

# TUPELO COUNTRY NEWS™

## THE WEWA NEWS™

*“The Good News Newspaper”*

FALL EDITION >> No. 011-02<< A FREE LOCAL NEWSPAPER Take One!



### PASTOR DERRICK GERBER RECOVERY FROM A FALL IS MOVING ALONG WELL

by Tom Wynn

Mayor Phillip Gaskin reported during the city meeting to the public that he had a good conversation with Pastor Gerber and that his recovery was moving along well. He can walk and do his therapy. He remains in Jacksonville Hospital after an operation to repair his back injuries. The city is praying for him and his family as he recovers. Brother Derrick is the Pastor of Westside Baptist Church located in Wewa. He is an active member of the Pastoral Association of Wewa as well.



Photo by T. Mathew Tanner, Local Photographer

### THE CITY OF WEWA'S NEW FIRE STATION STARTING TO LOOK LIKE A SHINY NEW PENNY!

During the October city meeting the mayor asked for an update on the Fire Station, the answer came with a list of finished and updated items, but the project is planned to be complete by April of 2025. The Electricians say their part may not be completed, because of the last hurricane damages down south causing electrical devices that they need, delayed. The company that supplies some of the electrical parts was damaged, so many projects across the county will also be affected. Otherwise, the building is on a fast track. **(Story Continues on page 2).**

### THE CITY OF WEWA AND THE WEWAHITCHKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY WORKING TOGETHER

Before the “War between the States” (The Civil War), the steamboat Apalachicola (nicknamed, “**Apalachee**”) sank in the river. The cleat was recovered from the sunken ship.

The very large and heavy cleat is presently being restored by the city, working with the Wewahitchka Historical Society. Their President, Mrs. Ann Johnson, was on hand to discuss with the Mayor and City foreman, Chipper Wade, where the best place to mount this famous vessel’s cleat for public display. All agreed the Wewa Library flowerbed is the best location for the public to see it and read a placard about its history.



Photo by Mrs. Lyn Wynn

### REMODEL OF THE CENTENNIAL BANK IT IS COMING ALONG!

The Centennial Bank branch in Wewahitchka is undergoing an exciting remodel, bringing a fresh and modern look to the bank on Main Street. This renovation is not just about aesthetics; it aims to enhance the banking experience for the community. The bank has been a part of Wewahitchka since 2004, and the improvements will help it better serve local customers.

### MAYOR RAY DICKENS FISH FRY Come one come all Wewahitchka!

The City Employees and the City Commission will put on the Annual Mayor Ray Dickens Fish Fry this year at Lake Alice Park on Friday, November the 8<sup>th</sup>. Come one, come all Wewahitchkians!

## (Fire Station-from page 1 Cont. )

City Commissioner Ralph Fisher is overseeing the project, due to his lifelong experience in the construction business, as an additional set of eyes on the project. The City Commission, and city engineers are very happy with the work thus far with the new contractor, Monolith Construction LLC, who is eager to make the City of Wewahitchka a fine Fire Station, as it was originally designed to be, modernized and updated equipment for firefighting. It will have the latest technology. TW



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### **The Possible Increase of Troops and Civilian Employees from Tyndall Air Force Base Moving to Wewahitchka**

By Tom Wynn Jr.

As we look to the future, there is an exciting possibility for Wewahitchka, Florida. With the ongoing rebuild of Tyndall Air Force Base, new units are being completed and will soon be filled with fresh troops and civilian employees. This change could bring many new faces to our community, leading to a growing demand for housing and good schools for their children.

#### **What is Tyndall Air Force Base?**

Tyndall Air Force Base has been a crucial part of our region for many years. Known for its essential work in training and supporting our military, the base is currently undergoing significant reconstruction after being affected by Hurricane Michael in 2018. The rebuild includes modern facilities and upgraded infrastructure, allowing the base to better serve its mission. As these new units become operational, we can expect an influx of personnel, including both military members and civilian employees.

### **Housing Needs**

With more families moving to Wewahitchka, finding suitable housing will be a top priority. Families coming from Tyndall will be looking for homes that are safe, affordable, and close to schools.

Currently, Wewahitchka offers a variety of housing options, including single-family homes, apartments, and rental properties. However, as demand increases, local real estate agents and property owners may need to prepare for a surge in interest. This might mean getting homes ready for new tenants or buyers, or even considering new construction to accommodate incoming families.

### **Importance of Schools**

Another significant concern for families relocating to Wewahitchka will be finding good schools for their children. Education is a top priority for military families, and they will be searching for schools that offer quality education and a safe environment.

Wewahitchka has schools that aim to provide a supportive and nurturing atmosphere for students. It's essential that our schools continue to focus on delivering high-quality education, extracurricular activities, and a sense of community. Local educators and administrators must work together to ensure our schools are prepared for an influx of new students and can maintain a strong educational experience for everyone.

### **Community Support**

As new families arrive, it will be vital for the Wewahitchka community to welcome them with open arms. Building a sense of community can help ease the transition for military families. Local organizations, churches, and community centers can play a significant role in offering support and creating events that bring people together.

Residents can assist by sharing information about local services, recreational activities, and community events. This way, newcomers will feel more connected and informed about their new home.

The potential increase of troops and civilian employees from Tyndall Air Force Base moving to Wewahitchka presents an exciting opportunity for our community. With the base being rebuilt and new units filling up with fresh personnel, there will be a growing demand for housing and educational resources.

By planning for these needs and embracing the incoming families, Wewahitchka can continue to be a great place to live, work, and raise a family. Let's work together to make our community welcoming and supportive for all residents, new and old! TW

**Proverbs 3:21-24**

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## HISTORICAL PERIODICALS BY TOM WYNN

Two historical periodicals by the Wewahitchka Historical Society and Friends of The Library are on sell at the Wewa Library. So, look for them and pick up a copy for a donation of \$5.00 each. Please contact the library to share historical information for the centennial. TW

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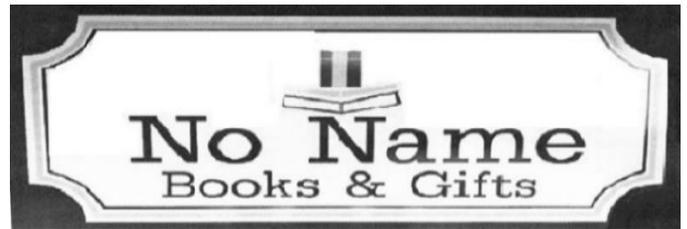
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**2 Corinthians 6:17-18**

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### **THE WEWA LIBRARY** The History of Our Modern Local Library by Joyelle Linton

It's hard to believe that it has been almost 100 years since Gulf County was established and 150 years since Wewahitchka was recognized. Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 7, 2025 when we celebrate these once in our lifetime achievements. In partnership with the City of Wewahitchka, the Friends of the Wewahitchka Library and the Wewahitchka Historical Society will be hosting a festival at the library grounds, while the library will be open to tour our exhibits. More information will be available soon.

The Wewahitchka Library is currently looking for photographs of Wewahitchka, such as businesses, landmarks, trades, community leaders, or events. If you have anything you would like to share with us, please call us at the below listed number to schedule an appointment. We will scan your photographs and return them to you at your appointment. Your photographs may be used in our historical exhibits at the Wewahitchka Library.

In honor of this monumental event, the Wewahitchka Historical Society is partnering with the Wewahitchka Public Library to create a community quilt. This craft will be a part of history! There are many ways you can participate. Simply donate or be part of the sewing. Work at home on your own time or attend a workshop to learn or help others. \$10 donation for name embroidery or \$15 donation for a square and additional embroidery. Proceeds will be used to purchase supplies needed to make the quilt and excess funds will benefit the Wewahitchka Historical Society and the Wewahitchka Public Library sewing programs.

The Wewahitchka Public Library's normal business hours are Monday 9-1, Tuesday 9-5, Thursday 9-5, Friday 9-5 and Saturday 9-1. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at (850) 639-2419

**EPHESIANS 2:4-5**



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**UPDATE!**  
In case you didn't know:  
“The Tupelo Radio Group”

is making a GMRS Radio network where the repeaters are to be located has yet to be determined.

In the last two months we lost two of our members, both passed away, leaving family and friends saddened by their departure to be with the Lord. Cal Zethmayr and Tom Semmes were very knowledgeable in the Radio Comms business. Cal had a long history in the Radio Broadcast field, while Tom was a Military Comms Officer and worked in the White House for two Presidents during his career. They both will be sorely missed.

Every Sunday at 4 PM we have a radio check to make sure our radios are working and charged up in case of a need. We are looking for some ham operators in the Wewa area to join us. If anyone is interested in joining the group, please

Contact: **Mr. Dudley Balmer** at: 317-379-1644.  
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**Hebrews 9:14**

## Founding of Wewahitchka

by Tom Wynn

Wewahitchka was established as a city in 1875, marking a significant milestone in Gulf County's history. The nearby settlement was known as New Eden, located where Jehu Cemetery is today. In the early 1800s, this site served as the Methodist and Baptist Church Cemetery, highlighting the community's early religious roots.

As Wewahitchka grew, its strategic location along the Apalachicola River contributed to its development. The river was crucial for transportation and provided resources that fueled the timber and turpentine industries. Many early settlers found work in these industries, helping the community thrive by building homes, schools, and churches.

The name "Wewahitchka" has significant meaning as well. According to Chief Alonso in a 2002 interview, it translates to "Water is Here." This name reflects the importance of water in the community's life and economy.

Today, Wewahitchka honors its rich history through local events and traditions. The community comes together to celebrate its heritage, remembering the hard work and sacrifices of its founders. The Wewahitchka Historical Society plays a vital role in preserving the town's history by documenting local stories and artifacts, ensuring future generations can learn about the past.

Visitors to Wewahitchka can explore its historical sites, museums, and cemeteries to gain a better understanding of its roots. The town's history is a testament to the resilience and spirit of its early inhabitants, which continues to inspire current residents. Wewahitchka is proud of its past and remains committed to preserving its unique identity for years to come.

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**ROMANS 8:1-2**

## Gulf County's Early Settlement

by Tom Wynn

Gulf County's early settlement history is rich and deeply connected to its natural resources and Native American cultures. The area's fertile land and waterways attracted settlers in the 19th century. Many families came to the region seeking new opportunities and a better life.

As settlers arrived, they established communities, including Wewahitchka and Port St. Joe. These towns became vital to Gulf County's growth, largely due to the timber and turpentine industries. Logging was an essential part of life, as many residents found work in cutting and processing timber, supporting families and building a strong local economy.

Gulf County officially separated from Calhoun County on June 6, 1925, marking a significant change in governance. This allowed the area to focus on its unique needs and resources, helping it grow even further.

The community spirit in Gulf County was strong. Residents worked together to develop schools, churches, and local businesses, fostering a sense of belonging. They shared stories and traditions that have been passed down through generations, creating a unique cultural heritage.

Today, Gulf County maintains its small-town charm while celebrating its rich history. Annual events and festivals bring residents together, allowing them to honor their roots. Local historical societies play a crucial role in preserving historical sites and landmarks that tell the story of early settlers and Native Americans.

As Gulf County continues to evolve, it remains committed to remembering its past. This dedication ensures that the experiences of those who came before are not forgotten. Visitors to the area can explore its history through museums and events, learning about the people who shaped Gulf County.

Gulf County stands as a testament to the strength and resilience of its early inhabitants. The community's pride in its heritage is evident, making it a welcoming place for both residents and visitors.

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**ISAIAH 1:18**

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## Young Beekeeper Emily Flowers Wins Prestigious Award and Inspires Future Generations

by Tom Wynn



Ms. Emily Flowers, a vibrant and passionate young beekeeper from Wewahitchka, Florida, is making a significant impact on the local beekeeping community. Last year, she captured the prestigious "Best Tasting Honey" award in the State of Florida, as a member of The Florida Beekeepers Association,

A recognition that highlights her dedication and skill in this age-old craft.

Emily's award-winning honey is harvested from the tupelo trees found in the Apalachicola River basin. These trees produce nectar that results in honey with a light, floral taste and a smooth, buttery texture. The tupelo tree is unique to this region, making the honey from Wewahitchka highly prized and sought after worldwide. Competing for the "Best Tasting Honey" award among seasoned beekeepers was no small feat, and Emily's victory speaks volumes about her talent and commitment.



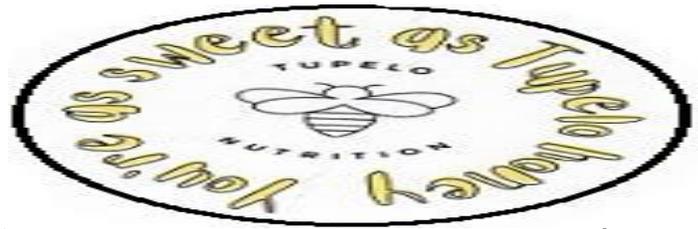
Despite her youth, Emily has quickly become an accomplished beekeeper, managed her own hives and produced honey that stands out for its flavor and quality. Her involvement with the Gulf County Beekeepers Association has provided her with invaluable resources and mentorship, enabling her to refine her techniques and expand her knowledge of beekeeping. Emily's journey into beekeeping began at a young age when she became fascinated by the bees in her family's garden. This early interest grew into a passion as she learned more about the critical role bees play in our ecosystem. Today, Emily is not only a skilled beekeeper but also a passionate advocate for the beekeeping industry, encouraging others, especially young people, to explore this rewarding and environmentally vital field. **TW**

Wewahitchka, affectionately known as "Wewa" by locals, is renowned for its tupelo honey. The area's swampy landscape, with its towering tupelo trees, is one of the few places in the world where this unique honey is produced. The honey's distinct taste and high quality make it a staple of the local economy, and the annual Tupelo Honey Festival, held every May, celebrates the harvest season with a variety of honey-related activities, including tastings, sales, and educational demonstrations. Her success at the State Level and within the Gulf County Beekeepers Association serves as an inspiration to other young people in the community, showing that with hard work and dedication, they too can achieve great things in the beekeeping world.

Emily's story is more than just a personal success; it's a testament to the potential of young people to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the environment. In an era where bee populations are under threat from various environmental pressures, beekeeping has never been more important. Through her achievements, Emily is helping to raise awareness about the significance of beekeeping and the vital role bees play in our ecosystem.

As she continues to grow in her craft, Emily hopes to inspire others, particularly the youth of Wewahitchka, to take an interest in beekeeping. Whether through participating in local beekeeping clubs, attending the Tupelo Honey Festival, or simply learning more about the importance of bees, there are many ways for young people to get involved. For those interested in experiencing the world of beekeeping firsthand, visiting one of Wewahitchka's local apiaries, such as Smiley Honey, is a great way to start. These apiaries offer tours and tastings, giving visitors a chance to learn about the process of honey production and the care that goes into maintaining healthy hives.

Emily Flowers' journey is a shining example of how passion, perseverance, and community support can lead to remarkable achievements. Her success not only brings pride to Wewahitchka but also shines a light on the importance of nurturing the next generation of beekeepers. TW



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## **Wewahitchka City Commission Meeting Highlights: A Year in Review**

by Tom Wynn

Over the past twelve months, the Wewahitchka City Commission has discussed many important topics during their meetings that impact the community. Here's a summary of the main issues:

1. **Road Improvements:** A significant concern has been the condition of Corn Griffin Road. Residents have highlighted the need for paving this road, and the Commission is exploring funding options to address these repairs, which are essential for safe travel.
2. **New Firehouse Construction:** The construction of a new firehouse has been a major focus. With a new contractor hired, the city is moving forward with reconstruction and necessary repairs. This facility will improve fire services and ensure faster emergency response times for the community.
3. **BP Oil Spill Grant:** Wewahitchka received a \$2 million grant as part of the BP oil spill recovery efforts. This funding is aimed at various community projects to help improve local infrastructure and services affected by the spill.
4. **Budget Matters:** The city has been reviewing its budget for the fiscal year, discussing the millage rate and examining past audits to ensure financial stability. Careful budgeting is crucial for funding city services and future projects.
5. **Public Works Projects:** The Commission has been working on public works improvements, such as upgrading the sewer plant's transfer switch. These upgrades are part of efforts to make city services more efficient and reliable.
6. **Environmental Concerns:** The issue of illegal dumping in city rights-of-way has also been a topic of discussion. The Commission is looking

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for solutions to address this problem and improve cleanliness in the community.

7. **City Employees Licensing:** Another important topic has been ensuring that city employees are properly licensed for the operation of the water and sewage plants. This is essential for maintaining compliance with state regulations and ensuring the safety and quality of services provided to residents.
8. **Ordinances and Planning:** Several ordinances have been reviewed, including amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and changes in land use for specific properties. These discussions help guide future development and land use in Wewahitchka.
9. **Community Engagement:** City officials have been working to engage with residents, encouraging public input during meetings. This involvement helps ensure that community members have a say in local decisions and initiatives.
10. **Infrastructure Maintenance:** The Commission has discussed maintenance projects for city buildings and facilities, including repairs to parks and recreational areas. Keeping these areas well-maintained is important for the enjoyment of residents.

These meetings show Wewahitchka's commitment to addressing immediate needs, such as road and firehouse improvements, while also planning for the future of the community. **TW**



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**ROMANS 12:9**



Photo by Mrs. Lyn Wynn

### CHIPOLA AVE. GETS A DITCH CLEANING!! By Tom Wynn

Over the past 46 years this has only happened twice, counting this time around. Many of our Ditches in Gulf County have had a much needed clean out. "Team Chipola" are now happy campers as our Ditches are made ready for the next Gully-Washer. Thank you, Gulf County Road Department! **TW**

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### The Government Our Founding Fathers Gave Us: A Republic! By AECS Tom Wynn USCG (Ret.)

In 1776, our founding fathers made a bold decision: they wanted to create a new type of government for America. They didn't want a king to rule over everyone like in England. Instead, they wanted a government that represented the people's voice. This form of government is called a "**republic**," meaning that people elect leaders to make laws and decisions for them. **Benjamin Franklin famously said, "A republic, if you can keep it,"** meaning that it was up to the people to protect this kind of government.

No matter what you hear on TV, radio, the internet, or from any "talking heads" in the media or a "politricksters," we are not, nor have we ever been, **a democracy!** Need I say more?

### The Separation of Powers

To make sure no one person or group had too much power, our founding fathers created **the separation of powers doctrine**. They divided the government into three branches:

1. **Legislative Branch (Congress)** - Makes the laws.
2. **Executive Branch (President)** - Enforces the laws.

### 3. **Judicial Branch (Courts)** - Interprets the laws.

These branches are designed to keep each other in check, preventing any one branch from becoming too powerful. **James Madison**, one of our founding fathers, explained, **“The accumulation of all powers... in the same hands... may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.”** In other words, when one person or group holds all the power, it can lead to unfair rule. The separation of powers helps avoid that.

#### **The Bill of Rights**

In 1791, a few years after the U.S. Constitution was written, the first 10 amendments, or changes, were added to protect individual freedoms. These are known as the *Bill of Rights*. They include rights that are important to every American:

- **Freedom of speech** - Allows people to speak their minds without fear of punishment.
- **Freedom of religion** - Lets people choose their own beliefs.
- **Right to bear arms** - Gives citizens the right to protect themselves.

These rights help protect people from an overreaching government. By writing down these rights in the Bill of Rights, the founding fathers made sure that the government couldn't ignore them.

#### **“Shall Not Be Infringed”**

The phrase “shall not be infringed” appears in the Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights. This Amendment states that “the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” When something “shall not be infringed,” it means no one should interfere or take it away. The founding fathers wanted to make sure that the right to own and carry weapons for personal protection and defense would be secure, even if the government grew stronger.

#### **A Republic to Protect Our Freedoms**

In creating a republic, the founding fathers aimed for a government that would serve the people and protect their freedoms. The separation of powers, Bill of Rights, and phrases like “shall not be infringed” are all ways to keep the government in check, making sure it serves the people, not the other way around. It's our job today to understand these ideas and protect the freedoms they built into our government.

By understanding our country's foundations, we can help keep our republic strong—just as Benjamin Franklin and the founding fathers hoped we would. **TW**

## **The Importance of Preparing for Blackouts in Florida**

*By AECS Tom Wynn, USCG (Ret)*

Florida is no stranger to blackouts. Anyone who has lived here, especially in coastal areas, has experienced power outages due to hurricanes, tropical storms, and even transformer fires. Growing up with my father, an Electronic Tech in the USCG, I learned early as a boy in South Florida **how important storm preparation was**. Because of this, we didn't suffer much during those days. Over my lifetime, I've experienced many bad storms and hurricanes. During those times, I often had to go to the base and fly in rescue helicopters to help others as part of my duty to our country. Other times, I sent my family to safety while I stayed home to protect my house. **My lifetime of training and experience can make a difference in life-or-death situations**, and it's something I don't take for granted.

What about you, though, the next time the lights flick off? **Are you ready for it?** Remember Hurricane Michael? **Are you and your family prepared for another possible storm of that magnitude?** Life isn't always “a box of chocolates.” Sometimes, it demands readiness and resilience. **Prepare now so that you're not left sitting in complete darkness, hoping for daylight and safety to arrive.** In severe situations, cities may even shut down sewage and drinking water systems due to a lack of backup generators or other planning failures. You can't depend on everything to work like it normally does.

Thinking back to what happened after Hurricane Michael: **ATMs were down, credit cards were useless, gas stations couldn't pump fuel, and there was no drinking water or air conditioning.** Everyone faced cold showers, strange bugs coming out of flooded areas, nails and roof tacks puncturing tires every few days from torn roofs along the streets. Huge piles of storm debris lined both sides of the roads, and life was a daily struggle. **Are you ready for a repeat of that? Are you prepared to handle another “Event Horizon”?**

#### **Essential Tips to Prepare for Power Outages**

Preparing for a blackout means more than just having a flashlight. Here's a simple list to help you get started:

##### **1. Have a Basic Supply Kit Ready**

A basic emergency kit should be a priority in every Florida home. **Your kit should include:**

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Candles or lanterns (with matches or a lighter)
- Non-perishable food and bottled water (at least one gallon per person, per day)

- First aid supplies
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Portable phone chargers or power banks

Store these supplies in a designated spot that's easy to access in the dark. This way, if a blackout happens, **you won't be scrambling around in the dark to find what you need.**

## 2. Consider Alternative Power Sources

**A generator can be an invaluable tool during extended blackouts.** If you decide to get one, make sure to read the instructions thoroughly and follow safety guidelines to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Solar chargers and power banks are also helpful for keeping smaller devices like phones and radios powered.

## 3. Plan for Food and Water Needs

When the power goes out, refrigerators and freezers can start to warm up quickly. Try to keep the refrigerator door closed as much as possible. **An unopened refrigerator can keep food cold for about four hours, and a freezer will hold its temperature for 24-48 hours.** Have a cooler and ice packs handy to keep critical items cold longer.

## Be Ready to Evacuate If Needed

If a major storm or blackout is severe, **you may need to leave your hometown and head to the safety of friends or relatives.** Be prepared with **"bug-out" backpacks for each family member, including pets.** TW



## History of Gulf Correctional Institute Located 4 Miles North of Wewahitchka

by Melea Corbin

**March 1988** - Secretary Richard L. Duggar ceremoniously stamped the deed for what would later be known as the Gulf Forestry camp. The original work camp opened later that year with a promise to be "a good neighbor" in Gulf County, opening to provide over 60 jobs and a commitment to economic growth.

**August 1990** - The groundbreaking ceremony for Gulf Correctional Institution laid the foundation for what would become a pillar of Gulf County's history. While the idea of

a prison faced opposition by residents, local officials remained steadfast in their vision, reassuring the citizens with the promise of 300 new jobs and a brighter future for Gulf County.

In preparation for the opening, supplies and other goods were sourced locally to help boost the county's economy. Local organizations played a crucial role by assisting with the opening of the institution by bussing correctional officer trainees to the Gulf Coast State College campus for correctional officer training. This collaborative endeavor not only underscored the commitment to community integration, but also was a testament to the unwavering spirit of unity driving Gulf County forward.

**1991** – Gulf CI annexes Franklin Work Camp.

**July 1992**- The first two dorms of Gulf CI officially open under the leadership of Warden Ron McAndrew. Construction continued until 1995 to complete what would be known as the Main Unit.

**1995** – Adjacent to the Main Unit, construction of Gulf CI Annex begins.

**1997**—Gulf CI is featured in the Golden Globe Award-winning movie Ulee's Gold. The prison's exterior and visitation park are portrayed as parts of "Central Florida Correctional Institution" in the plot of the film. This feature was a significant moment for the institution and the community and shined a light on the quaint town of Wewahitchka.

**May 1999** – Gulf CI Annex opened and became the largest capacity institution in the state. By the time all dorms opened, roughly 600 Gulf County and surrounding area residents were hired to support the mission of the institution, becoming the largest employer in the county.

**June 1999** – Gulf CI is nominated for the Silver School-to-Work Zone Award in recognition for its community service contributions to local schools in Bay, Gulf, and Franklin Counties.

**December 2000** – Gulf CI makes local headlines for directly contributing to the economic boom of Gulf County.

**June 2005** – Franklin Correctional Institution officially opens, and the Franklin Work Camp is annexed by the new institution.

**September 2010** – Gulf CI's K9 Team and K9 Daisy were recognized during Florida Missing Children's Day for their contributions to the search and rescue in the 'Baby Shannon' Dedrick case.

**October 10, 2018** – Essential staff at Gulf CI made final preparations at home before heading to their shift. As each advisory came through, Hurricane Michael's winds intensified as the storm barreled towards the panhandle with increasing force. Hurricane Michael makes landfall 26 miles from Gulf CI at Mexico Beach. Communication with the outside world ceased around 12:30 CST, prompting staff

to shelter together amidst the violent destruction around them.

As the eye of the storm passed over the institution, officers worked together to relocate staff and inmates to safer locations within the facility to survive the remainder of the storm. Despite the impassable roadways for miles surrounding the institution, staff worked tirelessly for 24 hours to clear a path once the storm had passed. In a remarkable display of solidarity, other FDC staff members from across the state came to assist Gulf CI to aid in the recovery efforts.

One of the largest mass evacuations successfully commenced, and nearly 3,000 inmates were evacuated to other facilities within 48 hours. Gulf CI Main Unit and Annex were forced to close for repairs in the wake of the devastation. Tragically, 100 staff members suffered the complete loss of their homes due to Michael's relentless winds and flooding rains.

Despite the overwhelming destruction wrought by the hurricane, the staff of Gulf CI demonstrated remarkable unity, coming together as a family to begin cleaning up and rebuilding their lives.

**June 2019** – Gulf CI's Main Unit begins a phased re-opening after repairs are made to the institution.

**April 2021** – Gulf Forestry Camp is closed temporarily.

**March 2022** – The Chipola Complex wildfires consume nearly 30,000 acres of Gulf, Bay, and Calhoun counties. Institutional staff from across the panhandle worked together to evacuate nearly 1,700 inmates to neighboring institutions away from the fire's path.

**2024** – Despite its primary function of keeping the public safe, Gulf CI continues to actively engage in community service. From volunteering at the local food pantry, to bringing joy to children in Gulf County each Christmas, staff at Gulf CI always have a heart to serve and look forward to serving for years to come. **MC**

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## The Ongoing Need for Paving Corn Griffin Road in Wewahitchka

by Tom Wynn

Corn Griffin Road in Wewahitchka has been a topic of concern for local residents and the surrounding community for quite some time. This road, named after Corn Griffin, a celebrated professional boxer and military veteran, has faced ongoing issues that need to be addressed. The improper leveling of the dirt road and the digging on both

sides have made travel difficult and unsafe for those who rely on it.

Residents have voiced their frustrations about the condition of Corn Griffin Road, (this road is in the city limits of Wewahitchka) emphasizing the need for proper paving. The road's uneven surface causes difficulty driving home for residents, making it challenging to get in and out of their driveways during rain or downpours. Additionally, the side ditches fill with dirt and sand after rain, causing further issues for residents. Many in the community have come together to express their hope that local leaders will find the funds necessary to resolve these issues (The Mayor and the City Engineer, have figured the cost of paving the road would be approximately \$250,000 Dollars).

Mayor Phillip Gaskin and the city council have taken action by visiting the road with residents. They are working alongside County Administrator Mr. Michael Hammond to assess the situation firsthand. Their involvement shows a commitment to addressing the community's needs and finding solutions to the long-standing issues on Corn Griffin Road.

Corn Griffin Road holds special significance for Wewahitchka. It was named by James F. Rish, the father of Jim Earnest Rish, both being local beekeepers who built the nearby neighborhood, approximately, in 2002. As I believe it is the last road within the city limits that remains unpaved, it is essential for both residents and visitors.

With the collective prayers and involvement of the local community, there is hope for the future of Corn Griffin Road being paved. The community believes that with continued advocacy and support from local officials, they can achieve a well-paved blacktop road. Such improvements would not only enhance the safety of those living on and traveling this road but also honor the legacy of a Famous Military Veteran and Famous American Boxer, Mr. "Corn" Griffin.

The paving of Corn Griffin Road is a vital need for the Wewahitchka community. With the dedication of local leaders, residents, and the desire for a safe and accessible road, there is optimism for a positive outcome.

By working together, the community can transform this famous dirt road into a safe passage for all who drive down it daily or to deliver packages, mail and visitors will not be afraid to travel down it on rainy days, able to drive down it safely. **TW**

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**Ephesians 2: 4-5**

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The Wewa News is a locally owned and operated local newspaper, created solely for the enjoyment of the people who live in the Wewa area. Our purpose is to bring "Good News" and "Whatever" to our locals' attention. I hope to bring back some joy and fun into our lives again and bring us closer than ever before. Thank you to those that support our efforts. The Wewa News operates in the Private. Freedom of speech and of the Press are fundamental to our effort of expression, as well as God given rights as men and women on the land called Florida. The Wewa News will be Published approximately 4 times a year, Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall Issues. Due to travel, family time, and health issues. I may decide to publish a Surprise, "Special Edition" occasionally. Thank you all for your support and positive feedback. The publishing of The Wewa News will be a periodical as of 1 January 2024 until further notice. We will notify the public via word of mouth and via Facebook pages the day it is published. Hard copies will be placed at Wewa Subway entrance and the City Library. **TW**

**Up Coming Events and Other:  
Mark Your Calendars**

**The Local Bee Association** meets at 6pm Glad Tidings Assembly of God Church 138 E. Orange Ave. in Wewa meeting room in the far Eastside of the Church on the first Tuesday of each month at 6pm.

**The Friends of the Wewa Library's** meet at the Wewa Library on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM. Come early and "Meet & Greet" with us in the conference room.

**Wewahitchka Historical Society** meets every month on the Third Thursday at 6pm at the Presbyterian Church in Hwy 71.

**City Hall Meetings:** The city meetings are held on the last Thursday of each month sharply at 6PM CT, unless posted otherwise.

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**Created for you by my son Aaron Wynn**