



## Meet Lopez-Neumann, Dunnellon’s history making placekicker

SPORTS, 1B

# Ocala StarBanner

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Assistant State Attorneys Rich Buxman and Amy Berndt. DOUG ENGLE/OCALA STAR BANNER

## Weeklong murder trial ends with guilty verdict

Austin L. Miller

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In closing arguments delivered Sept. 19, the prosecution and the defense had different views on who killed Timothy Floyd Smith.

Assistant State Attorney Amy Berndt told jurors the victim’s death was a case of “death by a thousand cuts” — in other words, there were many pieces of evidence and testimony that, when put together, were devastating for the defendant, Herbert Swilley.

Defense lawyer John Klein argued the death by a thousand cuts analogy was flawed because evidence collected by Marion County Sheriff’s deputies, and presented in court by the state, didn’t prove his client is guilty of murder.

After nearly 2 1/2 hours of deliberation, the 12-member jury accepted the prosecutor’s version. Herbert Kurt Swilley was found guilty of first-degree murder.

Swilley wore a suit during the weeklong jury trial. Bailiffs escorted the 57-year-old man to the back so he could change into a jail uniform for sentencing.

### Reactions from the victim’s family & sentencing

A man and two women elected to speak on behalf of Smith’s family, which was a fixture in the courtroom since trial started on Sept. 15.

Valerie Smith, a cousin, told the court Smith would always attend family gatherings. She said whenever he entered the room, everyone was excited. She said



Some of the 82 pieces of evidence introduced in the week-long trial on Sept. 19.

AUSTIN L. MILLER/OCALA STAR-BANNER

“he was so many things to so many people.”

She ended with “I love you, Tim.”

Nephew Blake Riels thanked prosecutors and those who brought the case to trial. He hopes Swilley will forgive himself.

Candace Baker, one of the many people testifying for the state, said her friend Smith was a smart, amazing intelligent person who was kind and loving to everyone.

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## Major industrial lease signed at Trailhead Logistics Park

Jim Ross

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The Trailhead Logistics Park in southwest Marion County has secured a tenant for its massive new building.

Here’s what we know about the deal:

### Where is the park located?

The park is northwest of the County Road 484/Interstate 75 junction.

### What do we know about the building?

It measures 943,426 square feet. Transwestern Development Company, in partnership with QuadReal Property Group, built the structure on spec (with no tenant secured ahead of time) in 2023.

### What do we know about the tenant who signed the lease?

Not much. A Transwestern news release does not mention the tenant’s name, referring to it only as “a third-party logistics provider” that serves “a global e-commerce company.” The Tampa Bay Business Journal earlier reported the deal.

### When will the tenant occupy the building?

At the end of this month.

### Will this deal lead to new jobs?

Hundreds of jobs will result from this deal, according to Bartow McDonald, managing director of Ocala-based SVN | McDonald & Company, which specializes in land and commercial real estate. McDonald represented Transwestern in lease negotiations and was

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## \$2.3M raised for nonprofits during Give4Marion drive

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The 2025 Give4Marion campaign raised \$2.3 million, with 5,076 donors and 7,959 gifts.

The dollar amount actually is greater than last year’s record amount. The 2024 figure included a major gift that one of the nonprofits took in as part of a capital campaign. If that large donation is backed out of 2024’s total, the 2025 final number is bigger.

And donations continue to come in.

This was the sixth year for Give4Marion, and the focus was on the impact the dollars have on the nonprofits. “They really are the ones doing the hard work every single day,” said Lauren Deiorio, president and executive director of the Community Foundation for Ocala/Marion County.

Deiorio and dozens of nonprofit workers and volunteers flooded the Marion County Commission chambers at 9 a.m. Sept. 16 during the ramp-up to this year’s fundraising sprint, which officially started at 10 a.m. Sept. 16 and ended at 7 p.m. Sept. 17.

The Give4Marion online portal will officially close the evening of Sept. 21.

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