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Holiday pie showdown: It's a face off for America's favorite



CITRUS
COUNTY

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Area hospitals’ Leapfrog grades jump

Both HCA Florida Citrus Hospital and Tampa General Hospital Crystal River receive ‘B’ ratings

By **CASMIRA HARRISON**
Chronicle Reporter

Both of Citrus County’s hospitals increased their safety scores, according to the national health watchdog organization that monitors patient safety.

HCA Florida Citrus Hospital in Inverness and Tampa General Hospital Crystal River each received “B” ratings, according to The Leapfrog Group, which released its fall 2025 Hospital

Safety Grade last Thursday. According to the national group’s website, the nonprofit assigns an “A,” “B,” “C,” “D” or “F” to all general hospitals in the United States based on their ability to protect patients from medical errors, accidents, injuries and infections. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services studies state that the largely preventable problems harm millions of Medicare patients each year.

The fact that both hospitals im-

proved – and HCA Citrus showing a big leap – appears promising for Citrus County medical patients. Here’s a breakdown of how each hospital fared.

HCA Florida Citrus Hospital

Year over year, HCA Florida Citrus showed the largest jump in ratings, going from a D grade in the spring and fall of 2024 to a C this past spring and, most recently, rising to a B rating. In 2022 and 2023, the hospital scored C ratings.

Included in that score, 32 metrics are highlighted under five patient care measurements: in-

fections, problems with surgery, safety problems, practices to prevent errors and staff, including doctors and nurses.

The areas are scored in a range from Worse than Average to Average or Better Than Average.

Missy Danforth, Senior Vice President of Health Care Ratings at The Leapfrog Group, said in a statement that the hospital’s jump shows that “meaningful improvement is possible.”

“Earning a ‘B’ Hospital Safety Grade is a testament to the commitment of everyone at HCA Florida Citrus Hospital – from leadership to frontline caregiv-

ers – working together to put patients first,” said Danforth. “Citrus Hospital is showing that meaningful improvement is possible.”

The hospital was proud of the grade, but noted that there are areas to be improved upon.

“At HCA Florida Citrus Hospital, patient safety is at the heart of everything we do. This ‘B’ grade reflects the dedication and hard work of our entire team – physicians, nurses, and support staff – who strive every day to provide safe, high-quality care to

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Courthouse museum: Where Citrus County’s past gets a second life



Cliff Fuller is a docent at the Historic Courthouse Museum. Above, he informs a small group of visitors about the history of Citrus County.

By **MIKE ARNOLD**
Chronicle Reporter

Steve Hrycaj, chairman of the Inverness Cultural Heritage Council, walked through the museum for the first time after his wife told him he needed something to do besides “not walking anymore.” He had retired in 2012.

“So as a joke, I’ll come in and take a look,” he said.

He met then Museum Director Kathy Turner Thompson, filled out a volunteer form, and was immediately put to work reorganizing the gift shop – first because of his retail background, then because he taught history, English, civics and government.

“And that’s what started my love affair with the building,” he said.

Hrycaj, who takes on an almost professorial persona in appearance and with his deep knowledge of Citrus County history, now helps coordinate concerts, speaker series, events and partnerships that support the museum financially and bring in new audiences.

“We try ... if she’s running short on supplies, we’ll underwrite it,” he said of assistant program manager Andrea Cuccaro. His group helps

Photos by Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor

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The Historic Old Courthouse in downtown Inverness relies on volunteers to educate the public about the history of the county.



Cliff Fuller answers questions asked by a couple visiting from Germany inside the courtroom of the Historic Courthouse in Inverness.

EXPLAINER

What’s next once Trump signs Epstein bill

By **STEPHEN GROVES**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress is sending President Donald Trump a bill to compel the Justice Department to make public its case files on the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, a potentially far-reaching development in a yearslong push by survivors of Epstein’s abuse for a public reckoning.

Both the House and Senate passed the bill this week with overwhelming margins after Trump reversed course on his monthslong opposition to the bill and indicated he would sign it. Once the bill is signed by the president, it sets a 30-day countdown for the Justice Department to produce what’s commonly known as the Epstein files.

“This bill is a command for the president to be fully transparent,

to come fully clean, and to provide full honesty to the American people,” Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Wednesday.

Schumer added that Democrats were ready to push back if they perceive that the president is doing anything but adhering to “full transparency.”

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Julia Demaree Nikhinson / AP

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., speaks to reporters Tuesday on the steps of the U.S. Capitol after voting in favor of the Epstein Files Transparency Act.

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