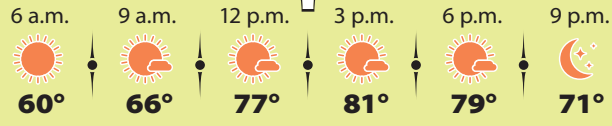




BEFORE THEY WERE VILLAGERS | C5
Ron Hedger has written about motorsports for more than 45 years for several publications.



LEAH SHEWMAKER ON FLORIDA | C1
State parks offer birdwatchers a chance to see more than 100 species of birds.



TOP WORLD AND NATION NEWS

U.S. SAYS WAR SECRETS SAFE AFTER INTEL LEAKS, A5

Around the World: U.S. reporter held by Russia denied release. **A3**

Across the Nation: Parking garage falls in NYC, killing one. **A2**

In Florida: Major roadway improvements underway in Leesburg. **C6**

ARTS & CULTURE NEWS

LEONID & FRIENDS TO MAKE STOP IN THE VILLAGES

The tribute band Leonid & Friends will make its debut in The Villages this month at Savannah Center during its 2023 tour. **A21**

SPORTS NEWS

DAMAR HAMLIN CLEARED TO PLAY AFTER 4 MONTHS

The Buffalo Bills safety said he's ready to resume his football career after going into cardiac arrest and being resuscitated on the field. **B1**

LOCAL NEWS

FRUITLAND PARK HOSTING MONTHLY COMEDY NIGHT

The city is holding shows on the third Friday at Fruitland Park's community center. Myke Herlihy and Jesse Chudeusz will perform this week. **C7**

OUR TOWN | THE FIGHT AGAINST HATE



India Pantin | Daily Sun

Rabbi Zev Sonnenstein, left, of Temple Shalom of Central Florida, and Bob and Susan Konig lit the eighth candle on the menorah during the Tri-County Interfaith Holocaust Remembrance event.

Ceremony Focuses on Fighting Antisemitism

By JAMES DINAN | Daily Sun Senior Writer

Lonny Wilk of the Anti-Defamation League's Florida Region did not mince words when he addressed Tuesday's Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony at St. Timothy Roman Catholic Church in The Villages. Antisemitism is on a sharp rise, and it's time for the community to stand up against it.

"In 2022, there was a 42% increase in antisemitic incidents in Florida compared to 2021," he told the

hundreds in attendance. "That number is double what we saw in 2020, and the proliferation comes from all sides of the political spectrum."

Wilk was one of the main speakers at this year's Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony, put together by the Tri County Holocaust Remembrance Committee.

This year's **Please See CEREMONY, A8**

Vespians Hosting Fundraiser for Villages Honor Flight

BENEFIT SHOWS

The theater company is putting on three performances of the adapted version of the comic opera "Don Pasquale."

By VERONICA WERNICKE | Daily Sun Senior Writer

There is nothing Marilyn and Stephen Mosel enjoy more than performing on a stage and hearing the laughter and applause of the audience.

That's only amplified when the Village of Charlotte residents get to do it for a good cause.

The Vespians, The Villages-based theater company, is putting on three performances of the comedic opera "Don Pasquale" to benefit Villages Honor Flight. The shows are at 6 p.m. April 26 at Sterling Heights Recreation and 6 p.m. April 27 and 28 at Fish Hawk Recreation.

"We've been doing shows for about five years now and

\$10

"Don Pasquale" attendees are asked to donate \$10, which will go to Villages Honor Flight.

Please See **VESPIANS, A9**

ONLY IN THE VILLAGES

By Jean Racine

As John Topliss leaves The Villages to return to England, he leaves a vast collection of track and field records behind.

A few of them have his name on them — four in the men's 60-64 age bracket with The Villages Track & Field Club, two in the 65-69 division. Even more, he knows just who holds all the other marks.

For nearly two decades, Topliss has taken on the task of compiling records — not only for the club but also for The Villages High School.

"It just seems to be a natural thing," said Topliss, of the

Please See **TRACK, A9**

EXPLORE & EXPERIENCE

OUT & ABOUT IN THE VILLAGES

Try This Today: Find a Practice Range Nearby To Work on Your Swing

With all the golf taking place in The Villages, four practice ranges are available to work out swing flaws. Ranges are available at Glenview Champions, Palmer Legends and Nancy Lopez Legacy country clubs, plus the Sarasota Golf Practice Center. Roger Williams, of the Village of Pine Hills, is among many who take advantage of the Sarasota driving range. Ball machine tokens are on sale at the golf shop or Sarasota's attendant window. Ranges typically are open from dawn to dusk. Consult golfthevillages.com for full information.

— Greg Hughes, Daily Sun



Arianna Bennett | Daily Sun

IN ENTERTAINMENT

Take a Tour Of the Historic Baker House

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**

LOVIN' THE LIFESTYLE

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

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from the front page

CEREMONY

Continued from A1

theme was “Who Would You Be? Rescuer, Persecutor or Bystander?”

Wilk addressed the rise in antisemitic incidents, both in Florida and across the country. A 2022 ADL audit of antisemitic incidents revealed a 51% increase in antisemitic harassment in Florida compared with 2021, as well as a 15% increase in vandalism.

“What comes with the rise in antisemitic activity and behavior is a significant amount of silence from the community when and after it happens,” he said. “All people must call out antisemitism when it occurs, advocate for change and speak up and report such incidents.”

Patrick Riccards, CEO of Life After Hate, a nonprofit dedicated to helping people disengage from hate groups and hateful online spaces, also spoke at the event. He said those drawn to hate groups are looking for camaraderie, are fearful and struggling, and tend to lash out against others who are not like them.

“There is no dispute that extremism is on the rise,” Riccards said. “But what can we do? Nations stood together against the Nazis and antisemitism during World War II, and we can do the same today.”

Riccards played testimonies of four young people who were assisted by Life After Hate to escape the world of hate. All four said they were drawn to such groups because they promised



Irving Locker, of the Village Santiago and a World War II veteran, salutes as he is acknowledged during the Tri-County Interfaith Holocaust Remembrance event.

Photos by India Pantin | Daily Sun

friendship and togetherness, but came to realize they were isolated and alone.

“They got their lives back,” he said. “They are living proof that they can turn away evil and do good. There are those who may ask if they are worthy of rehabilitation. I say we can help them and give them a second chance, because those that leave hate become the strongest people.”

This year’s ceremony remembered the 6 million Jews killed across Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II. Local Holocaust survivors and the “Second Generation” — those who

are the children of Holocaust survivors — were honored, as well as World War II soldiers, rescuers and liberators.

Susan Feinberg, a Village of Pennecamp resident, is chair of the Tri County Holocaust Remembrance Committee. Feinberg, herself the daughter of Holocaust survivors in Hungary, shared her family’s story to those in attendance.

“There were 450,000 Jews that called Hungary home before World War II but, after the war, the number plunged to just 100,000,” she said. “My father was in a labor camp, and my mother was saved by the Red Cross.

They came to the U.S. and had a family and, when I was a teen, I asked them to share their stories.”

Feinberg and others emphasized that it’s important for future generations to carry on what their ancestors started and share the stories of the Holocaust to everyone.

“We now have the third and fourth Generations, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, coming of age and learning about their ancestry,” she said. “It’s important for future generations to share our



Samantha Sherman, left, and Rabbi Zev Sonnenstein sing together during the event at St. Timothy’s Catholic Church.

stories, to remember and never forget.”

A poignant moment came during the candle lighting ceremony to remember those who lost their lives in the Holocaust and to commemorate the people who stood up against hate. The daughter of Heinz Jaffe, a Holocaust survivor and World War II veteran, lit the first candle. Jaffe, a longtime Villager and Temple Shalom of Central Florida member who died last year at age 99, frequently spoke about the Holocaust to students and others. He was able to participate in last year’s ceremony a few weeks before his death.

“Heinz Jaffe was a champion of Holocaust education and remembrance, and we are blessed that his family could participate in this

year’s ceremony,” said Bob Gold, a Tri County Holocaust Committee member.

The event also honored the winners of the Committee’s annual Holocaust educational writing contest. Students from the Villages Charter Middle School, Wildwood Middle High School and South Sumter Middle School participated in the contest.

There was also music from Temple Shalom members, as well as the God’s Echo Choir at Community United Methodist Church in Fruitland Park.

For more information on Temple Shalom and its Holocaust activities, visit tschl.org.

Senior writer James Dinan can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5302, or james.dinan@thevillagesmedia.com.

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BEFORE THEY WERE VILLAGERS | C5
JoNelle Zager spent more than 30 years working as a chiropractor across the country.

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JOSEPH FRANCIS ON HEALTH | C1
The Alzheimer's Foundation of America reminds caregivers to manage their stress.



TOP WORLD AND NATION NEWS

G-7 DIPLOMATS REJECT COUNTRIES' AGGRESSION, A5

Around the World: Death toll soars past 180 in Sudan battles. **A2**

Across the Nation: St. Louis tears down the DeBaliviere Place gate. **A4**

In Florida: Families cope after severe flooding in South Florida. **A13**

SPORTS NEWS

KENYANS SWEEP THE BOSTON MARATHON

Defending champion Evans Chebet won the Boston Marathon again, spoiling the debut of world record holder Eliud Kipchoge. **B1**

LOCAL NEWS

ZUMBA CLASSES GET RESIDENTS GROOVING

Instructors Connie Lumpkin and Stefanie Bristol help residents get moving and grooving in Zumba Gold classes at La Hacienda Recreation. **C3**

LOCAL NEWS

VILLAGER KEEPS HER LOVE OF DANCE ALIVE

Accomplished dancer Diane Vargas has found ways to continue her passion in The Villages by teaching and performing. **C12**

OUR TOWN | A BOOMING POPULATION



Caitlyn Jordan | Daily Sun

Visitors to Lake Sumter Landing Market Square dance to Rocky and the Rollers. The Villages' strong brand helped make Sumter the state's fastest-growing county again, experts say.

Sumter County Leads Growth in Florida

By KEITH PEARLMAN | Daily Sun Specialty Editor

As new residents continue to move to Florida in droves, nowhere in the state is growing faster than Sumter County.

Because of The Villages, Sumter is the fastest-growing county in the state once again. It also remains one of the fastest-growing counties in the United States, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Sumter added 10,103 residents from April 2021 to

April 2022 for a population of 144,970, according to the census. That represents a 7.5% increase year over year to lead the way in the state.

The census previously recognized Florida as the top-growing state with a 1.9% increase from July 2021 to July 2022 to a population of 22,244,823. Nationwide, Sumter County ranks

Please See **SUMTER, A5**

St. Timothy Church To Host Holocaust Remembrance Event

FIGHTING HATE

With antisemitic incidents rising nationally, organizers focus on how individuals react to hatred and bullying.

By JAMES DINAN | Daily Sun Senior Writer

As reported cases of antisemitism continue to grow in the United States, Temple Shalom of Central Florida has opted to focus this year's Central Florida Holocaust Remembrance Event on hate and bullying.

"Why do some people stand up against hate and bullying while others look away?" said Susan Feinberg, a Village of Pennecamp resident and chair of the Tri County Holocaust Remembrance Committee. "We saw this during World War II and we see it now."

The Holocaust Remembrance Event, which takes place at 4 p.m. this afternoon at St. Timothy Roman Catholic Church in

Please See **HOLOCAUST, A5**

51%

The ADL Center on Extremism reports that incidents of antisemitic vandalism rose 51% from 2021 to 2022.

ONLY IN THE VILLAGES

By Anne Moser

What started as a normal Monday morning turned into a memorable experience for Heidi Pearl when she found a lost homing pigeon at her neighborhood postal station.

She cared for the pigeon at her home in the Village of Bonita while she waited for its owner to pick it up. In the meantime, Pearl took the time to educate herself about the birds and ultimately came to love them.

"I knew absolutely nothing about pigeons when I first found it," she said. "But I ended up learning a lot by looking after it for the rest of the week."

Please See **PIGEON, A6**

EXPLORE & EXPERIENCE

OUT & ABOUT IN THE VILLAGES

Try This Today: Celebrate Several Cultures With the Asian Dance Performers

The Villages Asian Dance Performers showcase an array of Asian cultures at meetings and social gatherings around Florida's Friendliest Hometown. The troupe showcases dances and songs from China, India, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Their performance calendar includes a Lunar New Year show each January. Group members get together twice a week at Tierra Del Sol Recreation to work on their routines. For more information, go online to villagesasianperformers.org or email villagesasianperformers@gmail.com.

— Greg Hughes, Daily Sun



Michael Johnson | Daily Sun

IN ENTERTAINMENT

Live Country Music at The Yellow Pony Pub
Find out more, **D1**

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AT RECREATION CENTERS

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from the front page

HOLOCAUST

Continued from A1

The Villages, is titled “Who Would You Be? Rescuer, Persecutor or Bystander?” The event comes just weeks after new data released by the Anti-Defamation League revealed that antisemitic activity rose in 2022 to its highest level since the ADL started keeping such records in 1979.

The ADL Center on Extremism reports that incidents of antisemitic vandalism rose 51% from 2021 to 2022, while harassment jumped 29% and physical assaults rose 26%.

“We’re deeply disturbed by this dramatic and completely unacceptable surge in antisemitic incidents,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL chief executive officer and national director. “While we can’t point to any single factor or ideology driving this increase, this data confirms what Jewish communities across the country have felt and seen firsthand.”

A 2022 American Jewish Congress survey also notes concerns about antisemitism. The poll revealed that 89% of American Jews surveyed said that antisemitism is a problem in the U.S. today, while 82% said antisemitism has risen in the last five years.

In addition, 20% of those polled said they were the target of an in-person antisemitic attack in the 12 months before the survey was taken, while 13% reported being the target of an antisemitic remark or post online or through social media.

Given those numbers, Temple Shalom and the Tri County Holocaust Remembrance Committee will focus this year’s Remembrance Event on how individuals can choose how to react to hate and bullying. Local Holocaust survivors and the “Second Generation” — those who are the children of Holocaust survivors — will be honored, as well as World War II soldiers, rescuers and liberators.



India Pantin | Daily Sun
Rabbi Zev Sonnenstein sounds a shofar at last year’s Tri-County Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony.

“The message from this group is to remember and never forget,” Feinberg said. “We must make sure that the story is told that 6 million Jews were killed in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II. We must make sure that this history is remembered.”

There will also be two guest speakers who are authorities on antisemitism and bullying in today’s environment. They are Lonnie Wilk, deputy regional director of the Anti-Defamation League’s Florida Region; and Patrick Riccards, CEO of Life After Hate, a nonprofit dedicated to helping people disengage from hate groups and hateful online spaces.

“Both will explain how we can learn from the past and reduce hate and negativity moving forward,” Feinberg said. “We will also discuss how to recognize bullying behaviors, and how one can change perceptions and others toward others and themselves.”

The Tri County Holocaust Remembrance Committee will also reveal the winners of

its annual Holocaust educational writing contest at the ceremony. Students from the Villages Charter Middle School and other middle and junior high schools in Sumter County participated in the contest.

“There will also be music from the Temple Shalom Choir, as well as the God’s Echo Choir from Community United Methodist Church in Fruitland Park,” Feinberg said. “They will perform several selections regarding peace, tolerance and friendship.”

St. Timothy Roman Catholic is at 1351 Paige Place, The Villages. Doors open 45 minutes before the event, which is free and open to the community.

Senior writer James Dinan can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5302, or james.dinan@thevillagesmedia.com.

SUMTER

Continued from A1

second in growth for all counties with a population over 100,000, trailing only Kaufman County in Texas. Kaufman, a suburb of Dallas, added 14,150 new residents during the year for an increase of 8.9% to 172,366.

Sumter was the fastest growing county in the nation for the decade of 2011-20, according to Census.

“A place like The Villages is like a unicorn,” said Rich Doty, GIS coordinator and research demographer at the Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida. “It has a strong brand that continues to attract retirees. And as the people keep coming, other towns in Sumter County are also growing at a fairly rapid pace. That’s what we’re seeing now in places like Wildwood.”

The Villages in 2022 was once again the No. 1 master-planned community in the United States, according to RCLCO, a Bethesda, Maryland-based international real estate consulting firm. It was the sixth consecutive year The Villages earned the top spot.

“Much of the sustained success of The Villages can be attributed to the lifestyle that they have created for their residents,” said Karl Pischke, RCLCO Principal. “Few other communities in the country have been able to foster such a unique environment.”

The unique environment made quite an impression on Dave and Cyndi Fountaine, who moved to the Village of Hawkins in 2021.

“We did the Lifestyle visit and that’s all it took,” Dave said. “We were sold within 24 hours. We hear that over and over again from people we meet. All it takes is one day.”

The recreation and lifestyle

“Much of the sustained success of The Villages can be attributed to the lifestyle that they have created for their residents.”

KARL PISCHKE
RCLCO Principal

activities persuaded Jodi and Mark Zwayer to make the move in August 2022 from Columbus, Ohio, to the Village of St. Johns.

“Just the sheer number of recreation centers and swimming pools and the wide range of activities made it an easy choice,” Jodi said. “Most places have one rec center, one pool, one golf course. When you come here, you can be involved to whatever extent you want. There’s no limit to what you can do.”

The Villages boasts more than 3,100 resident lifestyle clubs run by resident volunteers, 747 holes of golf — more than anywhere else in the world — 113 recreation facilities with 110 pools, 241 pickleball courts and 15 softball fields.

The planning that goes into every aspect of The Villages is key to setting it apart, said John Rohan, director of The

Villages Recreation and Parks. “This is a world-class community that provides its residents with an outstanding lifestyle second to none,” he said. “That’s a culmination of the design of the community. There’s a synergy with the vision of what the Developer created to allow residents to remain active and healthy. You see it with the accessibility of the recreation centers, the squares and restaurants, the churches and other support centers conveniently located all within the community.”

But it’s the residents themselves who bring the community to life, Rohan said. “It is achieved through the number of recreation centers and amenities, our dedicated resident lifestyle volunteers, our dedicated and professional staff, and we love what we do,” he said. “We’re all committed to our goal to help enhance and enrich the lives of our residents.”

The appeal of The Villages lifestyle is why about 400 people a month are moving to The Villages, according to local statistics.

“Just look around and you can’t help but see this place is phenomenal,” said Kenny Blocker, district manager. “The opportunities they offer residents as far as amenities — the engagement and interactions they can have with other people and the number of activities to get them out and keep them active — is amazing.”

“Nowhere can you go and find what we have here. That’s why you see everyone moving here. This is the ultimate residential location to move to. You go outside, anywhere else, and there’s no place like this.”

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