

THE WEATHER TODAY, C2

8 a.m.

Noon

4 p.m.

8 p.m.

69°

80°

79°

72°

Packers Keep Playoff Hopes Alive

Green Bay hits last-second field goal to sink Bears in Chicago. Sports, B1

Top of the News

INSIDE THE ISSUES SHAPING OUR COMMUNITY

Travels Heat Up as Holiday Season Nears

2016 travel numbers are expected to outpace last year.

By MICHAEL SALERNO | Daily Sun Staff Writer

Santa's sleigh won't be the only vehicle logging high mileage during the holidays. A merry travel outlook is expected, with travel in and out of Florida slated to be high. More than 103 million Americans plan to travel for Christmas and New Year's, up by 1.5 million travelers compared to 2015, according to a forecast issued Thursday by AAA, the Auto Club Group. "They're going out with a bang," AAA spokesman Mark Jenkins said. "We've got a wealth of people traveling this time of year. Hotels will be booked and attractions will be busy."



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

BY LAND ...

About 93.6 million travelers intend to take a trip by car during the holidays, Jenkins said. The steady increase in gas prices this month, which AAA attributed to an Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries agreement to reduce oil production, is unlikely to deter travelers from Christmas road trips. "It's not going to get to \$3 a gallon," Jenkins said.



The Associated Press

BY SEA ...

More than 3.5 million Americans plan other means of travel such as cruises, AAA stated. Christmas and New Year's are very popular times for cruising, and cruise lines anticipate heavy passenger traffic, Jenkins said. "They don't have to worry about cooking or cleaning up and everything is inclusive," he said. Cruise travel's popularity has benefited the state economy; Gov. Rick Scott announced Tuesday that Florida's seaports added more than 200,000 jobs since 2012.



The Associated Press

BY AIR ...

More than 45 million people are forecast to travel by air during the holidays, according to a recent outlook from Airlines for America, the airline industry trade organization. Meanwhile, Orlando International Airport expects its busiest Christmas season ever with about 3 million passengers coming in and out of the airport from Dec. 16 to Jan. 6, said Phil Brown, executive director of the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority.



The Associated Press

AT HOME ...

AAA named Orlando the second-most popular winter travel destination based on booking data for the season, trailing only Las Vegas. Travel to The Villages is expected to be high for holiday family visits, said Doug Gilpin, chairman of Sumter County's Tourist Development Council. "It's a continuation of long family traditions; for Christmas, you go to Grandma and Grandpa's house," he said.

NATIONAL NEWS

Zsa Zsa Gabor, Icon of Glamour, Dies at Age 99

Zsa Zsa Gabor, the jet-setting Hungarian actress and socialite who helped invent a new kind of fame out of multiple marriages, conspicuous wealth and jaded wisdom about the glamorous life, died Sunday, said her husband, Frederic von Anhalt. She was 99. Gabor died of a heart attack at her Los Angeles home. A8



The Associated Press

The best known of three glamorous sisters from Hungary, Zsa Zsa Gabor pioneered a modern version of celebrity — she was famous for being famous.

FRANCE AND RUSSIA REACH UN COMPROMISE ON SYRIA

France struck a compromise with Russia on a U.N. resolution that it said would prevent "mass atrocities" in besieged areas of Aleppo, where thousands await evacuation. World News, A7

THAT'S AMAZING

SANITATION WORKERS FIND WOMAN'S LOST CASH

A Long Island woman was reunited with \$5,000 in cash that was accidentally thrown in the trash thanks to the diligence of several sanitation workers. Krishna Nadalall, 45, said his mother, Bayban, had set aside the cash for her mortgage payment but she couldn't find it Tuesday morning. Hysterical over the loss, she called Nadalall to report that she mistakenly threw the money away. Nadalall gathered co-workers to help sift through the trash. The group was able to recoup all but \$40 and refused the reward. — The Associated Press

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COMMUNITY & CONNECTIONS

Only in The Villages

LIFE IN FLORIDA'S FRIENDLIEST HOMETOWN

Businesses And Artists Spruce up Storefronts For the Holidays

By CIARA VARONE  
Daily Sun Staff Writer

There's no snow in the lane, but holiday shoppers still can see some glistening on storefronts at the town squares in The Villages. They're walking in a window wonderland. Decking the halls was just the start for businesses in The Villages this holiday season. The Villages Commercial Property Management hired 12 local artists to paint the windowpanes with boughs of holly. Property manager Matt Hooper said it is the first time Commercial Property Management has sponsored the holiday-themed window decorating.

Please See STOREFRONTS, A17



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

Artist Deborah Grant, left, and Amanda Mills, of Off the Wall Murals, stand near a Christmas window painting at Brownwood Paddock Square.

THE DIGIT

262,000

pounds of food

Amount shared by the Wildwood Food Pantry in 2016 during its twice-monthly food distributions to Wildwood area families. Don Huggins, pantry manager, said the pantry served between 190 to 200 families Friday, the last distribution date of the year. Food packages include fresh produce, canned and boxed food and baked goods. — Patricia Steele, Daily Sun

TONIGHT'S EVENTS ON THE SQUARES

Entertainment runs from 5 to 9 p.m.

**Spanish Springs Town Square**  
The 45s  
Happy hour, 5-7 p.m.

**Lake Sumter Landing Market Square**  
Gene Cannon  
Happy hour, 5-6 p.m.

**Brownwood Paddock Square**  
Carol Ann  
Happy hour, 5-6 p.m.



# Hermine, Matthew Damages Near \$1.6B

The numbers don't include agricultural losses or local governments handling repairs without assistance.

By JIM TURNER  
News Service of Florida

**TALLAHASSEE**  
Hurricane damages in Florida have reached at least \$1.59 billion from the two storms that hammered parts of North Florida and the East Coast this year, according to the latest numbers from the insurance industry and the state.

The numbers don't include agricultural losses and some damages that local governments are handling without state assistance. Also, the director of the state's Division of Emergency Management said the numbers remain preliminary and depend in part on future state funding.

Still, the costs tied to Hurricane Hermine and Hurricane Matthew, for which the state expects to receive substantial reimbursements from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, are the highest for disasters since the much more expensive 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, Division of Emergency Management Director Bryan Koon told members of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday.

"That's to be expected. Hurricanes are our most expensive disasters," Koon said as he outlined damages to government entities.

Damages from Hurricane Hermine, which made landfall in a sparsely populated part of the Big Bend and swept through Tallahassee in early September, stand around \$213.6 million. The total includes \$147 million in individual property-damage claims that have been reported to the Office of Insurance Regulation.



The Associated Press

Officials examine sections of A1A that were washed out by Hurricane Matthew in Flagler Beach.

The more-powerful Hurricane Matthew, which stayed offshore but caused damage Oct. 6 and Oct. 7 in Northeast Florida, clocks in at \$1.376 billion.

By comparison the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research has placed damages from the 2004 hurricane season, in which four hurricanes hit the state, at \$45 billion.

The Matthew total includes 112,000 individual property-damage claims, representing \$729 million in value. Volusia, Duval, Brevard, St. Johns and Flagler counties represented most of the claims.

The Matthew figure also includes \$430.8 million in damages to government facilities and structures, including damage to a 1.3-mile section of Florida A1A in Flagler Beach that caused Gov. Rick Scott to order expedited repairs.

Koon said the state's share of storm-damage costs is expected to be offset by money from the federal government and local contributions.

Hermine is expected to directly cost the state about \$9.6 million, from emergency protective actions to debris removal, with local government contributions reaching more than \$5 million.

Matthew may require about \$130.3 million from the state, a figure that includes \$77 million being sought from the Legislature in 2017 for an estimated \$217 million in beach, dune and park repairs from Duval through Indian River counties.

"First, we do want to focus on the immediate protections needed for structures, we want to look at projects that can be implemented in a timely manner," said Alex Reed, program administrator for the Department of Environmental Protection's Beach Management Funding Assistance Program. "The cost estimates are going to be refined as we get more data."

## STOREFRONTS

Continued from A1

"We really wanted to do something to encourage our hometown businesses to get in the holiday spirit," Hooper said.

Artist Deborah Grant painted 10 storefronts throughout Brownwood Paddock Square and Spanish Springs Town Square. She tried to tie her window works of art into the community.

Passers-by can see Santa splashing in the water, a snowman putting on the 18th hole and another celebrating its final score at the 19th with a drink.

Grant, of Ocala, said the response from Villagers made the art worthwhile.

"I truly enjoyed it for one reason. Whenever I do art and people express to me how they feel, it really makes me feel very satisfied inside," Grant said. "They would come by and they would say, 'You know, I remember as a kid, we had those up North,' so the memories are attached to that."

Joseph Schnurr said holiday window painting seemed more common in Indiana, where he lived before moving to Florida 20 years ago, so he was delighted to see the art on his daily walks through Spanish Springs.

"I really enjoy them, especially this time of the year," said Schnurr, of the Village Palo Alto.

Grant said she started painting windows 12 years ago after the restaurant where she worked at the time hired



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**DEBORAH GRANT**  
on painting storefront windows in The Villages

a window artist who painted lopsided reindeer. With the help of her family, what started as a hobby became a business for her.

"Painting windows is really a lost art," Grant said.

Ron Averbeck, who owns Margarita Republic in Spanish Springs, said his business has had its windows painted for Christmas for the last 12 years. He is happy others in the area are catching on.

"This is the first year we've seen other places doing it. We started a trend," he joked.

Hooper said he and the rest of Commercial Property Management staff are thrilled with how the paintings turned out.

"Local artists brought their magic to our businesses," Hooper said.

Ciara Varone is a staff writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 9036, or ciara.varone@thevillagesmedia.com.

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