




**BEFORE THEY WERE VILLAGERS | C5**
Steve Lee moved to the U.S. at 16 years old and worked in the aluminum industry.


6 a.m.

72°


9 a.m.

78°

12 p.m.

87°

3 p.m.

93°

6 p.m.

92°

9 p.m.

83°

**SYLAISHA TAYLOR ON NATURE | C1**
The Villages Science and Technology Club is hosting a lightning safety talk Monday.

TOP WORLD AND NATION NEWS

PUTIN TIGHTENS GRIP AT START OF NEW TERM, A5

Across the Nation: Stormy Daniels takes stand at Trump's trial. **A3**

Around the World: Third phase of voting begins in India's elections. **A30**

In Business: Fed indicates rates to remain higher for longer. **C10**

ARTS & CULTURE

AREA THEATER ENDS SEASON ON HUMOROUS NOTE

Leesburg's Melon Patch Theatre is ending its season on a farce with its production of "One Man, Two Guvnors," which opens Friday. **A16**

SPORTS NEWS

HESS CATCHES FIRE, OVERTAKES GOMEZ IN PBA50

Tuesday marked day two of the PBA50 The Villages Classic at Spanish Springs Lanes and Tom Hess brought his A-game. **B1**

COMING UP

VHA PRESENTS ITS LARGEST EVENT OF YEAR TODAY

"Our Community, Today and Tomorrow" is at 7 p.m. at The Sharon. Re-watch the event on VNN at 8 a.m., noon, 4 and 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

OUR TOWN | HURRICANE SEASON 2024



Bill Tenney, left, a sales associate at Burry's Ace Hardware in La Plaza Grande and a resident of the Village of Country Club Hills, assists Bob and Carolyn Yankovitz, of Stonecrest, with the purchase of lanterns as part of their preparations during last year's hurricane season.

George Horsford | Daily Sun

Prepare Now for a Busy Storm Season

BY VERONICA WERNICKE | Daily Sun Senior Writer

It's Hurricane Preparedness Week, the annual reminder that the upcoming hurricane season is not far away and now is the time to prepare. Researchers from the Colorado State University Tropical Meteorology Project are predicting an "extremely active" 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, which runs June 1 through Nov. 30. They predict 23 named storms and 115 named storm days, which count all tropical cyclones with winds of at least 39 mph.

Although The Villages is far enough inland to escape storm surge and onshore winds, it is still important to be prepared, especially for possible extended power outages. The Villages Public Safety Department hosted its 17th annual Hurricane Expo on Friday at Savannah Center so more than 40 local businesses,

Please See **PREPARATION, A7**

Villages Charter School Reveals New Look at Buffalo Ridge Campus

The campus at the northern end of the community will open for the 2024-25 school year with a new look.

By GARRETT SHIFLET | Daily Sun Staff Writer

The Villages Charter School's Buffalo Ridge campus will usher in a new era with the start of the 2024-25 school year. Details about upcoming changes were revealed Tuesday night at the final Buffalo HERD meeting of the current school year. The moves will complete a transformation for VCS that began with the opening of a second campus in Middleton last fall. The entire process has been eight years of planning and almost four years in the making, said Randy McDaniel, director of education. "You're basically refreshing

an entire campus that's been serving students for 24 years at the Buffalo Ridge campus," McDaniel said. "If you do it right, and I think we have, it could serve students for another quarter century." For the 2024-25 school year, The Villages Charter Middle School at Buffalo Ridge will be at 251 Buffalo Trail — the former site of The Villages High School. Extensive renovations at that building will be completed this summer and ready for classes this fall. The renovations include new flooring, paint, signage,

Please See **VCS, A6**

ONLY IN THE VILLAGES

By Taylor Strickland

The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra finished its 20th anniversary season with a magical finale that included a mesmerizing, unexpected guest.

Patrons of The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center were brimming with curiosity about the identity of the mystery soprano who dominated the stage Monday night. "She was magnificent," said Mary Yankowski, of the Village of Polo Ridge. "It just gives me goosebumps." Every year, the VPO and a number of opera singers come together under the baton of Maestro Pasquale Valerio to perform a program of beloved arias and romanzas from operas

Please See **GALA, A6**

EXPLORE & EXPERIENCE

OUT & ABOUT IN THE VILLAGES

Try This Today: Give Beach Volleyball a Try at A Location Near You

Bring the beach to you with sand volleyball in Florida's Friendliest Hometown. There are eight sand volleyball courts at five locations in The Villages, and the sport is offered at different skill levels, from beginner to advanced, so anyone can join in. Competitive players can take part in competitions or tournaments, like Sandy Smaltz, of the Village of Bridgeport at Creekside Landing, did at The Villages Senior Games. Check The Villages Recreation & Parks publication to find the sand volleyball court nearest you.

—Greg Hughes, Daily Sun



George Horsford | Daily Sun

IN ENTERTAINMENT

Lady Lake Library Hosts A Story Time

Find out more, **D1**

Plus: Find the lineup of entertainment at the town squares, theaters and beyond, **A15**

AT RECREATION CENTERS

Happening near you: From aqua aerobics to Zumba and everything in between, there's fun for everyone, **C8-9**



Plan your perfect day in The Villages, **D1**

Recipes	D1
Advice	D3
Poetry	D4-5
Comics	D6
Puzzles	D7-8
Horoscope	D9

from the front page



The Villages Charter School’s Buffalo Ridge campus is undergoing renovations that include new flooring, paint, signage, technology, teaching screens, furniture and layouts.

VCS

Continued from A1

technology, interactive teaching screens, furniture and classroom layouts. Former VHS academy classrooms will be repurposed for the middle school’s needs such as the former Culinary Arts Academy being eliminated to add space to the cafeteria. “We feel like, by the end of this summer, that we’ll have two campuses that are state of the art,” McDaniel said. “Modern technology, upgraded furniture, upgraded paint schemes and school logos are all on the inside. No matter what campus you’re attending, whether its Buffalo Ridge or Middleton, you’re going to a world-class facility.” VCS meets high standards in test scores, graduation rates and other measures of achievement. The school as a whole earned an “A” rating every year since 2003 that the Florida Department of Education gave school grades. VCS once again earned the “School of Excellence” designation from the Florida Department of Education this year. It has achieved the award each time it has been presented since the program was created by the Florida Legislature in 2017.

The charter school will have a capacity of 6,500 students spread across the two campuses with around 500 students per grade level. “I have loved seeing the changes to the new middle school but also blending in parts of the original building such as the media center circulation desk and the beautiful Buffalo chandeliers in the gym lobby,” said Peggy Irwin, VCMS principal

who will oversee the Buffalo Ridge campus next school year. “I think we will have the premier middle school campus in the state when all the renovations are done.” The rest of the Buffalo Ridge campus also will be reorganized for the 2024-25 school year. The Primary Center, made up of kindergarten and first grade, will move to 521 Old School Road. The Intermediate Center, which houses second and third grades, will move to 350 Tatonka Terrace. The 4th and 5th Grade Center will move to 450 Village Campus Circle. Each of those buildings was renovated over the previous three summers.

Growth has propelled all of these changes to the campus. “We’re anticipating to grow by 300 students each year over the next few years,” McDaniel said. “We believe this is going to give us a nice long runway to serve all the families and folks who want to come here.” The renovations, however, will accommodate the increases. “I love to see the growth as we are able to offer more students the opportunity to attend the charter school,” Irwin said. “Renovating the campuses allows the students to have up-to-date technology and keeps the campuses on the same level of design so that you have the same experiences regardless of what campus you attend.” More changes also are anticipated for the Buffalo Ridge campus in future years. VCS expects to open a subsidiary charter school, which will serve students on the autism spectrum. It will

take over the building at 420 Village Campus Circle, which is currently known as the VCES Primary Center. “We currently have students in our school with the autism identification, but we’re able to serve Individualized Education Programs in the regular classroom through support with our inclusion model,” McDaniel said. “But some students need more, so we’ve been thinking about this for a while and now is a good time to do it.” The school is in the early planning phases but is expected to open for the start of the 2025-26 school year. It is still subject to approval by the Florida Department of Education and the Sumter County School Board.

Staff writer Garrett Shiftlet can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5367, or garrett.shiftlet@thevillagesmedia.com.

GALA

Continued from A1

like Puccini’s “Turandot,” Mozart’s “Don Giovanni” and Verdi’s “La Traviata” at the orchestra’s annual fundraising gala, “Magic Moments of Opera Scenes.” Most audience members were pleased to witness the return of tenor Francesco Malapena and baritone Stephen Mumbert, but it was the surprise debut of Bolivian-American soprano Lynette Tapia, who was not listed in the show’s program, that truly captured their attention. Acclaimed throughout the opera world for her “canary” embellishments and “crystal-line coloratura,” Tapia is a winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions as well as a first-place and “Prix de la publique” winner in the Operalia Concours International de Voix d’Opera Placido Domingo. She recently took on the demanding role of Marie in “La Fille Du Régiment” by Donizetti with Parnassus Society in Orange County, California.

At the VPO concert, Tapia charmed the audience with her performance of “La ci darem la Mano” as Zerlina from “Don Giovanni,” which she sang opposite Mumbert. Laughter rang out from the crowd as the Don seduced the impressionable ingenue away from her own wedding and the two minced about the stage. Tapia and Malapena earned three standing ovations for their rendition of “Quel guardo, il cavaliere” from “Don Pasquale,” followed by another for Tapia, Malapena and Mumbert’s combined song, which Valerio dedicated to all the mothers in the audience in honor of Mother’s Day. “It’s the best night ever,” Mary Feichtel said. “I thought it was just outstanding.”



Lynette Tapia, of the Village of Dabney, sings as The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra performs during “Magical Moments of Opera Scenes” on Monday at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

The Village of Poinciana resident, who came with her husband, Greg, said she’s never really been into opera before, but when visiting The Sharon and listening to the VPO, she always enjoys it. She said the performance from Mumbert, Malapena and Tapia made her want to go home and read librettos to better understand them. Like most of the audience, however, Feichtel was mostly filled with praise for Tapia. Tapia joined the “Magic Moments of Opera Scenes” after being contacted by Valerio. “I’ve known Pasquale for 17 years,” Tapia said. “I met him in Europe, where I work and my husband as well, who’s a tenor. You’ll be meeting him soon.”

Despite it being Mumbert’s birthday, which the VPO honored with a spirited rendition of “Happy Birthday,” patrons flocked to Tapia at the end of the show to introduce themselves and ask if they would see her at

more operas in The Villages. Thankfully, the answer was a resounding yes, as Tapia recently traded her life in California for one in The Villages. The decision was made at the behest of her husband and fellow opera singer, John Osborn. “The main reason we are here is because he was like, ‘I want to retire at 60,’” said Tapia, who is now a resident of the Village of Dabney. “We’ve been at this a long time. People think it’s glamorous, but it’s a lot of work.” Despite the lack of formal announcement, Tapia considers her debut in The Villages a success. She said the community can expect to see a lot more of both her and her husband in the future. The VPO returns for its 21st season this fall. For more information, go to thevillagesentertainment.com. Senior writer Taylor Strickland can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5334, or taylor.strickland@thevillagesmedia.com.

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