

JUNE ←

June was business as usual in the city and county. City commissioners performed a six-month evaluation of City Manager Sarah Campbell which she “passed” with flying colors according to the News-Leader’s report. On June 13, the News-Leader published a column written by Regina Duncan, at the time the president of the Nassau County Chamber of Commerce. The column sparked frustrations among county leaders who said her claims that Nassau County is not “business friendly” were incorrect. On June 20, the News-Leader reported that county commissioners had agreed to have County Manager Taco Pope draft an official letter calling on the chamber to regroup on

its stance. Just months later, Duncan announced her retirement. Also in June, the first step was taken in getting the historic Bosque Bello Cemetery entirely placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The initial draft application was submitted to the Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources. The final draft was submitted in August 2025. An arson occurred at Sliders Seaside Grill in June, and thanks to social media push from law enforcement and residents, the suspected arsonist was caught. A sad day in Fernandina was June 6 when a 5-year-old succumbed to a drowning near Seaside Park. June also featured a day

overloaded with quality community events. On June 21, Cross the Line held its annual Paddle for Veterans event; NFL star Derrick Henry returned to his hometown for the Two All Community Day; and for the first time ever, Nassau County held events for the globally recognized Make Music Day. Also on June 21, the United Funday Community Club hosted its first Juneteenth celebration. News-Leader staff picked two topics to represent the month of June, the June 21 special events; and the Public Safety Training Complex Phase 2 Ribbon Cutting. *These stories have been edited and/or trimmed from the originals, published in the News-Leader as noted above the story.*

PUBLISHED APRIL 18, 2025



Derrick Henry at the 2025 Two All Community Day in June.

MIKE THORN

King Henry gives back to Yulee; Make Music Day comes to Nassau; Paddle for veterans raises thousands

NFL superstar and Yulee native Derrick Henry returned home June 21 for his annual Two All Community Day. Each year, Henry gives away bicycles, backpacks, scooters, books, and other items to 300 kids in preparation for the upcoming school year. The event at the Yulee Sports Complex was put on by his nonprofit, the Two All Foundation, was filled with energy as families staked their claim in line before Henry’s arrival. Along with the giveaways, Henry supplied the kids with bounce houses, face painting, inflatable axe throwing, and an autograph session. “I’m very excited, humbled, and blessed to be able to do something like this for the town I grew up in,” Henry said.

on Saturdays — or after shopping nearby. Venues ran through Downtown Fernandina Beach: At the Marina, the Visitor’s Train Depot, Pocket Park, Island Art Courtyard, the Fountain at Historic Courthouse, The Butterfly Wall at the Train Depot and Violet Bloom Boutique. Depending on the location, visitors of Make Music Day could have had very different experiences. Musicians played bluegrass, jazz, country, classical, rock, pop and more. “You can never understand or appreciate who likes what,” Restiano said. Musicians of all levels and abilities were invited to sign up and participate in Nassau County’s inaugural event. *-Ashley Chandler/News-Leader*

He recalled moments from his days at the sports complex, including football games, baseball games, and cookouts. Henry was a standout running back at Yulee High School nicknamed “Shocka.” Henry set the national high school rushing record at 12,124 yards. Every kid that received something from Henry, even if it was just a handshake, left with a smile on his or her face. “It makes me feel great. That’s why I do it. If they aren’t smiling, then I’m doing it wrong,” Henry said. “I want to be exhausted by the end of this. I want to do this every year in each community I’ve been to, whether that’s in Nashville where I got drafted or Alabama where I played college football and now in Baltimore. I’m gonna try to touch as many kids in places that have impacted me.” *-CNI staff*

More than 110 paddlers finished a 9-10 mile kayak from St. Marys to Fernandina Beach to benefit veterans over the weekend. Bill Cimino, codirector of the Cross the Line Foundation that hosts the annual Paddle for Veterans event, said overall the event raised more than \$8,000 for Homes for Our Troops which will assist in the construction of a special adaptive home for a soldier in need. Cimino said after a brief presentation from the mayors of Fernandina Beach and St. Marys, the paddlers started the long trek to Fernandina from the St. Marys boat ramp. He said more than 80 volunteers helped paddlers on and off the water. After the paddle everyone was treated to a large after-party at the Green Turtle/Leddys Porch. Food was provided by Smoke-n-Da Cockpit, Coastal Pizza and the Omni Resort. Music was provided by the Andrea Shinn Band, and musicians Kevan Wilson and John Schuld. A check presentation was made to Homes for Our Troops and Cimino said “their guest speaker Captain Bobby Whithers was an inspiration to all in attendance.” *-Ashley Chandler/News-Leader*

Downtown Fernandina Beach was alive with music Saturday. Richard Restiano, president of Nassau Council of Arts and Culture said it was a day of feeling good, happy and connecting with music and the community. Restiano said it’s hard to know how many people attended. He said a lot of people came after the Farmers Market — held downtown



Full Moon Folk — Amanda Moore, left, rhythm and vocals; and Jarrod Franco, lead guitar — perform Saturday at Make Music Day Nassau County.

PHOTOS BY SAGE BOEZ/NEWS-LEADER

PUBLISHED APRIL 18, 2025

Phase Two Ribbon Cutting held at regional training complex

Sheriff Bill Leeper showed off the new additions to the regional law enforcement training complex the county is constructing in phases. Leeper gave tours to Rep. Aaron Bean, county commissioners and other attendees of the Phase Two Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. “Today, cutting the ribbon on this new training building is another major part of our continued efforts professionalizing NCSO and it will serve the sheriff’s office for many decades to come,” Leeper said. The classroom building is the key piece to the training complex, which is located in northeastern Nassau County, and was the main focus of Monday’s event. The second phase of the complex was a \$7.95 million project, mostly state funded.



Law enforcement personnel enter the regional law enforcement training complex following the ceremonial Phase 2 ribbon cutting in June.

“It allows us to move all of our training to one location which also will house NCSO’s training division personnel. This facility will run ... training in several classroom settings, allow simulator-driving training, and also house a firearms de-escalator simulator for officer scenarios,” Leeper said. It also has a mat room and weight room for physical training. Leeper said the building is a “game changer.” “In the past we’ve just been trying to make due, trying to train wherever we could,” Leeper said following the ceremony. “Our county’s growing tremendously and we need to keep up with that growth and have additional personnel, and along with that growth we have to have a place to train to provide the best service as possible.”

Phase 2 also included the construction of storage and a parking lot, which attendees of the ceremony utilized. The NCSO Honor Guard led attendees in the National Anthem, the invocation was given by Chaplain Arlie Johns and the welcome address was given by County Commission Chairman A.M. “Hupp” Huppmann. Ceremony remarks were given by Bean and Leeper. “In my opinion there’s no greater calling in our human existence than those who are willing to put aside their own fear of safety for the sake of helping other humans,” Huppmann said. “You live and work in a profession that requires you to be highly trained, incredibly capable and completely selfless. You make it look easy, day-in and day-out. Sheriff Leeper’s visionary leadership and the establishment of this training facility ... is part of that process.”



Rep. Aaron Bean shakes hands with Sheriff Bill Leeper following the ceremonial Phase 2 ribbon cutting at the regional law enforcement training complex.



1421 South 10th Street
Fernandina Beach
orders@mealeasemarket.com
904-310-3612

