

# LOCAL & STATE

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### JACKSONVILLE Police release video of officer fatally shooting dog

Authorities in Florida released body camera video of an officer fatally shooting a dog.

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office posted the video on Facebook on Friday, two days after officer Victor Jones shot the pit bull while responding to the report of a home alarm.

The video shows Jones walking around the property. Then the pit bull rushes toward him and barks. Jones cursed in fright and quickly shot the dog in the head.

The sheriff's office said Jones was "forced" to shoot the dog because he was in fear of his safety.

In a separate Facebook post, the pit bull's owner criticized Jones. Matt Long said the 11-year-old dog wasn't aggressive and has bad legs. Long said the dog, Prophet, "was just an old boy hanging out in his yard."

### PENSACOLA Man gets 7½ years for fatal hit- and-run crash

A Florida man has been sentenced to seven and a half years in prison for a fatal hit-and-run crash with a pedestrian.

The Pensacola News Journal reported that 29-year-old Lucas Beaty was sentenced Friday for failure to stop at the scene of a crash involving death.

Authorities say 56-year-old Eldred Williams was crossing a Pensacola street in November 2017 when Beaty's truck hit him. Instead of stopping to help, officials said Beaty drove home, parked his truck behind a fence and hid the damage with a garbage can.

Williams died at a hospital shortly after the crash.

Florida Highway Patrol ultimately ruled the collision an accident, saying Beaty would not have been charged if he had remained at the scene.

### TALLAHASSEE France, Florida sign agreement to preserve ancient shipwreck

France and Florida have signed a "declaration of intent" to preserve, protect and research a 16th century shipwreck off the state's coast.

Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner and Consul General of France in Miami Clément Leclerc announced the agreement Friday to protect what remains of La Trinite, which sank off the coast of Cape Canaveral during a 1565 hurricane.

The Trinite was the flagship of a fleet captained by Jean Ribault that was part of a conflict with Spain as the nations fought to colonize Florida.

Items from the ship were discovered in 2016 by a marine salvage company and led to a court battle over the rights to them. A judge ruled the artifacts were the property of France.

The agreement calls for artifacts removed from the site to be put on public display in Florida.

### TALLAHASSEE Parkland survivor David Hogg is going to Harvard University

Florida school shooting survivor and gun control advocate David Hogg is going to Harvard University.

Hogg announced his acceptance to the Cambridge, Massachusetts, university on Twitter Saturday. He said he plans to major in political science.

# The sound of Christmas

## Local man wins state of the art hearing aids in essay contest

By Linda Florea  
Correspondent

CLERMONT — Trash hauler Joseph Dimeglio, 47, got an early Christmas present this year — new hearing aids. But the present wasn't

from Santa, but the prize in an essay contest sponsored by Dr. Kristen Weinbaum, owner of Precision Hearing.

"I didn't think I would win," Dimeglio said. "There's always somebody that has it worse and always somebody that has it better too."

In his essay, Dimeglio explained that his hearing aids had been donated to



On Wednesday, Joe Dimeglio received a pair of hearing aids from D.r Kristen Weinbaum, owner of Precision Hearing. [LINDA FLOREA/CORRESPONDENT]

him in 2007 — the average lifespan of a hearing aid is about 5 years — and have

been repaired twice. As a  
**See SOUND, A4**



Some of the clients of Forward Paths pose for a group photo during their Christmas party at the home of its founder. [LINDA FLOREA/CORRESPONDENT]

# Homeless but loved

## Forward Paths party creates holiday warmth for homeless youth

By Linda Florea  
Correspondent

LEESBURG — Imagine Christmas without family, without a home, without the big dinner and a decorated tree with presents under it.

While that may be a pretty grim specter, that's what many homeless youth and those who have aged out of foster care have to

look forward to during the holidays.

But for the lucky ones that have found Forward Paths Foundation, their Christmas was brighter.

Recently, a Christmas party was held at the home of founder Denise Burry.

The house was festive and packed with some of the group's 60 young adult clients and 30 children they currently serve, along with volunteers and staff.

"We're trying to create positive memories for our youth because so many

of them haven't had good memories associated with holidays," Burry said.

The stories of the youth in the program are distressing but also offer hope for the future.

Austin had been homeless about three years when he found Forward Paths. He recently earned his high school diploma and is looking forward to becoming an emergency medical technician.

"I didn't think I would make it this far," Austin admitted.

He then found his love, Casey, and he led her to Forward Paths with 2-year old Ayden and one-month-old Ryleigh.

With help from Forward Paths, he was able to arrange daycare, and Casey is enrolled in the culinary program at Lake Tech with the goal of becoming a chef.

Little four-month-old Azara is animated as she shows off for everyone, flapping her arms and legs and smiling in her new holiday

**See PATHS, A4**

# Scott leaves office with low jobless rate

By Jim Turner  
News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Rick Scott will exit the governor's mansion proclaiming an unemployment rate that is nearly 8 percentage points lower than when he moved in.

The state Department of Economic Opportunity on

Friday said Florida's estimated jobless rate was 3.3 percent in November, down from 3.4 percent a month earlier.

The state figure, which is below the nation's 3.7 percent jobless rate, represents 335,000 Floridians qualifying as being unemployed from a labor force of 10.26 million.

When Scott was sworn into the governor's office in January 2011, the state's jobless mark stood at 11.1 percent. The national mark at the time — as Florida and the rest of the country recovered from a deep recession — was 9.4 percent.

Scott, who had never held public office, pinned his 2010 gubernatorial

campaign on creating jobs, using the theme, "Let's Get to Work." His tenure in office also coincided with broader national job growth.

"Being governor is the best job in the world, and I am excited about the economic success that Florida has been able to achieve

**See SCOTT, A4**



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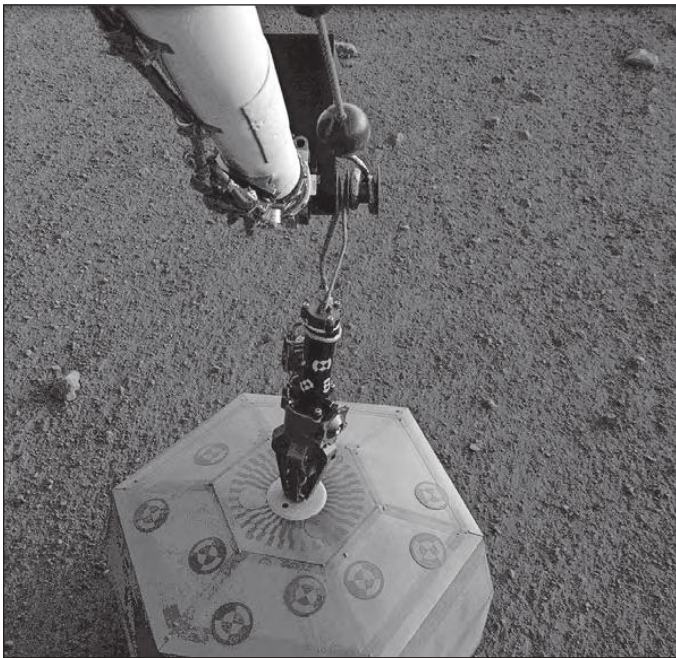
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FERRAN PARK





The new Mars lander is pictured here placing a quake monitor on the planet's dusty red surface. The unprecedented milestone occurred less than a month after Mars InSight's touchdown. InSight's robotic arm removed the seismometer from the spacecraft deck and set it directly on the ground on Wednesday to monitor Mars quakes. [NASA JET PROPULSION LABORATORY VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

## Mars lander sets quake monitor on planet surface

By Marcia Dunn  
The Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL — NASA's new Mars lander has placed a quake monitor on the planet's dusty red surface, just a few weeks after its arrival.

Mars InSight's robotic arm removed the seismometer from the spacecraft deck and set it on the ground Wednesday to monitor Mars quakes.

Project manager Tom Hoffman called the milestone "an awesome Christmas present."

It's the first time a robotic arm has lowered an experiment onto the Martian surface. The ground is slightly tilted, and so flight controllers at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, still need to make the seismometer level.

The French dome-shaped seismometer is a little over 5 feet in front of the stationary lander, about as far as the arm can reach.

Next month, InSight's arm will put a wind cover over the seismometer and set down another experiment. The heat probe, dubbed the mole, will burrow up to 16 feet (5 meters) into Mars to measure internal temperatures.

"Seismometer deployment is as important as landing InSight on Mars," JPL's Bruce Banerdt, lead scientist, said in a statement. It's needed to "complete about three-quarters of our science objectives."

Banerdt plans to open a bottle of Champagne once seismic measurements start rolling in.

InSight landed on Mars on Nov. 26.

## Women sending love letters to man serving life sentence

By Deanna Paul  
The Washington Post

"Greetings from New York, Chris!" a Brooklyn-based woman wrote to Christopher Watts on Aug. 23, days after he admitted to murdering his pregnant wife and young daughters, loading the bodies into his truck and dumping them at an oil work site.

"I found myself thinking a lot about you," Tatiana confessed to the now-convicted killer, "I figured life is too short to hold back . . . so here I am!"

The 29-year-old enclosed a bikini-clad photo of herself on a beach. "So you can place a face to the words. I know what you look like so I thought I'd make it fair," she flirted. "I hope I've put a smile on your face."

But if Tatiana failed, many others also aimed to cheer him up.

Watts was charged Aug. 20 with multiple counts of first-degree murder, unlawful termination of pregnancy and tampering with a deceased human body. He pleaded guilty. In November, a Colorado judge sentenced him to three consecutive life terms in prison — one for each murder victim.

In his six months behind bars, documents obtained from the prosecutor's office by The Washington Post show, Tatiana's was just one among many letters he received from hopeful suitors and fans.

Candace, a 39-year-old

mother of two, wrote multiple times; her second letter ended with #TEAMCHRIS #LOVEHIM and a doodled heart. "I've been watching your interview and I just became attracted to you (don't ask me why)," she said in one missive, adding that if he wrote back she would "be the happiest girl alive."

Another woman named Christan began by "addressing the elephant in the room. No, I'm not a creeper or crazy." She was drawn to Watts when she watched him take a deep breath as the judge read out his murder charges.

She said, "I know how alienating this process can be."

Tammy, 36, described herself as "a simple girl living in a small town" and included photos. She noted that it was her first time writing to an inmate and that she was "actually very nervous."

The Ohio-based woman asked Watts, "Why is someone as pretty as me single? And writing to someone in jail?" (She recently came out of a bad breakup, she explained.)

How a woman could fall for a man jailed for killing his family might seem perplexing, but this decades-old phenomenon is far from unusual. Front-page offenders — like Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, Charles Manson and the Menendez brothers — have also been pursued behind bars by countless women.

## SOUND

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CDL truck driver, he has to pass a physical to provide for two households.

He added that if he did not pass the hearing test he would lose his job.

"My current hearing aids are old analog hearing aids, which were donated to me in 2007," he wrote in the essay. "They squeal when turned up and short circuit when I sweat. They have been repaired by Precision Hearing twice

already and may not have much life left."

The hearing aids Dimeglio received were state of the art Oticon Opn Hearing Aids, which retail at \$4,400 and were not covered by his insurance plan.

"Very few insurance plans cover hearing aids," Weinbaum said. "A lot of older people are on fixed incomes and it's really hard."

Weinbaum started the essay contest two years ago when she started the Clermont business.

"Last year the business was a success and I was feeling really blessed and this was a

way to give back. The recipient last year was so grateful and so was the family that I decided I would like to do it every year if I can," Weinbaum said.

Dimeglio came into the office Wednesday for the hearing aids on his lunch break. After a little adjustment and fine tuning, Dimeglio was ready to walk out the door and back to work in his truck.

"I'm grateful that Precision would provide me with these hearing aids," he said. "The old dinosaurs I had, they (Precision) were able to get repaired when the others couldn't."

## SCOTT

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over the past eight years," Scott, who will move to the U.S. Senate in January, said in a prepared statement Friday.

The state's peak unemployment from the recession was 11.3 percent in January 2010, three months before Scott opened a campaign account to run for governor. His platform included a seven-step economic program that "over a 7-year period — will have a positive economic impact and create over 700,000 jobs for the state of Florida."

The target was at one time "on top of what normal growth would be."

On Friday, the governor's office said Florida businesses have created more than 1.67 million private-sector jobs since December 2010, with the state's employment growth rate outpacing the nation in 79 of the past 80 months. The outlier month was September 2017, when Hurricane Irma swept through the state.

The latest numbers from the Department of Economic Opportunity — based on separate



Florida Gov. Rick Scott, right, shakes hands with employees at Aerospace Precision after a tour of the repair facility to highlight job growth in Florida, Tuesday, July 7, 2015, in Hollywood, Fla. [AP PHOTO/WILFREDO LEE]

surveys of households and employers — were driven by an increase in leisure and hospitality jobs, up 53,200 over the past year. Next highest were education and health services jobs, up 50,700 positions, followed by professional and business services, 45,400 jobs, and construction, 32,900 jobs.

Government jobs, mostly at the local level, fell by 9,600 in the same period.

Across the state, Monroe County, which includes the Florida Keys, had the lowest jobless

mark in November, 2.4 percent, followed by St. Johns and Okaloosa counties at 2.5 percent.

At the other end were two counties directly hit by Hurricane Michael in October. Gulf County's jobless mark stood at 8.4 percent, up from 2.8 percent in the report for October. Bay County, which also was at 2.8 percent in October, jumped to 6.1 percent in November.

The statewide unemployment rate is seasonally adjusted, while the local rates are not.



Ashley, with fourth-month-old Azara, who will have surgery in January. Ashley is pursuing a phlebotomy certification. A child in the program, J.C., enjoys playing with the baby. [LINDA FLOREA / CORRESPONDENT]

## PATHS

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dress. Her mother, Ashley, aged out of foster care and is pursuing a phlebotomy certification. Ashley will take a break from school in January to take care of Azara, who is scheduled for oral surgery. Ashley was given a 39-foot recreational vehicle so she and Azara would have a stable home.

Steve circulated the party talking with friends and Forward Path volunteers. He was kicked out of his home in high school. Forward Paths has helped him get his identification and food. He is currently living with a family and seeking employment.

Food for the party was provided by Leesburg Sunset Rotary Club, and Sunrise Rotary Club of Leesburg provided gifts and Christmas stockings.

"I don't think any kid in our community should be homeless at any age," Burry said.

"It's so hard to get into



From left to right, volunteer Cristy Orpurt, Forward Paths client Steve and volunteer Shay Razaire. [LINDA FLOREA / CORRESPONDENT]

housing on your own and things have to change. They have to be given an opportunity to get their education and work on their job skills."

For more information, to donate or volunteer, go to [www.forwardpaths.org](http://www.forwardpaths.org).