

STYLE & HOME

How to teach pets house rules

Jameson: Texas-based veterinarian offers advice on ways to discourage unwanted behaviors. PAGE 1



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Orlando City turns down \$10M offer for Dike

Coach restates confidence that star striker will return to team for 2021 MLS season, as Lions hold to high price tag for player. PAGE 1

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Aid gives state chance to spend big

Florida lawmakers looking at \$10B windfall

By Gray Rohrer Orlando Sentinel

TALLAHASSEE — When Florida lawmakers kicked off the session last week they were concerned with how to close a \$2 billion shortfall. Now they're looking at a \$10 billion windfall, thanks to the \$1.9 trillion federal COVID-19 relief package signed by President Joe Biden on Thursday.

The package includes \$350 billion in aid to states and cities, and Florida's share is already upending lawmakers' approach to the budget.

Legislative leaders had pointed to the projected shortfall as a reason to look at cutting spending for higher education and for K-12 schools amid questions over how

Turn to Stimulus, Page 6

Central Florida awaits \$846M in relief funds

By Martin E. Comas and Stephen Hudak Orlando Sentinel

Soon after President Joe Biden signed a \$1.9 trillion relief package into law on Thursday, local governments across Central Florida began anticipating the \$846 million expected to flow into the region to provide financial help to families and businesses battered by

the year-long COVID-19 pandemic. "We are looking forward to using that money to once again help our hardest hit individuals and businesses in Orange County," Mayor Jerry Demings said. "If there are opportunities, we'll create some incentives to get people working, get people fed and all those kinds of things."

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The Gamble family camps while spending time in Florida. Parents Grant and Jana moved into a 40-foot RV to travel full time with their two teenagers, Jack and Stellie, plus the family's three dogs. GAMBLE FAMILY/COURTESY

'Schools of hope' charter can open in Apopka

School board vote unanimous despite officials' concerns

By Leslie Postal Orlando Sentinel

A high-performing charter school operator can open a campus in Apopka with the goal of attracting students now zoned to attend D-rated Wheatley Elementary School, the Orange County School Board has decided.

The vote for the "schools of hope" was unanimous but unenthusiastic. Board members voted yes on the advice of their attorney, who said if they turned down the Mater Academy application, they'd end up in court, lose the fight and then lose money.

"We are not voting to approve a charter," said board member Karen Castor Dentel on Tuesday. "We are voting to recognize the state authority to put their school of hope here, I guess. If we were to deny it, it doesn't matter, they will still come."

A 2017 state law — one the Orange and other Florida school boards unsuccessfully fought in court — allows charter school operators with proven track records to open near "persistently low performing" public schools.

Typically, school boards must approve the applications submitted by charter school operators, which are privately run but publicly funded. But with "schools of hope" charters, the board has no discretion to turn down one that wants to open a campus near a "persistently low performing" school or in an "opportunity zone," a federal designation for economically stressed communities.

The state's goal is for "schools of hope" to offer options to parents whose children attend a school where academic performance has lagged for years as measured by state test scores and school grades.

"No child in Florida should be denied a chance at their future because they have the misfortune to end up in the wrong school," Richard Corcoran, then the speaker of the Florida House and the proposal's champion, wrote in an opinion piece for the South Florida Sun Sentinel after the law passed. Corcoran is now Florida's education commissioner.

Though one school board member called it a "treasure of the community," Wheatley Elementary has earned four Ds and a C since 2016 and been tagged "persistently low performing" by the Florida Department of Education. Its south Apopka neighborhood also is labeled an "opportunity zone."

Mater Academy, based in Hialeah, is the first hope operator to target Orange County for one of its campuses. Mater has been in

Turn to School, Page 6

As pandemic continued, family sold home for RV

By Patrick Connolly Orlando Sentinel

During a time when many families were spending more time at home in a COVID-19 lockdown — perhaps thinking about household projects and family game nights — the Gamble clan had a different idea: What if home had wheels?

After all, the family's teenagers Jack, 16, and Stellie, 14, were already going to school remotely. Grant, an author and business strategist, and Jana, a creative director, had the ability to meet with clients virtu-

ally while pursuing their own projects. The moment seemed ripe with opportunity to do something drastic, like traveling the nation — including a month-long stay in Florida.

The thought of moving into an RV was hatched when Grant and Jana noticed how coronavirus restrictions and cabin fever were adversely affecting the whole family, especially the kids.

"You don't want to watch your children suffer, it's hard to do that," Jana said. "It was driven by the children and their well-being more than anything else."

A 'big gamble'

The wheels were set in motion. Grant and Jana purchased a 40-foot, 15-ton recreational vehicle dubbed "Thelma," a motor home with lots of "character" and beige on the inside. Months of work went into their new home on wheels, bought for just over \$20,000, making it livable and highway-ready.

"We spent about two months repairing, restoring and refitting her and that

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Region's largest Boys & Girls Club opens near stadium

By Kate Santich Orlando Sentinel

From their apartment balcony a few blocks west of Camping World Stadium, 10-year-old twins Bella and Millie Donald-Stanley watched the first bulldozers start to transform a field of grass and weeds.

That was a year ago.

On Friday, they watched as civic leaders cut a ceremonial ribbon on a \$9 million, 30,000-square-foot Boys & Girls Club — Central Florida's largest — and talked about the dance studio, science projects and new friends that awaited them.

"Everyone at school — they're all excited," Millie said. "We can't wait!"

Officially the Jacqueline Bradley & Clarence Otis Family Branch in West Lakes, the facility is named after Otis, the retired Darden Restaurants CEO, and his wife, both



Philanthropists Jacqueline Bradley and Clarence Otis cut the ribbon to officially mark the opening of the Boys & Girls Club in West Lakes, named in their honor, on Friday. JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL

longtime supporters of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. They donated the initial \$4 million to get the project off the ground,

giving kids in the historically Black neighborhood what many described as a place of healing and promise.

"When you have a chance to liberate a child spirit, or help others, you must," Bradley said, addressing a small, socially-distanced crowd of supporters.

A striking cream-colored, stone and glass structure, the new club anchors a corner of the burgeoning West Lakes community near the stadium, across from Orange Center Elementary School, where Millie and Bella attend. The neighborhood is undergoing a large-scale redevelopment effort, led by nonprofit Lift Orlando and local residents, to spur overall well-being in what was once Orlando's most distressed ZIP code.

The club will provide space for more than 250 kids, ages 6 to 18, with study rooms, a full gymnasium, tech labs, a dance studio

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YOUR NATION, YOUR WORLD

Vaccine timeline brings praise

Governors cheer as President Biden announces all Americans should be eligible for shots by May 1. Page 3

GOP proposals target vote access

Lawmakers push legislation that would disproportionately affect groups that historically vote Democrat. Page 4

Cuomo refuses to step down

New York governor faces political isolation after refusal to resign in wake of sexual harassment allegations. Page 7

