



BEFORE THEY WERE VILLAGERS | D5
Marilyn Williams bred Arabian horses for 14 years and worked as a flight attendant for six years.

6 a.m. 9 a.m. 12 p.m. 3 p.m. 6 p.m. 9 p.m.
56° 63° 76° 83° 79° 70°

KEITH PEARLMAN ON COMMUNITY | D1
Go on an insider tour of what's happening now and what's coming next to The Villages.



IN SPORTS | B1

Will Richard and top-seeded Florida run away from Maryland's 'Crab Five' for 87-71 Sweet 16 March Madness victory. Richard scored 15 points to lead the Gators.



IN LIFESTYLE | E1

Head over to The Villages Polo Club from 3 to 5 p.m. today for its Friday polo match, complete with live music from local singer Geri Blount.

Gates for the event open at 1:30 p.m. and the match starts at 3 p.m. Guests can sit in the lower level or tailgate for \$20 per person at the gate. A \$5 upgrade is available for seats in the pavilion's upper level.

First Free Black Town Celebrates Founders Day



George Horsford | Daily Sun

Thomas Jackson, left, of St. Augustine, and fellow members of the Fort Mose Militia reenactors fire their muskets Saturday during the Founders Day celebration for Fort Mose, the first legally sanctioned free Black settlement.

By BREA JONES | Daily Sun Staff Writer

Hidden among clustered palmetto and oak trees and underneath marshland, with swarms of mosquitoes hovering throughout, the land of Fort Mose Historic State Park in St. Augustine contains lessons about the price of freedom.

"(Fort Mose) has to do with every aspect of the founding of the country and this country's history," said Lucas Finsel, a double major in public history and anthropology from nearby Flagler College. "I love the people over there. As a young person,

Fort Mose feels like a hidden gem that is important for us as Americans in modern day. The story of the fort touches home in so many ways. It shows that people can come together. Its story is not as well-known as it should be. It's important that more people know about the history."

During a Founders Day event Saturday morning, reenactors

Please See **FORT MOSE, A6**

IN NATIONAL NEWS | A9

FIREFIIGHTERS MAKE SOME PROGRESS ON WILDFIRES IN THE CAROLINAS

Despite progress, fire danger from dry and windy conditions remains and hundreds have been asked to leave their homes in North Carolina and South Carolina as large fires burn in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

IN NATIONAL NEWS

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS BIDEN RULE ON GHOST GUNS

The 7-2 opinion found that existing gun laws allow regulation of the kits increasingly linked to criminal activity. **A13**

IN WORLD NEWS

U.K. PLUGS HOLE IN FINANCES AS GROWTH FORECAST HALVED

The British economy will only grow by 1% this year, half the rate previously anticipated, according to officials. **A14**

ONLY IN THE VILLAGES

By Taylor Strickland

If you've ever wanted to take center stage in a local production, this could be your big break. Significant Productions recently announced the lineup for The Studio Theatre Tierra del Sol's 10th season and is looking for talent in four different locations, including The Villages.

Please See **AUDITIONS, A5**



Submitted photo

Sumter County Fire & EMS now deploys a fleet of 12 ambulances equipped with the latest medical technology to serve residents of the county outside of The Villages.

New Ambulance Fleet Ready to Serve Sumter County

By KEITH PEARLMAN | Daily Sun Managing Editor

Sumter County Fire & EMS finally has a brand-new fleet of ambulances, enhancing emergency medical response across the county.

The county fire department recently received the last of 12 ambulances ordered in May 2022, using about \$3.05 million in federal funds from the COVID-19

American Rescue Plan Act.

"It's great to have the entire fleet now," said Rob Hanson, Sumter County fire chief. "Everybody is very pleased, very happy to have our own ambulances. They have the newest technology and are more appropriate for the level

Please See **AMBULANCES, A5**

INSIDE TODAY'S DAILY SUN

TEST YOUR NEWS IQ

POLAR BEAR DEBUTS, INCREASED DEFENSE SPENDING AND COUNTRY COOPERATION

1. Twin 2-year-old polar bears Kallik and Kallu made their public debut Tuesday at the St. Louis Zoo. The twins come as a replacement for Kali the polar bear, part of a big-league bear trade with the Toledo Zoo. Kallik and Kallu's Inuit names, respectively, mean what? **Page A4**

- a) Lightning and thunder c) River and lake
b) Wind and sky d) Snow and sleet

3. Officers in Turkey have arrested how many people following eight days of massive protests? **Page A15**

- a) 2,200
b) 1,850
c) 1,900
d) 1,750

4. Leaders of which two countries met Wednesday, creating an action plan to work together? **Page A16**

- a) Brazil and Japan
b) Vietnam and Chile
c) Somalia and Ethiopia
d) India and Singapore



2. Sweden's prime minister aims to ramp up defense spending to a target of 4.5% of the Nordic country's gross domestic product. **Page A14**



Make it a Great Day!

Weather	D2
Recreation Listings	D6-7
Recipes	E1
Comics	E4
Puzzles	E5-6
Horoscopes	E7
TV Tonight	E8

BY THE NUMBERS

\$69

The average amount that Americans spend per month on video streaming, according to a Deloitte report. That price spans across an average four different services. By comparison, cable or satellite TV customers reported spending \$125 per month on average. Forty-seven percent of those surveyed said they pay too much for the services they use, and 41% believe the content on these streaming services isn't worth the price they pay.



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AUDITIONS

Continued from A1

Significant Productions is the creative force behind The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center and The Studio. The not-for-profit theater production company set The Studio's theme for Season 10 as "Echoes of the Past, Visions of the Future."

"It is such a special season for us, because we are celebrating 10 years," said Angel Creeks, associate artistic director for SigPro. "We believe the stories we are telling will be impactful and also joyous. Being a part of this season will be an incredible experience for any actor."

The Studio's casting team usually holds a few auditions throughout the country, but this year they are broadening their reach to include New York City, the home of many leads in previous seasons. Auditions will take place throughout April and May in Chicago and Orlando as well.

New York auditions will take place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 8 at Ripley-Grier Studios in New York City, followed by Chicago auditions from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. April 10-12 at Theater Wit.

Orlando auditions will take place from 10 a.m. to 4:50 p.m. May 3-4 at Orlando Shakes, and auditions in The Villages will be from 10 a.m. to 3:50 p.m. May 11 at The Sharon.

Each audition will be overseen by the SigPro casting team, which consists of SigPro co-founder and artistic director Whitney Morse, Creeks and literary and casting associate Jordan Gregson.

"Our casting team is super,



The Studio Theatre Tierra del Sol is opening auditions for Season 10, "Echoes of the Past, Visions of the Future," which was announced a couple of weeks after its most recent production, "Pippin," finished its run.

Submitted photo

super, super eager and excited to meet everybody who comes in," Gregson said. "We are really hoping and wishing the best for everybody we see."

The Studio also is accepting video submissions. However, Gregson said, space for video submissions is limited, so it is recommended that potential applicants submit as soon as possible.

To be considered for plays and musicals, applicants must bring a 60- to 90-second monologue and a 16-bar cut of a musical theater song in the style of the shows listed for Season 10. For in-person auditions, Gregson encourages preparing a contrasting monologue if requested.

Although performers are required to choose a musical theater song in the style of Season 10 shows, they will not be auditioning for individual shows, nor will additional auditions take place later in the season. At The Studio, each show is fully cast before the season begins.

"We don't do auditions at The Studio production by

production," Gregson said. "Technically, anybody who auditions for us is auditioning for the entire season — they're auditioning for everything — and then once our team gets the callback, we're calling back performers for specific roles."

Even if a performer is not cast as one of the principal actors, they may be cast as a swing or understudy. In fact, many Villages residents join The Studio productions as swings or understudies, which means they prepare to cover other actors' roles to act as replacements on short notice.

The Studio practices nontraditional casting, a method designed to increase artistic opportunities for women, actors of color, seniors, and actors with disabilities for roles where race, gender, age or disability are not required. To that end, all actors are encouraged to audition — especially, Gregson said, Villages residents.

"We encourage Villagers to audition because at The Studio, we are focused on community,"

Gregson said. "We are creating and telling stories for our patrons, who are Villagers, and it's a unique opportunity to have them participate with us to establish that community."

Those who have performed at The Studio within the past five years, including understudies, do not need to sign up again. Instead, they can simply fill out an interest form to express their interest in being cast in Season 10.

For more information about auditions, go to thesharonstudio.com/auditions.html and sign up. Returning performers can find the interest form link on the same page.

"Our company prides itself on living and breathing the motto 'artists first,'" Creeks said. "I encourage everyone to find out for themselves. Please join us. I assure you it will be hard work but a rewarding experience with SigPro."

Senior writer Taylor Strickland can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5334, or taylor.strickland@thevillagesmedia.com.

AMBULANCES

Continued from A1

of EMS service we provide in the county, especially the more rural areas."

Sumter Fire & EMS took over ambulance transports on Oct. 1, 2022, for its coverage areas outside of The Villages. It was using ambulances leased from American Medical Response and on loan from Citrus County while it awaited delivery of its own fleet.

"We are definitely happy to have all the ambulances in place," said Bradley Arnold, county administrator. "We appreciated AMR allowing us to lease their ambulances during our transition for the fire and EMS department to provide medical transport. We also appreciated Citrus County loaning us, at no cost, some of their surplus ambulances for that duration. That carried us through meeting the needs of the public."

Each of the 12 Road Rescue Ultramedic 170 ambulances are built using Ford F550 4x4 chassis and outfitted with equipment featuring the latest medical technology. The ambulances started coming off the production lines in September 2024.

"We got the first one in September, but as far as production goes, they can't complete all 12 of them at the same time," Hanson said.

The department took ownership of additional ambulances throughout the remainder of 2024 and early 2025.

"Now that we have all 12 of them here, we have the ability to spread them

around to each station and to implement a rotation," Hanson said. "It gives us more options to expand into those ambulances and call up additional ambulances as the call volume dictates."

Sumter Fire & EMS currently has six ambulances in service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It can operate up to nine ambulances during peak times if needed based on staffing, Hanson said.

Having 12 ambulances in the fleet allows the department to have reserves when units need to be taken off the road for preventative maintenance, Hanson said.

Ordering the ambulances was a drawn-out ordeal.

Former commissioner Doug Gilpin pushed for using the federal funds to order ambulances in 2021, when the commission at that time voted unanimously to keep Sumter Fire & EMS and The Villages Public Safety Department as separate entities, and for each of them to take over ambulance transports in their respective coverage areas.

His proposal at first was not acted upon as former commissioners Craig Estep, Oren Miller and Gary Search prioritized using the ARPA funding for improvements to water and sewer infrastructure throughout the county and expansion of broadband internet in rural areas.

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