Flagler County saw its unemployment rate improve to 6.9% tied with three other counties for 14th highest out of 67, according to the latest data from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. It marks the first time since 2008 that unemployment in Flagler wasn’t among the three highest counties in Florida.

News Splash!

Varn Park Adds Functional Flair

Before long, visitors to Varn Park will enjoy a new dune walkover, more parking and new bathroom facility that could easily be mistaken for a work of art.

“The bathroom will look like a stingray,” County Engineer Faith Alkhatib said. “It’s just beautiful. Most of our parks have typical square bathrooms but we were able to do this one with an artistic feature.”

The dog-friendly, 8-acre park has been closed since mid-December and is scheduled to reopen at the end of May.

The parking lot is being expanded from 42 regular parking spots to 106 spots including four that are ADA-compliant. A current dune walkover is being refurbished with ADA ramps added for accessibility near the new bathroom facility.

The new dune walkover constructed at the north end of the parking was also constructed with both ADA ramps and stairs. Additionally, ramps will be built from the new added parking area to the existing sidewalk along State Road A1A.

“The new bathroom is more environmentally friendly as we have connected to a central wastewater collection system and the existing septic system has been removed,” County Administrator Craig Coffey said.

The total cost of the project is $549,420 and 80 percent of those costs will be reimbursed from federal grant dollars issued through the Florida Department of Transportation. Local funds and in-kind services will cover the remaining 20 percent, or $105,000.

“This is why I love my job,” Alkhatib said from atop the new dune walkover. “Look at all of this our residents and our visitors can come and enjoy.”
Free Skywarn Storm Spotter Class Open to Public April 22

Meteorologists are not the only ones who can recognize potentially disastrous weather. After participating in a free nationally acclaimed weather class hosted by the National Weather Service and Flagler County Emergency Services, anyone can become a trained storm spotter.

The Skywarn Storm Spotter Program recruits volunteers to help protect people and property during tornados or severe thunderstorms.

“Skywarn is essential to the National Weather Service as weather radars cannot see everything,” said Bob Pickering, Flagler County Emergency Management Technician. “Spotters play a key role not only in advanced warnings, but also storm verification.”

During the class taught by meteorologist Ben Nelson, participants will learn to recognize signs of impending weather and how to report perilous conditions so warnings can be issued faster.

The class will be held Wednesday, April 22, from 6-9 p.m. at the Flagler County Emergency Operations Center, 1769 E. Moody Blvd., Bunnell.

For more information, contact Pickering at 386-313-4250 or bpickering@flaglercounty.org.

Flagler County Sheriff’s Operations Center Update

The progress photos show various areas around the building where work is being completed. The upper left photo shows the demolition of existing site work, as does the picture on the upper right. The installation of new interior walls has begun along with new ductwork and conduits.

Flagler County Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2015

8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Kim C. Hammond Justice Center
1769 E Moody Blvd., Bldg. #1
Bunnell, FL 32010

PAY FINES ON APRIL 17, 2015, AVOID COLLECTIONS SURCHARGE, REINSTATE YOUR LICENSE

For ONE DAY only, the Clerk will accept payment for unpaid traffic tickets and court fines and fees without charging its 40% collection surcharge*. Payments will only be accepted in person.

Click here for more information.

Flagler County Public Safety ‘Building Relationships’

A new collaborative effort with the theme, “Building Bridges, Building Relationships,” is bringing together Flagler County public safety personnel from various entities.

A first-ever appreciation picnic and barbecue hosted by Flagler County Emergency Services on Sunday, April 19, will include firefighters, police officers, Florida Hospital Flagler and Flagler County Health Department staff members, Flagler County Sheriff’s Office employees and other emergency management workers to foster relationships and provide services. It is anticipated that the event will be held annually.

“We want all emergency management personnel to think of one another as colleagues,” Flagler County Public Safety Emergency Manager Kevin Guthrie said. “Emergency management is the sum of all its parts and no one person can do any one part by themselves; we need all of our stakeholders working together.”

The picnic, funded by corporate sponsors, will include food and family-friendly activities like corn hole, a Moon Bounce and a magician. The event will take place from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Cattleman’s Hall, Flagler County Fairgrounds, 650 Country Road 13, Bunnell.
Job Fair brings 40 companies, 500+ jobs

Last year nearly 400 jobseekers attended the inaugural fair, which was hosted by the Flagler County Department of Economic Opportunity and Career-Source Flagler Volusia. This year Daytona State College and the Flagler County Chamber of Commerce joined the effort to positively impact Flagler County’s economic vitality.

The event will take place on Friday, April 24, from noon to 6 p.m. at the Palm Coast Campus of Daytona State College, 3000 Palm Coast Pkwy SE, Building 3.

Among the businesses that have already registered are CoastalCloud, Edwards Jones Financial Service, Beutlich Pharmaceuticals and Target. A complete list of attending companies is available [here](www.flaglercountiedc.com/jobfair).

“We’ve been encouraging a wide variety of industries to sign up for a booth in order to provide jobseekers with a diverse job market,” said Helga van Eckert, the executive director of the Flagler County Department of Economic Opportunity. “Simultaneously, we’re helping our local businesses and building a stronger local economy.”

For additional information about the fair, please contact Casey Scott at 386-313-4098 or cscott@flaglercountiedc.com.
We Are Flagler County!

Frank Barbuti moved to Flagler County 14 years ago from upstate New York started working for the county shortly thereafter. He’s a family man with two adult daughters and married 12 years to his wife Jeanette.

“I started working in the Public Works department and moved to the Parks Department after about 9 months,” Frank said.

Frank’s office walls are decorated with photographs of the Bald Eagles that call Princess Place home.

“These are our eagles,” he said.
He moved up through the ranks at the Parks Department from a maintenance worker to supervisor and then on to his current position as parks manager.

“I was a person who had a preconceived notion of what it meant to work for county government,” Frank said. “That changed my first day of work. Where I’m from, you’d see the guys show up at the diner for lunch. I just figured that’s what we’d do.”

Instead, his co-workers shared their lunch with him.

“I’ve been teased about it ever since,” Frank said. “The one thing I learned is that everyone here takes a lot of ownership in their positions.”

In is off time, Frank enjoys spending time with Jeanette motorcycle riding, trails and kayaking.

“We walk the trails, but we just purchased mountain bikes so we’re getting adventurous,” he said. “We do travel other places sometimes, but we really enjoy what we have here in Flagler County.”

Volunteers needed for invasive plant removal

Bring a friend, bring a kid, bring gloves and a water bottle to Betty Steflik Memorial Preserve on April 29 to help rid it of invasive species like the Brazilian pepper trees along the entrance road.

The entrance road will be closed from dawn to 1 p.m. as Land Management and Parks and Recreation staff, with the help of volunteers, remove the plants. Normal park access will be available after 1 p.m.

Flagler County has a dedicated group of volunteers who have worked at other preserves, like the River to Sea Preserve, protect the native ecosystem.

“We have a sign that says, ‘Restoring paradise one tree at a time,’ because that’s what we are doing,” Laura Ostapko said. “It’s very rewarding when you see what you have done.”

Betty Steflik Memorial Preserve is situated on 217 acres along the eastern side of the Intracoastal Waterway south of State Road 100.

Those interested in volunteering are asked to contact Mike Lagasse at 386-313-4064 or at mlagasse@flaglercounty.org.

‘Help’ celebrate National Library Week, escape the ordinary

Imagine the possibilities upon entering the Flagler County Public Library with publications available in every format imaginable – print, large print, ebooks, audio – both knowledge and adventure are readily accessible.

And while National Library Week officially takes place from April 12-18, programs, movies and events are scheduled throughout the year.

“National Library Week is a very special time for those working in the library community to remind people of all the services and programs we offer,” Director Holly Albanese said.

The traveling art display called “IMAG_NE,” created by Australian artist Emma Anna will be at the library for the entire month of April. The sculpture features supersized Scrabble letters that spell out the word imagine with the second “I” missing that fits in with this year’s theme for National Library Week: Imagine the Possibilities at Your Library.

“The library is so important to our community not only for the activities available, but also because of the access to information that is provided,” County Commissioner George Hanns said.

The time is right to register for the 3rd annual Adult Summer Reading Program: Escape the Ordinary.

More information is available at the library’s webpage.