

Raiders ready to roll

Seminole State will see three teams start their Spring seasons this week

See Sports, Page 7



The F3 Mission:  
Believing in Something  
Bigger than Yourself

See People, Page 5



# SANFORD HERALD



LAKE MARY, LONGWOOD, WINTER SPRINGS, OVIEDO, GENEVA, CASSELBERRY, OSTEEN, CHULUOTA, ALTAMONTE SPRINGS, DeBARY

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## HEADLINES FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fire-ravaged Southern California braces for gusty winds and heightened wildfire risk

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Southern Californians are bracing for gusty winds and a heightened risk of wildfires, less than two weeks after the outbreak of deadly blazes that have killed at least 27 people and charred thousands of homes.

Millions across the US brace for plummeting temperatures and winter storms

BOSTON (AP) — Residents across the country from the Northern Plains to the tip of Maine are bracing for dangerously low temperatures while the East Coast contends with a thick blanket of snow and the South prepares for a rare winter storm expected to disrupt travel from late Monday into Wednesday. **FBI acting chief says he's retiring as Trump's pick to lead the bureau awaits Senate confirmation** WASHINGTON (AP) — Paul Abbate, who became the FBI's acting director following the departure of Christopher Wray, is retiring from the bureau, according to an email he sent to senior executives that was obtained by The Associated Press on Monday.

**Biden pardons Fauci, Milley and the Jan. 6 committee in effort to guard against 'revenge' by Trump** WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Monday pardoned Dr. Anthony Fauci, retired Gen. Mark Milley and members of the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, in an extraordinary use of the powers of the presidency in his final hours to guard against potential "revenge" by the incoming Trump administration.

**Billionaires' wealth soared in 2024, anti-poverty group says as the elites prepare for another Davos** DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — Billionaires' wealth grew three times faster in 2024 than the year before, a top anti-poverty group reported on Monday as some of the world's political and financial elite prepared for an annual gathering in Davos, Switzerland.

**Palestinians trek across rubble to return to their homes as Gaza ceasefire takes hold**

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Even before the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas was fully in place on Sunday, Palestinians in the war-battered Gaza Strip began to return to the remains of the homes they had evacuated during the 15-month war.

## Sanford Hosts Annual MLK Jr. Day Parade



Some of the residents who walked in the parade.

By Amelia King  
Herald Correspondent

Despite one of central Florida's coldest winters, which has proved to be the coldest within the past fifteen years, the Sanford Community was supported by other communities in Seminole County who showed their best spirits in celebrating Martin

Luther King Day. From the Young Women of Excellence at Lake Mary High School, Lake Howell High School's Step Team Phi Omega Nu, Seminole High School's marching band, and many other clubs and organizations from across Seminole County, all who were involved enthusiastically took part in the parade.

See PARADE, Page 6



More parade attendees.

Photo by Bryanna Valderrama

## Oviedo Citizens in Action Presents 2025 "I Have a Dream" Awards



Photo contributed by the OCIA

The 2025 "I Have a Dream" award recipients (left) Dennis Dulniak, (middle) Carla Chavez Ramirez and (right) Bishop Larry Perkins.

By Bryanna Valderrama  
Herald Intern

This past Saturday Oviedo Citizens in Action (OCIA)

hosted the Community Prayer Breakfast at the Oviedo Cultural Center. The families of Oviedo were invited to listen to the words and music of the

Lord, share a meal together and rejoice in unity just as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned.

See DREAM, Page 6

## Seminole County Commission Meeting Recap

By Jessica Battisti  
Herald Intern

The Seminole County Board of Commissioners began the new year with matters related to special events permits, rezoning, right-of-way vacates and design updates on a crossing project at their bimonthly meeting on Tuesday.

The commission approved a special event permit for the annual Wekiva Island Spring Fling and Paint Out events to be hosted from Feb. 23 through March 1 and March 16 to March 20 in Longwood.

The 12-day-long event will include artists painting outside with their art displayed and sold. There will be an art auction, quick draw and gala with live performances.

The commission was also presented with a design update for the Seminole Wekiva Trail Grade Separation Crossing Project at State Road 434 and 436, detailing some major setbacks due to utility conflicts and an unfeasible initial design concept.

The project, which was initiated in 2021, could potentially face a redesign for the 436 tunnel, causing significant and costly delays in the process, more utility conflicts and traffic disruptions. Total costs for the projects sit at an estimate of \$39 million, 14 percent higher than predicted in 2022.

Public Works Director John Slot and Engineer Jorge Jimenez presented three options to the commissioners, including a continuation of the tunnel project with a new concept, a reconsideration of a bridge alternative or to hold the project and request the Florida Department of Transportation to include grade separated crossings when they make improvements to State Road 434 and 436.

See RECAP, Page 2

## STOCKS OF LOCAL INTEREST

As of 3 p.m. Tuesday

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| Allegiant       | \$102.99 |
| Faro            | \$30.84  |
| Fastenal        | \$76.08  |
| HCA Healthcare  | \$310.45 |
| L3Harris        | \$218.16 |
| Lowes           | \$261.06 |
| Lockheed Martin | \$490.32 |
| NextEra         | \$70.76  |
| Tractor Supply  | \$53.66  |
| Toro            | \$83.40  |

## SEMINOLE SMILE



Jaren Williams - Student Writer



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# PEOPLE

A GLANCE AROUND TOWN AND COUNTY

## The F3 Mission: Believing in Something Bigger than Yourself



Photos contributed by group member Will Cannon

By Victoria Pera  
Herald Intern

F3 is a network of free workout groups for men that emphasizes physical fitness, community, and leadership development. F3 stands for "Fitness, Fellowship, and Faith" and these peer-led workouts occur in 415 different regions, Sanford being one of them.

F3 (NEO) is the Northeast Orlando fitness group, and they call themselves, "The Bokey." Their workouts start as early as five in the morning and they happen outside – rain or shine. According to the F3 fitness group website, all F3 men always hold these five key principles.

1. Free of Charge- Never pay to workout, ever.
2. Open to all Men- No matter the man, you are welcome here.
3. Held Outdoors- Rain or shine, hot or cold, we are out there.
4. Peer Led- Rotating fashion of men leading each other.
5. Ends with a COT- Always ends with a Circle of Trust.

Looking at the group's history on their site, F3 started in 2011 in Charlotte, North Carolina. It has grown to more than 46 states and 3,400+ scheduled workouts each week. Some would say the faith part of the name would stand for religion, but on their site, they specify the part of faith stands for simply believing in something bigger than yourself.

Some of the workouts done outside include a mix of bodyweight exercises like burpees, push-ups, squats, lunges, mountain climbers, planks, and much more. This is often done in a bootcamp style with a focus on high intensity.

Will Cannon is the communications lead for F3, and he joined in Jan. of 2023. Cannon spoke about the ultimate goal of the fitness group.

"So, even though we get together through workouts, our ultimate mission is really to just create leaders within our group. We use fitness as a kind of a model. If you're able to lead a workout you know, you might be able to become a leader in your own life, whether that be at home, at work, or in the community," said Cannon.

Cannon talked about the meaning of the circle of trust at the end of every session.

"We circle up at the end of the workout and we announce who we are. We count how

many of us are present, and we see any announcements that we want to share with the group, or any thoughts or prayers. It's based on everybody's comfortability level if they want to share with the group or not," said Cannon.

Cannon continued to add that on top of working out with other people, you inevitably make some good friendships.

"These are guys that, you just develop that fellowship and friendship. We have each other's phone numbers, and they're guys that I know I could just text anytime of day, if we ever just want to talk or meet up. They are reliable guys that are totally in," said Cannon.

Community outreach is also a priority for this fitness group. Cannon said once a quarter, F3 (NEO) cleans some of the streets of Sanford by picking up trash. He also said that in the past, the fitness group had helped clean, fix and revitalize a house for domestically abused women.

James Emerson talked about his life since joining F3 (NEO).

"Since I started, you know, I've lost weight. I've gotten in much better shape and I've been more accountable at getting up early so I can work out," said Emerson.

Emerson digs deep when explaining how the F3 group inevitably becomes a vulnerable and open space. He said, after working out side by side for an hour, because they are exhausted, it is easier to let your guard down. Especially, after they have been pulling for each other and motivating one another to hit their physical and mental limits.

The most important thing about this group is not just fitness for Emerson, but also fellowship.

"I speak for myself and I know I speak for many of the members of the group, is that you come on the first day for the fitness right? You're showing up because you want to get in shape, do some exercise, and then you find out about the second F. The second F is for fellowship. You find out that it's a great group of guys, and you meet so many friends, and that's the reason you stay. So, you come for the fitness, and you stay for the fellowship, I think," said Emerson.

If any men would like to try F3 training in the new year, you can find the workout schedule and location on

their website, <https://www.f3neo.com/>.

## Winter: Cultural/Spiritual Across World



By Anekan  
Thyagarajan  
Goldsboro  
Elementary  
Magnet  
School

Winter is not just a season; it is a time of traditions, celebrations, and joy across the world. Different cultures and religions mark this time with unique festivals and customs, creating a sense of global unity. December is often viewed as a time of joy and celebration due to the festive atmosphere leading up to the new year. It's a month where people come together, reflecting on the year gone by and looking forward to a fresh start. This is the importance of December.

To begin with, Margazhi Masam, occurring between mid-December and mid-January, is culturally and spiritually significant in Hindu traditions, especially in South India. This auspicious month is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, with devotees engaging in prayer, meditation, and fasting, particularly on Vaikunta Ekadashi, when the gates of Vaikunta are believed to be opened. In Tamil Nadu, the singing of hymns called "Thiruppavai" by the poetess Andal is common, fostering community and devotion. Rituals like kolam (decorative floor art) and community feasts promote togetherness. For agrarian communities, Margazhi signals preparations for the harvest season, intertwining spiritual practices with cultural identity and prosperity. Overall, it's a time of heightened devotion and community bonding. Margashirsha is a holiday during Margazhi Masam, significant in the Hindu calendar. It can be seen as a time for spiritual reflection and growth, where many engage in spiritual practices to enhance their inner peace and connection with the divine.

In Hinduism, a Hindu god named Lord Vishnu is considered the protector and preserver of the universe and is honored during this time. In Margazhi Masam, many devotees perform rituals to express their reverence and seek his blessings for prosperity and protection. Margazhi Masam serves as a time for spiritual reflection and connection to the divine through rituals such as river baths and

the worship of Lord Vishnu, fostering a sense of community and shared devotion among participants. Bathing in sacred rivers is seen as purifying and is believed to wash away sins and bad karma. Many devotees rise early in the morning to participate in these baths, often accompanied by the chants of devotional songs. The cold water of the rivers symbolizes the cleansing of the mind and body, preparing individuals for prayer and worship. It's important to note that the dates for Hindu festivals can vary each year due to their reliance on the lunar calendar, adding a unique aspect to their observance.

December is filled with diverse celebrations that showcase various cultural traditions worldwide, including Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Margashirsha. Christmas involves family gatherings with shared meals and gift exchanges. Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, features the lighting of the menorah and enjoying traditional foods like latkes. Kwanzaa honors African heritage, focusing on community and gratitude.

The winter solstice, a crucial astronomical event marking the shortest day of the year, signifies the return of longer days and the eventual return of light. Different cultures celebrate the solstice with feasting and rituals, historically symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness. For example, Norse and Roman cultures celebrated various festivals. Margazhi Masam coincides with the winter solstice, representing an auspicious time for spiritual practices and rituals.

Winter festivals have their roots in ancient solstice celebrations in pagan traditions, where communities gathered to mark the return of light as the days began to lengthen after the winter solstice. These festivities often included feasting, rituals, and various forms of merry-making, reflecting the hope for renewal and the agricultural cycles that were essential for survival.

To put it in a nutshell, The exploration of winter holiday celebrations highlights how despite different customs and traditions, the core values of happiness, love, joy, togetherness, family connection, and kindness resonate universally. It's remarkable to see how people across the globe embrace the winter season with their distinctive celebrations, all contributing to a rich tapestry of cultural practices that bring joy and community spirit. Isn't it wonderful how the world comes together in its unique ways to celebrate winter?

## Going to a Magical Place in New York



By Vishakan  
Thyagarajan  
Goldsboro  
Elementary  
Magnet  
School

For the summer of 2024, my parents, my brother and I went to New York, for a day, enroute to India. We had to take two flights to get to New York. We did a lot of cool stuff there. The most important part of the visit was our trip to the Lyric theatre on Broadway.

We had to go to the Orlando Airport for our first flight. Our first flight went to Charlotte, NC. The flight took about 1.5 hours. When we reached Charlotte, we had to board another flight to New York. When we were waiting for the flight to New York, I reminded my father that I read all the Harry Potter books so I asked my father to book tickets to the Harry Potter and The Cursed Child Broadway play. The second flight from Charlotte to New York only took about 1 hour. When we were landing, I saw the Statue of Liberty from the flight.

When we reached New York City, we had to take a taxi to our hotel. Our hotel was about 30 minutes away from the airport. After we

got to our hotel, we unpacked our luggage and went to a pizza restaurant for lunch. When we got back to our hotel, we watched TV, and then we took a nap.

We woke up at 5:00 PM. We were going to see Harry Potter and the Cursed Child on Broadway. Broadway is like a performing arts venue. We reached at 6:45 PM, and the show was set to start at 7:00 PM. We bought popcorn and drinks and got ready for our seats.

The Show Experience: The show was so exciting! A lady's nails grew magically in seconds. Someone walked onto the stage out of nowhere. Special Effects: Someone said a spell, and it actually worked. Suddenly, someone levitated in the air. A person turned invisible.

Exciting Parts: People were kissing and fighting. The story was amazing! After the show ended, my brother and I were so tired. We saw Time Square at night. Time square is a place by Broadway where buildings are filled with lights and filled with ads and pictures. We saw the Empire State Building and tall buildings filled with lights. Then our mom bought us some street food which looked like burritos. They had the perfect temperature to keep us warm on a cold night. Then we went back to the hotel, and I immediately fell on to my bed and drifted off to sleep thinking about the magical day I had.

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