to the "Pomp and Circumstance" graduation march, the Lake Placid Green Dragons cut the march short and entered Roger Scarborough Memorial Stadium to "Jump Around" by House of Pain.

Instead of walking in a single filed line to their seats, the graduates came out of a gigantic Green Dragon football helmet celebrating, waving and dancing. The graduates scattered to find their assigned seat, that was one of seven seats assigned to the graduate with family in the additional six seats (socially distanced of course).

All of this seemed completely natural and fitting because the graduating class has had anything but a normal senior year. The Green Dragons started the year by losing a beloved teacher, Naisha Henderson, and then had their last few weeks of school ripped away due to the pandemic. The Green Dragons showed perseverance and were determined to walk



RUTH ANNE LAWSON/STAFF

GRADS | 10A Claire Phypers delivers a speech during Lake Placid's graduation.

## State sees smaller increase in COVID numbers

By ALLEN MOODY  
HIGHLANDS SUN EDITOR

Florida saw an increase of 8,892 COVID-19 cases with the release of Monday's numbers by the Florida Department of Health. It was the smallest daily increase seen the past two weeks.

Testing was also down slightly, so the positivity rate of 11.39% was consistent with the two previous days. While that number is still more than double the 5% positivity rate recommended by the World Health Organization in order for countries to reopen, it is much better than the 14-15% routinely seen at the beginning of

the month. Only 17 states currently meet the WHO guidelines.

Not all of the news was good, however, as the median age for new cases was 43, which is up slightly from previous days and is the highest median age of any day this month. With those ages 54 and younger making up nearly three-fourths of the cases, but just 7% of the deaths, the younger the median age is for new cases, the better.

With school districts making plans for the start of school next month, there has also been an increase in the number of cases and hospitalizations in those 17 and younger. The Florida Department of

Health's Pediatric Report, which is released weekly, showed an increase from 23,170 to 31,150 cases for the week ending July 24 — an increase of 7,980 cases, while hospitalizations went from 246 to 303.

Florida's new cases pushed the overall total to 432,747, with the majority of those cases occurring this month. The July 1 FDOH report listed 158,997 confirmed cases.

There were 77 new state resident deaths to bring the total to 5,931 and non-resident deaths remained at 118, bringing the combined total to 6,049.

In Highlands County, there was an increase of 29

new cases, but it was also one of the best testing days seen in the county so far. The positivity rate of 4.8% is the lowest the county has seen in the past two weeks. There have now been 1,065 resident cases and three non-resident cases.

Hospitalizations decreased by five, with the count now at 125 and there are 49 currently hospitalized. Highlands County's hospitalization rate of 12% is double the state average of 6%.

The county death toll remained at 22 and the median age of the new cases was 37, marking just the third time in the past 14 days to see a median

age under 40.

In surrounding counties, DeSoto County saw an increase of 34 cases, bring its total to 1,205. The positivity rate was 23.8%, which is the second time in the past two weeks DeSoto has been above 20%.

Glades County didn't see any new cases for the second straight day, but have only received results from 10 tests for those two days combined. FDOH did make a minor correction for the county's results on July 24, changing the number of positives from 91 to 89, which drops the county to 383 cases.

Hardee County had an increase of eight cases, but a positivity rate of 21.1%,

making it the eighth day of the past 14 where the positivity rate for new cases was 15% or higher. Hardee is now at 789 cases.

Okeechobee County saw 25 new cases and had a positivity rate of 19.8%, its highest positive rate in the last 14 days. Okeechobee County has now seen 837 cases.

Polk County saw 226 new cases and now has seen 11,717 cases. There have been 220 deaths and 951 hospitalizations.

On the state level, Miami-Dade County saw an increase of 3,201 cases with a positivity rate of 18.1%. For the past

NUMBERS | 8A



Classifieds.....B3-6  
Comics.....B7-10  
Lottery.....A2

Obituaries.....A2  
TV Listings.....A9

Viewpoints.....A6  
Weather.....A10

Good morning To  
Sherman Gray  
Thanks for reading!

