



POA Bulletin

POA4US.org

JULY 2021

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UPCOMING GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

TUESDAY, JULY 20 | 7 PM

LAUREL MANOR RECREATION CENTER

Speakers: County Administrator
Bradley Arnold and District 3
Commissioner Craig Estep

TUESDAY, AUGUST 17 | 7 PM

EVERGLADES RECREATION CENTER

Speakers: The Villages Fire Chief
Edmund Cain and District Manager
Richard Baier
"Fire Safety and EMS Services"

Overflow room will be available
for extra attendance.

Stay connected at POA4US.org.

Inside this Issue

Lightning Continues
to Hit in The Villages

Residential CDD's Set Budgets/
Maintenance Fees

Florida Legislature
Strips Local 'Home Rule'

Ad Hoc Committee Tackles Fire, EMS & Transport Services

The Ad Hoc Committee for Fire, EMS and Medical Transport Services appointed last month by the Sumter County Commissioners began its daunting task by examining documents such as the AMR Contract, the Interlocal Government Agreement with the Villages Center Community Development District (VCCDD) and the contract for the Medical Services Director. They also heard presentations by the Sumter County Fire Chief Rob Hanson and the Villages Public Safety Fire Chief Edmund Cain. AMR, the current provider of Medical Transport Services is scheduled to present on July 7.

The Committee was appointed after growing complaints about delays in AMR ambulances arriving on scene for hospital transport which led to a presentation by County Administrator Bradley Arnold to the Commissioners at a May 18 workshop. Ten options were presented including the utilization of Quick Response Vehicles (QRV's), continuing with a private transport contractor like AMS, contracting with a single or both fire departments to provide transport services, or having UF Hospital provide transport. AMR has pointed to a variety of reasons for delays in arriving on scene, including staffing shortages and delays in hand-off at UF/The Villages Hospital.

Residents and emergency responders filled the room and hallway during the Commission meeting at which the suggestion was made to appoint a committee comprised of fire department and hospital representatives. All five Commissioners agreed. However, surprisingly, at the formal

Commissioner meeting that followed on May 25 a proposal was made that excluded representatives of fire and hospital, instead deciding to appoint a committee of five, one by each Commissioner representing that district. The Union representing The Villages Firefighters has had harsh criticism for Bradley Arnold and his ten options.

The POA sees this issue as the most important that will affect residents for years to come. Arguably the most important public service that is provided is public safety, and for residents of the Villages that means qualified first responders with reliable transport services to medical facilities when needed.

The Ad Hoc Committee will do its due diligence, but it is hard to argue against trained personnel, equipment and facilities that are already in place.

Ad Hoc Fire, EMS, & Medical
Transport Committee Meeting

July 7, 2021 at 7 PM

Wildwood Community Center
Powell Road, Wildwood

Mission Statement

The Property Owners’ Association, Inc. (POA) is the original property owners’ group in The Villages. Established in 1975, the POA operates with complete independence from the Developer of The Villages. Membership is open to all property owners and residents of The Villages. The POA is committed to acting as a watchdog to ensure that the Developer and local government are responsive to the needs, interests, and rights of residents.

Vision The Property Owners’ Association, Inc. (POA) is a champion for the rights of residents of The Villages. Guided by member input, investigation and determination, the POA brings attention to and acts on issues that may impact property values and quality of life.

Goals The POA provides 1) a forum for discussion of issues; 2) research and analysis; 3) programs of interest; and, 4) is a conduit for objective and accurate information. Specific attention is given to resolving housing, community and local government issues.

Values

Independence Honesty Fairness
Objectivity Respect

The POA Declaration of Independence

The POA is free of any outside influence. This is the only way we can assure our members of absolute autonomy to act on their behalf. From the very beginning in 1975, we recognized this need for independence, and we’ve cherished and nurtured it ever since.

The *POA Bulletin* is published monthly by the Property Owners’ Association of The Villages, Inc. Articles represent the opinion of the POA or the writer, and Letters to the POA postings represent the opinions of the writers. Care is taken to ensure that facts reported herein are true and accurate to the best knowledge of the POA and are taken from reliable sources. The POA assumes no liability for any information published, opinions expressed, or delivery to any person or location. The POA does not endorse or recommend the products or services of any advertiser or discount partner. All publication rights are reserved. Publication or reprinting of any material contained herein is by written permission only. The POA reserves the right to remove and/or discontinue any advertisement or advertiser from its *POA Bulletin* at any time at its sole discretion.

Ad Hoc continued from page 1

Chief Cain reported the following to the Committee:

The Villages Public Safety Department (VPSD) is an all-hazards career fire department, **protecting the largest single-site residential real-estate development and largest retirement community in the United States.** (*Emphasis added*)

VPSD is an operating department of The Villages Center Community Development District (VCCDD). VCCDD has the power under F.S.S. Chapter 190 to “*plan, establish, acquire, construct or reconstruct, enlarge or extend, equip, operate, and maintain additional systems and facilities for: ... fire prevention and control, including fire stations, water mains and plugs, fire trucks, and other vehicles and equipment.*”

Station	Address	Owned By	County
40	2455 Parr Drive	Sumter Landing Amenity District (SLAD)	Sumter
41	8013 E CR 466	Sumter Co. BOCC	Sumter
42	17202 SE Belle Meade Cir	Village Center Community Development District (VCCDD)	Marion
43	1419 Paradise Dr	Village Center Community Development District (VCCDD)	Lake
44	3035 South Morse Blvd	Village Center Community Development District (VCCDD)	Sumter
45	3555 S. Buena Vista Blvd	Village Center Community Development District (VCCDD)	Sumter
46	3290 CR 521	Sumter Co. BOCC	Sumter
47	4856 South Morse Blvd	The Villages Land Operating Company	Sumter
51	1231 Bonita Blvd	Sumter Landing Amenity District (SLAD)	Sumter

Year-to-date calls in 2021 total 10,814, with 73.5% of them being classified as Rescue and Emergency Medical Service. There is a total of 172 personnel – 96 are Firefighter/Paramedics and 61 are Firefighter/EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians.)

In the State of Florida, Fire and Emergency Service decisions and contracts fall under the authority of county government. There is a Fire Territory Assessment Fee, currently set at \$124. In addition, fire stations and equipment are funded with Amenity Fees in The Villages.

Residents have invested heavily in ensuring that our fire and emergency response services are world-class. The POA agrees that the transport times by AMR, the current provider, are unacceptable. There are penalty clauses for those response times that have never been assessed. While the contract does not expire with AMR until September 2022, there is 180-day “out” clause.

It is never a bad idea to explore all options, however, there is an adage that seems appropriate here – “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.”

Ask these questions:

- If the County decided to contract with UF/The Villages Hospital for transport services, would there be an improvement? On what history can Villagers feel comfortable with that option? Shouldn’t the hospital focus on improving care at the hospital?
- Should the contract with AMR be allowed to run until its completion, in the face of these serious performance issues? Should the penalties be enforced?
- With the infrastructure, trained personnel, and equipment in place, is VPSD in the best position to assume ambulance transport services? What additional investment in equipment and personnel would be needed? The financial options need to be explored as well.
- What is the desired outcome in this process? The POA assumes it is improved emergency response services including transport to the Emergency Rooms and hospitals. What criteria will be used to determine recommendations the Ad Hoc Committee will face?
- How many ambulances does AMR have in service at all times to cover transport for the 67,112 rooftops in The Villages as well as all of rural Sumter County?

Ad Hoc continued on page 4



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Ad Hoc continued from page 2

Sumter County residents outside of The Villages Public Safety service area also have a lot at stake, perhaps more so in these rural areas of the County. Keep in mind that the fire departments have agreements in place to support to each other.

The POA wants to go on the record as supporting Option 9 that Bradley Arnold presented on May 17, which keeps the County and The Villages Public Safety Departments doing what they are doing and adding Quick Response Vehicles (QRV's) and ambulances to each department. The County would continue to manage EMS Services and there would be no other company involved in transporting patients.

Residents must band together and support our Firefighters and the investment that has been made in our Public Safety personnel, training, equipment, and states. The POA strongly encourages residents to send email communications to the members of the Ad Hoc Committee to keep The Villages Public Safety responding to medical emergencies and to add transport ambulances to their fleets. You can send an email to Leslie.smith@sumtercountyfl.gov. Be sure to put "Forward to Ad Hoc Fire, EMS and Medical Transport Committee" in the subject line.

The Ad Hoc Committee is meeting every two weeks at 7 PM at the Wildwood Community Center on Powell Road. Residents attended the first discussion the Commissioners had back in May. The POA and residents need to continue to be engaged in and attend these meetings. Please do not wait until it is time for recommendations to be educated about this important issue!

We will attach meeting agendas, minutes and any presentations that are being made to our website. Find them at poa4us.org.

STAY TUNED AND INFORMED! ■



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Local Governments Stripped of ‘Home Rule’ with State Impact Fee Legislation

Co-sponsored by the Developer’s 6-figure employee and Florida State Representative Brett Hage, the Florida Legislature and Governor Ron DeSantis have stripped local governments of their ability to determine local government funding needs by setting limits on road impact fees for development.

In March, Sumter County Commissioners, by a 3-2 vote raised road impact fees by 75%, despite a media campaign waged by the Developer-owned newspaper, *The Villages Daily Sun*, which repeatedly ran articles of misinformation and misquotes. The increase was a campaign pledge by new Commissioners Craig Estep, Oren Miller, and Gary Search to provide a fairer system of funding growth instead of putting the burden on the property taxpayers as the previous Commission did in 2019 when they enacted a 25% increase on the property tax millage rate. That increase was used, in large part, to fund new roads for development south of CR 44, where up to 65,000 new homes are being built by the Developer. The

Commissioners signed an agreement with the Developer in July 2019 to provide \$40 Million in funding for road improvements south of CR 44.

The cost per home built in an age-restricted community like The Villages would have increased \$729 but would have provided the County with \$7,290,000 for every 10,000 new homes built. Instead, every property taxpayer is forced to pay for these road improvements.

In a written 7-page statement, County Attorney Jennifer Rey advised the Commissioners they would need to reconsider the impact fee ordinance in light of the new requirements, saying she didn’t think they had a basis to challenge the constitutionality of the new legislation. “In light of the changes to the statute posed by the legislation, now that it has become law, Sumter County’s recently adopted impact fee ordinance would not meet the standards set forth in the legislation,” she wrote in the statement.

The Commissioners have set a public hearing for July 13 at 7 PM at Everglades Recreation Center to repeal the March Impact Fee ordinance.

The Daily Sun continues its marketing campaign against the new Commissioners as seeking new

ways to increase taxes, while, in fact, the new Commissioners are attempting to find FAIRER ways to fund government and growth that spread the burden among and between all taxpayers. Meanwhile, the two remaining Commissioners from 2019 are suddenly against all spending, vowing they have listened to people’s concerns by voting “No” on such things as an independent study that would examine the entire tax system. What are they afraid of? That a real study might show the inequities?

We encourage residents to support these new Commissioners who are doing everything they can to equalize a system that has for far too long been tipped in the favor of massive development and profit. Don’t be fooled by the “Economic Development” guise that is the pat answer for why this growth is necessary. And read carefully between the lines of anything printed by The Daily Sun, who promotes itself as the “trusted” Villages news source. Ask who are the real beneficiaries here, and why has the State taken control away from local government officials that were elected by the people. ■

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Lightning Safety By Len Hathaway

Editor's Note: Lightning guru Len Hathaway made his annual presentation to the POA General Membership Meeting in June at Everglades Recreation Center, and the timing could not have been better when just the day before a strike in Monarch Grove left a hole in the roof of a garage about the size of a bowling ball and the following week another strike caused an attic fire to a home in LaBelle North. Many electronics and garage doors were affected by the Monarch Grove storm on June 14. Following is Len's very informative article about lightning, its potential impacts and how to protect yourself.

As a resident of The Villages, you need to be aware of the risk that lightning poses to you, your family, your pets, and your property and what you can do about it. Florida typically leads the nation each year in fatalities, injuries, and property damage. All thunderstorms produce lightning that can be highly dangerous and unpredictable. Our area averages 110 thunderstorm days per year. Therefore, residents need to consider the more frequent but less severe **indirect lightning strikes** and the less frequent but more severe **direct lighting strikes**.

A recent report by Vaisala, the Finnish firm that operates the US National Lightning Detection Network, (said to be the most scientifically accurate and reliable lightning information system monitoring all lightning activity across the nation) released its 2020 report. Over the last five years Oklahoma barely edged out Florida based on strikes per kilometer, 83.4 to 82.8. Historically, Florida leads all states in lightning fatalities and injuries. In 2020, Lake County recorded 145.8 lightning strikes per square kilometer that was 7th highest in the nation and 4th highest in FL. Sumter County was 14th in the nation and 6th in FL with 131.9 lightning strikes per square kilometer. This author continues to believe that Florida is the Lightning Capital of the country.

Electronics and appliances can be damaged due to lightning induced surges into the wiring system in your home.

Lightning Protection for Your Appliances and Electronics Due to An Indirect Lightning Strike

Indirect lightning may not strike your home but may strike nearby trees, flag poles, a neighbors' home, or some unknown location. These are more common but usually less severe than a direct lightning strike discussed in the next section.

Lightning-induced surges can damage control boards and computer chips, which are susceptible to even a relatively minor surge. **Remember - Lightning Loves Technology!**

To protect against damage to your sensitive electronic equipment such as computers, televisions, microwave ovens, telephone answering machines, games, refrigerators, garage door operators, irrigation controllers, motorized recliners & sofas, and while charging golf carts and cell phones you may wish to consider both primary and secondary surge protection.

Primary Surge Protection

This is surge protection installed on your electric meter by your electric utility. For example, if you are a SECO Energy customer they will lease a surge protector on your electric meter for \$5.95 per month or purchase for \$349 for 200-amp service (\$399 for 320-amp service). Duke Energy

Lightning continued on page 8

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Lightning continued from page 7

and Leesburg Electric also have similar lease agreements. It can also be achieved by engaging a licensed electrician to install a surge protector on a dedicated two-pole breaker on your electrical panel. This level of protection is to prevent surge damage to hard-wired equipment that you do not plug into a 120-volt wall outlet. **This is not “whole house” surge protection!**

Secondary Surge Protection

This level of surge protection is called point-of-use (POU) and the devices are sometimes referred to as “plug ins.” These surge protectors plug into a 120-volt wall outlet to protect microwave ovens, garage door openers, refrigerators. Underwriters Laboratories listed surge protectors are another form of secondary surge protection for televisions and computers. These devices can be purchased from electronics, hardware, big box stores, and the internet.

Surges can also enter your home from other sources such as telephone and satellite/cable TV lines. Therefore, it is vitally important that telephone lines to an answering machine or computer be routed through a secondary surge protector. This is also true for the coaxial cable line for a television.

Lightning Protection for Your Home Due to A Direct Lightning Strike

A direct lightning strike does not happen very often, but it can cause substantial structural damage with ensuing fire. The chance that your home will be struck is very low, but it is not zero and is greater than winning the lottery. One home was struck last year and rendered uninhabitable for a total of 20 since 2004.

Only you the homeowner can decide if you need a lightning protection system commonly called lightning rods. One way to think about it is assessing your own tolerance for risk. For example, if you have a **high tolerance for risk** you choose to do nothing, the odds are with you, the money stays in your pocket, and if the worst does happen you rely on your homeowner’s insurance policy.

On the other hand, if you have a **low tolerance for risk** and wish to seek peace of mind to avoid the loss of your home, possessions, pets, vehicles, and the stress of the entire ordeal to reconstruct and live-in temporary quarters you may wish to consider a lightning protection system. Contrary to popular myth they do not attract lightning but simply give it a safe path to ground.

Lightning continued on page 9

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Lightning continued from page 8

If you do choose to install a lightning protection system, be advised that there is no local, state, or federal oversight for residential properties and this can be a buyer beware marketplace.

Many lightning protection system installers do police themselves by becoming listed by Underwriters Laboratories and employing installers who have passed a minimum of four exams to qualify as a Master Installer by the Lightning Protection Institute.

Do not be misled by a potential installer telling you that all equipment used is UL listed. Although this may be true it does not mean that the system to be installed will meet nationally recognized standards. Further, before any job is started the underground utilities should be marked by calling 811.

Here are the names of three firms that that are known to be working in our area who currently meet the above criteria:

A-1 Lightning Protection Services, Inc.

1-866-465-0620

Central Lightning Protection, Inc.

407-380-6995

Triangle Lightning Protection, Inc.

352-483-7020

The above is the current state-of-the art, but safety is never absolute. It should be recognized that anything man-made can fail but the systems and equipment discussed above do function as designed a very high percentage of the time. As a homeowner, you should conduct your own due diligence for your lightning risk.

References:

The Art and Science of Lightning Protection, by Dr. Martin Uman, distinguished professor in the Department Electric and Computer Engineering, University of Florida. (Available at The Villages Public Library at Belvedere, 693.898 UMA)

National Fire Protection Association 780, Standard for the Installation of Lightning Protection Systems, 2020 edition <https://secoenergy.com/surge-mitigator/>

If you have questions or comments, contact me at LHATHA@AOL.COM ■

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In Case You Missed It... News Highlights from June Meetings

CDD’s Approve Preliminary Budgets & Set Maintenance Fees

The biggest news from June meetings was the passage of Preliminary Fiscal Year 2021/22 budgets and the residential Community Development Districts (CDDs) setting maintenance fees for the next year. CDDs 5 and 9 took a different approach this year, looking carefully at reserve funds and slashing maintenance fees by 20%. Two others had to raise the maintenance assessment by 8%.

In a communication to his CDD 2 residents, Supervisor Bill Schikora said “Every dollar counts, and Supervisors gave serious consideration to cutting some services, including (for example) reducing the flowers/ decorative landscape, but ultimately agreed that the budget is already so tight that achievable savings would be relatively inconsequential. For example: ALL of the annual flowers in CDD-2 that are now changed out 4x per year have a total annual cost of about \$17,000. We have 3,368 rooftops in CDD-2. Therefore, each household pays about \$5.00 TOTAL per year for ALL the flowers. A 20% reduction in flowers = \$1.00 per year/per household. REMEMBER: Costs have gone up -- but so has the \$\$\$ value of your home in The Villages, in part because of the beautiful and well-kept landscaping of our CDD/publicly-owned property.” Mr. Schikora also pointed out that the impact for an owner of a designer home is \$30, villas would be less and Harneswood more.

CDD 10 also raised its maintenance assessment by 8%. The cover memo provided by District Budget Director Barbara Kays said “After the review of the fund balances and the ten-year capital improvement plan, the Board of Supervisors determined that an increase was necessary to provide the necessary funds for future capital projects while maintaining adequate fund balance levels.”

CDD 13 continues to add acreage and rooftops to its budget so for many residents it is the first time there will be a maintenance assessment.

Following is a breakdown of all residential CDD FY 21/22 Budgets and Maintenance Fee Changes:

CDD	Budget	% Increase or Decrease	Maintenance Fee Increase or Decrease
1	\$1,593,628	9%	No Change
2	1,528,068	10%	8% Increase
3	1,577,339	-11%	No Change
4	3,567,830	6%	No Change
5	2,871,738	-17%	20% Decrease
6	3,675,535	1%	No Change
7	2,200,429	-15%	No Change
8	2,966,935	0.40%	No Change
9	2,939,583	-26.50%	20% Decrease
10	3,603,135	6%	8% Increase
11	1,356,058	-1%	No Change
12	3,648,845	8%	Some increase; some decrease
13	2,406,753	\$1,263,196	First time maintenance assessed ■



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SHINE Offers Medicare Help

With the Villages opening its pandemic restrictions, SHINE is resuming its Medicare counseling at various Rec Centers. Beginning in July 2021, SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) volunteers will assist clients with Medicare related questions including drug, Medicaid, Medicare, Advantage, and Medigap plans. The service is free and unbiased, and reservations are not taken.

Counselors are scheduled at the following locations to assist area residents for one-on-one counseling on the indicated days.

1. Eisenhower Recreation Center, 9 am - 11:30 am, 1st & 3rd Wednesdays.
2. Chula Vista Recreation Center, 3 pm - 5:30 pm, 1st & 3rd Fridays.
3. Lake Miona Recreation Center, 9 am - 11:30 am - 2nd & 4th Tuesdays.
4. Lady Lake Library, 2 pm - 3:30 pm - 2nd & 4th Wednesdays.

Also, “Understanding Medicare,” a group presentation geared toward those turning 65, will be made at 1:00 pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month, at the Manatee Recreation Center.

For more information, call 800-963-5337.



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Hurricane Season Is Here!

Are You Prepared?

Know Your Storm:

Hurricanes are tropical cyclones that threaten areas of the United States along the Atlantic coastline and Gulf of Mexico.

Hurricane Watch – conditions are possible within 48 hours.

Hurricane Warning – hurricane is expected within 36 hours.

Tornadoes are violent and rotating storms with winds that can cause severe damage. Florida ranks third in the nation for average number of tornadoes each year. Due to Florida's unique climate, tornadoes can occur any time of year. They can strike quickly with little or no warning. Tornado Watch – Conditions favorable for tornado development.

Tornado Warning – A tornado has been sighted by a trained weather spotter or a tornado is indicated on radar. Take cover immediately!

Thunderstorms are considered severe if it produces hail the size of a U.S. quarter or larger, or winds of 58 mph or higher.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch – favorable development for storms.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning – reports of 1-inch hail or winds that exceed 58 mph.

Floods - People who live near waterways or other low-lying areas are at highest risk, but anyone can be impacted by flooding.

Flood Watch – flooding is possible within 12 to 36 hours.

Flood Warning – Flooding is or soon will be occurring. Evacuate immediately if advised.



What to Do:

When storms are predicted, be sure to secure loose outdoor objects, cut down dead branches and clear from around the home, secure or board windows, stock up on food and water, listen to radio or TV, and get a weather radio.

During a storm, take shelter in an inside room on the ground floor with no windows, stay away from windows, stay tuned to radio or TV. Do not shower or bathe, or go outside. If you live in a mobile home, find a sturdy building nearby.

After the storm, do not go outside or drive unless you must. Assess damage carefully. Wear shoes and gloves when going outside to protect your hands and feet from sharp objects. Be observant of downed power lines and do not go near or touch them. Never drive around barricades or through high water. Do not walk through flood waters or allow children to play in them.

Hurricane continued on page 17



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Hot Weather Flowers to Plant Now

THE FANATICAL GARDENER

by Anne Lambrecht Fanatical Gardener

Here are some tried and true hot weather-colorful-low maintenance flowers for our sizzling summer days. Most of these can be found at the big box stores.

Angelonia. Also known as summer snapdragon, the delicate tubular flowers are a magnet for hummingbirds, butterflies, and insect pollinators. With a wide range of flower colors to choose from, this carefree annual makes a versatile addition to beds, borders, and containers. If Angelonia plants begin to sprawl in midsummer, cut them back by about half their height. They will soon regrow and produce a fresh flush of flowers.

Celosia is a small genus of ornamental plants in the amaranth family whose flowers look like little flames of fire. In fact, their name means “burning” in Greek. They come in red, yellow, orange and pink. Once established they need little water and can live in the hot blazing sun until fall. Celosia need full sun, at least six hours a day, and soil that is rich and moist but not wet. Also called Cockscomb, their stylized flames are crested, plumed and wheatlike.

Coreopsis or Tick Seed is Florida’s wildflower in the aster family. It is a great choice for the garden: dependable, bright yellow daisy-like flowers have a long bloom period, are trouble-free and easy to grow. Coreopsis is tolerant of a variety of soil types and environmental conditions and likes full sun.

Ornamental Sweet Potato is a sun loving ground cover or container plant in the morning glory family, whose leaves are the star of the show. The leaves come in dark purple, chartreuse green or variegated green and white. They tend to spread and if you use them in a container, you might have to water more often than you would want. The cold weather will cause them to go dormant and they will restart from underground tubers which are inedible.



Penta Colorful little five-stared flowers that together in their group look like umbrellas. Pentas love the heat and pollinators love Pentas. These 12” plants produce red, pink, purple or white flowers throughout the summer and are a great source of food for hummingbirds and butterflies. The red ones are usually taller and more attractive to wildlife. In many areas of Florida, Pentas will grow as perennials, though they will die back after freezes if not protected.

Portulaca Moss Rose or Purslane is a low-growing sun loving succulent with brightly colored flowers that close up at night and on cloudy days. Flower colors come in shades of rose, salmon, pink, scarlet, orange, yellow and white. Some flowers are also striped or spotted with contrasting colors. Plants are drought tolerant and grow well in poor, sandy soils provided it is well drained.

Rudbeckia Black Eyed Susan, also members of the aster family, are great in the sunny Florida garden. They come in shades of yellow or orange, with a dark center seed head, but there is also russet, bronze, and mahogany tones. The flowers are daisy-like and can be single, semi-double and fully double. You can tell them apart from coneflowers by their coarse-textured, hairy leaves. Be careful when choosing your Black eyed Susans because many of the luscious hybrids from the “big box” stores tend to get moldy and die. Susans are not particular about soil but do best in soil that is not too rich, with well-draining conditions. Once established, they will be quite drought resistant.



Torenia, in the Snapdragon family, is called Wish bone flower because inside each little bright and quirky flower is a tiny wishbone. The tubular flowers look like a snapdragon and come in pink, purple and blue with a yellow dot in the center lobe. This low-growing plant is great for borders in the sun or shade and will volunteer all over the garden. Another name for Torenia is Clown Flower because of the way the little face looks like a clown. Hummers love Torenias and bees will often break the wishbone trying to get pollen.

Remember there are four seasons in Florida: Summer, Hurricane Season, Love bug Season and Snowbird Season. ■

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Hurricane continued from page 15

Have a Plan: Keep it Simple

Planning with your family is an essential part of preparing for a storm, and can also be used in other disaster situations, such as a fire or national crisis, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.

If you live alone, make a plan with neighbors, friends, and family members living outside the area.

In the case of a coming storm, try to keep family members together, and identify each member's responsibility.

If you plan to use a shelter during the emergency, identify the nearest and most appropriate shelter. Have a plan to get there, be aware of personal special needs and whether, if needed, the shelter accepts pets. Know the policies and capabilities of each available shelter. Contact your county and sign up for your county's alert system (see below) to find out if they have a Special Needs Program for residents who have a medical or physical condition that requires special care, assistance with transportation, or are dependent on electricity. Make arrangements for your pet. If you are sheltering at home, keep the pet inside with you, in a secure crate, if possible. Be certain your pet's shots are up to date and have current pictures and identification in case you are separated.

Prepare an Emergency Kit

You probably already have had a kit put together for the current pandemic stay-at-home quarantines. Make sure it is fully stocked with water, medications, non-perishable goods, pet foods, etc.

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County Alert Systems The county alert systems will notify you of impending danger, storms, amber and silver alerts, etc. for your specific area.
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Romance Scams

SENIORS VS CRIME

It’s never too late to find love, and lots of dating sites and apps are there to help. Lisa Lake, a Consumer Education Specialist with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), warns that scammers are out to steal your heart, too...and then steal your money.

Let’s talk briefly about romance scams. These can happen when someone makes a fake profile on dating sites, apps and social media. They then message you to get a relationship going, build your trust, and connect.

Then, they hit you up for money. “Baby, I want to come see you but I’m short on funds. Can you send me \$500 for a ticket?” Or, “I love you, honey. But we may not be able to talk anymore because my phone is about to get cut off. I need \$300 to pay the bill...” Get the idea?

In the name of love, you send money. They come back with other lies to get still more money. Then the messages stop. You can’t reach them. They’ve taken off with a piece of your heart and big chunk of your wallet.

People reported \$304 million in losses to romance scams in 2020. Here’s how you can avoid these heartless imposters:

If someone you’ve never met in person asks you for money, that’s a scam. No matter the story. Never send money or gifts to anyone you haven’t met in person — even if they send you money first.

Only scammers tell you to buy gift cards, wire money, or send cryptocurrency. Once you send that money, you won’t get it back.

Do a reverse image search of the person’s profile picture. See if it’s associated with another name or with details that don’t match up. Those are signs of a scam.

Talk to someone you trust about your new love interest, and pay attention if they’re concerned.

Learn more by watching this video and at ftc.gov/romancescams. And if a scammer tries to charm you out of your funds, report it to the FTC.

If you need assistance with understanding any aspects of Romance Scams, contact the nearest Seniors Vs. Crime office in The Villages for advice or assistance. . Seniors Vs. Crime also has a Speakers Bureau that will gladly come to your club, church, or group to speak about scams. To schedule a presentation, contact any of the offices. There is never a charge for their services. Seniors Vs. Crime can be reached at:

The Fruitland Park Police Department Annex
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The Marion County Sheriff’s Office in The Villages
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The Sumter County Sheriff’s Office in The Villages
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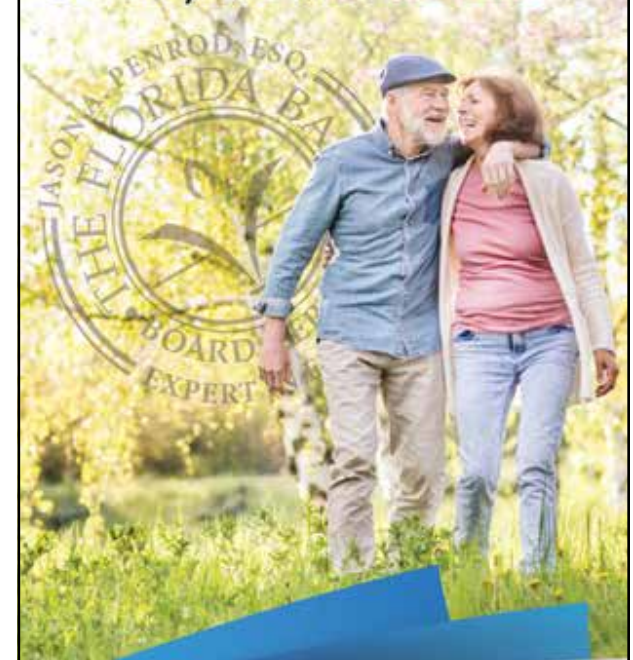
The Wildwood Police Department Annex at
Brownwood in The Villages – (352) 753-0727

During this pandemic, our offices are closed for walk-in complaints. Please call before you come to our offices. Hours may vary or may require appointments.

To keep up with the latest scams, LIKE ‘Seniors vs. Crime Region 4’ on Facebook. Hablamos Español. Por favor pregunte por Yolanda. Martes a Viernes: 10:00 am a 2:00 pm, (352) 689-4606. ■

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Humans sometimes learn slowly. Such was the case when a Subway sandwich lay unattended more than once on our kitchen counter. Turning one’s back for a moment was all the time necessary for lunch to magically disappear... wrapper and all. I doubt the number of grams of fat was ever an issue. Shadow would dawn a sincere look as if to say, “How could you possibly suspect that I would do...what I just did.”

Our pets create memorable emotional experiences. Humans, likewise, create for each other memories that serve as a basis for the warmth we feel, instilling love and affection. Hearts are valuable, deserving respect and protection.

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