



# Week in Review

Feb. 2 - 10, 2025

The *Week in Review* is prepared and published by Laurie Hayes, Director of Communications, for the staff and residents of the City of Bartow, 450 N. Wilson Avenue, Bartow, Florida 33830

Welcome to the new *Week in Review* via Constant Contact.

## 32 Year Veteran of Bartow Police Department Passes

It is with a heavy heart and deep respect that the Bartow Police Department announced the death of retired Patrol Captain and loving friend, Hiram Saunders, who passed at his home in the early morning hours of February 10.

Hiram Saunders was hired by the Bartow Police Department in 1988 and served the community as a Uniformed Patrol Officer, Uniformed Patrol Sergeant, School Resource Sergeant, and as the Uniformed Patrol Division Captain. As Division Captain, he was responsible for overseeing the Patrol Division, K-9 Unit, Traffic Homicide, the Reserve Officer Unit and the Police Explorers Program.

Capt. Saunders retired from the Bartow Police Department in March of 2020, after 32 years of service.

He is survived by his wife, Yetta Smith-Saunders, along with their adult children and grandchildren.





# City of Bartow Celebrates Black History Month

February is Black History Month, an observance first conceived as a commemorative week in the early 1900s by Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, a noted Black scholar and son of former slaves. Woodson chose February to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial, Black History Week was expanded and became established as Black History

Month, and is now celebrated all over North America.

This year's theme from The Association for the Study of African American Life and History is "AFRICAN AMERICANS AND LABOUR," focusing on the various and profound ways that work and working of all kinds – free and unfree, skilled, and unskilled, vocational and voluntary – intersect with the collective experiences of Black people.

Bartow's 2025 Black History Month Champion is James L. Camp, a Bartow native and multi-talented artist known for his western-themed paintings. He's easily recognizable by his cowboy hats, western wear and fabulous stories of simple living.

The proclamation issued by the City Commission last Monday noted that as "societal and political forces escalate to limit access to exercise voting rights at the ballot, eliminate the teaching of Black history and work to push us back into the 1890s, we can only rely on our capacity to resist."

When honoring Mr. Camp, the Commission urged citizens to recognize his contributions and those of all African Americans, to celebrate diverse heritages and cultures and to continue efforts to create a world that is more just, peaceful, loving and prosperous for all.

*It is worth noting that the Facebook post on the City's page regarding Black History Month and honoring Mr. Camp or "Cowboy" or "Lonestar" as he is often called, racked up more than 350 likes and was share over 130 times - a true testament to his character an to his talent.*

---

## L.B. Brown Festival Held last Weekend

The Bartow community celebrated the 25th Annual L. B. Brown Heritage Festival at the LB Brown House Museum c. 1892, 470 L.B. Brown Ave., this past weekend.



The house, constructed in 1892 by self-taught carpenter Lawrence B. Brown and thought to be the only remaining home in Florida built by a former slave, had ongoing tours throughout the Festival.

At last Monday's regular meeting, Mayor Pfeiffer and the rest of the Commission encouraged the citizens of Bartow to honor and participate in the event, which included more than 50 vendors selling clothing, jewelry, arts & crafts and food.

The proclamation was accepted by Neighborhood Improvement Corporation of Bartow, Inc. Chairperson Gloria Northern McCoy and Board Members Juanita Warner, Garry Crosby, Chuck Warren, Patricia Smith Fields, Lisa Link and Clifton Lewis.



## Session 3 of the Youth and Police Initiative is in the Books

The City's Parks & Rec staff and Police Department wrapped up Session 3 of the Youth and Police Initiative last Friday with a graduation for all participants. During the program, the students were able to interact with the City's police officers, sharing life experiences and

breaking down stereotypes and other barriers. Students 13 - 18 years of age are eligible to participate. Register for Session 4 at [Bartowrec.recdesk.com](http://Bartowrec.recdesk.com)

## Meeting to Discuss S Jackson Ave. Improvements to be Held this Evening

A study was done in 2024 that evaluated safety, operations and existing facilities along the 1.3-mile corridor of S. Jackson Ave. between E. Clower St./E. Soledad Ave. and E. Main St. to identify improvements that could lower motor vehicle speeds and enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.



Results of a speed survey focused on traffic between E. Wabash and E. Lemon Streets indicated that the average car was traveling more than 10 mph above the posted 25 mph limit, with some cars traveling nearly twice the limit.

The City already has plans for improvements in the area to include better lighting and additional four-way stops but also is considering features that would support future designation of the corridor as a segment of the long-distance Collier to Polk Trail being planned by the Florida Department of Transportation.

Grant funding may be available to implement the final design and construction of this and other study recommendations, including the extension of the corridor from Mary Holland Park to the southern end of the Fort Fraser Trail along the south side of State Road 60.

Public feedback on the proposed improvements and support for the funding application will be sought at a Public Meeting on Traffic Safety along Jackson Ave. at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, February 11 at Bartow City Hall, 450 N. Wilson Ave. Residents, especially those who live near or frequent the area designated for improvements, are encouraged to attend.

## Herr Appointed to NCL Transportation and Infrastructure Services Federal Advisory Committee

Bartow City Manager Mike Herr is not only concerned about transportation in our city but will be contributing to

safety and connectivity issues across the country with his recent appointment to the National League of Cities 2025 Transportation and Infrastructure Services (TIS) Federal Advocacy Committee.

The TIS Committee is responsible for leading the League's policy development and advocacy on transportation for communities of all sizes. The members advocate for federal funding opportunities for cities and towns, improving safety and connectivity, and leveraging innovation for all types of transportation.

NLC's Federal Advocacy Committee members include local elected officials and staff from NLC member cities and towns across the country who are committed to discussing and influencing federal policy that has a direct and profound impact on local government operations.

The National League of Cities is the voice of America's cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people. NLC works to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy and drive innovative solutions.

---

## SyFy Bartow Returns on February 15

SYFY Bartow dates back to 2014, when it was known as SYFY Saturday. A collaboration between Bartow residents Sean & Lori Serdynski, Main Street Bartow and the City, this FREE event is held annually on the third Saturday of February each year - this year on Feb. 15.



SYFY Bartow covers over 10 blocks of Bartow's downtown district, and brings in more than 30,000 visitors happy to partake in the many family-friendly activities as well as one of the largest television and movie-themed car shows in the nation and more than 200 pop culture vendors, authors, artists & cosplayer clubs.

The 2025 theme is "Villains," which explains the presence of Cruella de Vil and some other bad guys at the most recent Commission meeting. But it didn't take any threats to convince Mayor Pfeiffer and the rest of the elected officials to proclaim this coming Saturday as SyFy Bartow Day in the City. See you there!



---

## February is American Heart Month

February is American Heart Month and Friday was National Wear Red Day, a day to raise awareness about the risks of heart disease and stroke, which are leading causes of death in the United States. It's celebrated on the first Friday of February each year.

Our IT team was all in, wearing their red City of Bartow polos in honor of the day.

---

## Frank Canovaca Celebrates 15 Years with the City

Speaking of IT, congrats to Frank Canovaca on being recognized at the last City Commission meeting for 15 years of service!



## Black History Month Commemorated at the Library

This February, in celebration of Black History Month, a special guest is coming to the Bartow Public Library, 2150 S. Broadway Ave. Storyteller Tamara Green will share touching stories from Africa, her family and Florida beginning at 6pm on Thursday, February 13. All ages welcome.

The Library will be celebrating Black History all month long with a window display, make and take art kits, an exploration of how potato chips were first created (credit: George Crum), book displays, interactive lessons in the contributions of Black authors, poets, scientists, inventors, political figures, and more.

## Fluoride Workshop Scheduled for Feb. 18

The Bartow City Commission will hold a public Workshop regarding the pros and cons of adding fluoride to the City's water supply on Tuesday, February 18 from 6 -8pm at the Bartow Civic Center, 2250 Floral Ave. Panelists will include Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Lapado and American Fluoridation Society President Dr. Johnny Johnson.

Following presentations on both sides of the issue, there will be an opportunity for questions and public comments. Based on the information and feedback gleaned from the meeting, the Commission will vote on whether to continue to add fluoride to City water at a future regular meeting.

## State of the City Address Slated for Feb. 27

Bartow City Manager Mike Herr will provide an update on City accomplishments across the various departments as well as present his vision for Polk's Capital City in 2025 and beyond at a State of the City breakfast presented by the Greater Bartow Chamber of Commerce. The event will be held at 8 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 27 at the Bartow Civic Center, 2250 S. Floral Ave.

Herr, a long-time public servant and former president of Econ Engineering, was hired as Bartow's City Manager in January 2023. He previously served as City Manager in Winter Haven and Plant City as well as Polk County Manager, among other high level municipal positions. Herr also is a member of the Florida League of Cities Advocacy Committee, the National League of Cities Small Cities Advisory Council, and the National League of Cities Transportation Infrastructure Committee. He received a Career Excellence Award from the Florida City County Manager Association in 2009. Under Herr's leadership, the City of Bartow has seen considerable

investment in infrastructure as well as City amenities, services and personnel.

Tickets are \$25 per person and include a buffet breakfast. To register or for more information, go to [bartowchamber.com](http://bartowchamber.com) or call 863.533.7125.



## Bright Ideas Innovation Sessions Planned

Last year, the City launched a Bright Ideas Innovation Program. Spearheaded by City Manager Mike Herr, the program creates a framework for every member of the City staff to develop and submit ideas for review, feedback and adoption.

The City will host three Bright Ideas Innovation Sessions for City staff to share more about the program and offer assistance in submitting an idea either in writing or online. The sessions will be held on February 27 from 9 - 11am or 2 - 4pm in the Commission Chambers at City Hall; on March 19 from 9 - 11am or 2 - 4pm in the Gause Room at the Carver Recreation Center and on March 28 from 9 - 11am or 2 - 4pm in the PRCA Conference Room at the Civic Center.



## 13th Annual Blarney Duathlon to be held March 15

City of Bartow Parks & Recreation once again will host the Annual Blarney Duathlon / 5K on Saturday, March 15. Now in its 13th year, the duathlon consists of a 1 mile run, an 11 mile Bike ride and a 3 mile run. A 5K race will be held at the same time. Discounted entry fees are available on a sliding scale through March 9. Register at [tinyurl.com/bartow0blarney](http://tinyurl.com/bartow0blarney).

[NEWS](#)

[SIGNUP](#)

[DEPARTMENTS](#)

[BUSINESS](#)



450 N. Wilson Ave., Bartow, FL 33830  
(863) 534-0100

[CONTACT  
US](#)





Try email marketing for free today!