



24 boys swimmers to watch in Polk County in 2026

SPORTS, 1B

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Two women seized for ICE

Polk Sheriff's Office answers lawmaker on incident

Gary White
Lakeland Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Polk County Sheriff's Office has responded to a state legislator who inquired about an Aug. 20 incident in which deputies took custody of two women inside a hospital on behalf of a federal immigration agency.

State Rep. Rita Harris, D-Orlando, wrote a letter to the Polk County Sheriff's Office dated Aug. 25, in which she sought information about the incident

involving Grace Calero and her daughter, Giulianna Carriel, both of Kissimmee.

A PCSO deputy took the two women into custody at HCA Florida Poinciana Hospital, where they had been treated following a vehicle crash. Videos of the distraught women being handcuffed and forced from the hospital gained national attention.

Calero was the driver and her daughter the passenger in a vehicle that was involved in a rollover crash, according to media reports. They were taken to the

hospital for observation and treatment.

The hospital is just outside Polk County in Osceola County, but the vehicle crash occurred in Polk County.

Like other law-enforcement agencies in Florida, PCSO has an arrangement under the 287(g) program to perform certain duties for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. After determining that ICE had issued detainers for the women, both immigrants from Ecuador, deputies handcuffed them for removal to the Polk County Jail and eventual transfer to ICE custody.

See ICE, Page 2A



Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd is shown speaking at a news conference Sept. 3 in Winter Haven. Judd said his deputies followed normal procedures in detaining two women who had been involved in a car crash on Aug. 20.

POLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



Crews have completed repairs to the roof of Annie Pfeiffer Chapel at Florida Southern College, returning the exterior to its "monochromatic" appearance, as FSC President Jeremy Martin described it. PROVIDED BY FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE

Florida Southern finishes roof repair to famous chapel

Gary White
Lakeland Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

LAKELAND — At the start of each school year, Florida Southern College holds an orientation convocation in Annie Pfeiffer Chapel for new students and the parents who deliver them to campus.

"That's where they do their hugs," Florida Southern President Jeremy

Martin said. "They take their photo in front of Pfeiffer, and then their Florida Southern experience officially begins."

Martin is grateful that a major repair to the roof of the campus landmark was completed before move-in day on Aug. 22.

"It is the heart of campus," Martin said of the chapel. "It's the most sacred precinct on campus."

Annie Pfeiffer Chapel is one of 13 structures on the Lakeland campus de-

signed by Frank Lloyd Wright, probably the most esteemed American architect. It was the first to be built, with construction finishing in 1941.

The chapel has a flat roof that can hold water during Lakeland's frequent rains. Over the decades, it has been plagued by persistent leaks.

Florida Southern filed a federal lawsuit in 2025 against Tremco CPG Inc, a

See CHAPEL, Page 3A

Shapiro headlines Lakeland political fundraiser

Gary White
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USA TODAY NETWORK

Ben Shapiro, one of the nation's most influential conservative figures, came to Lakeland for a political fundraiser held Sept. 2 at the Ashley Gibson Barnett Museum of Art at Florida Southern College.

Shapiro is the host of "The Ben Shapiro Show," a daily political podcast and live radio show, and the author of 16 books, including "Facts Don't Care about Your Feelings" and "Lions and Scavengers: The True Story of America (and Her Critics)."

Chris McLaughlin, a Lakeland real-estate executive, attended the event and shared photos of himself sitting beside Shapiro at the main table along with Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd.

The organizers of the event privately rented the museum, Executive Director Daryl Ward said. Ward did not attend.

The event was organized by the Meridian Political Action Committee, a state-level organization formed in June, said Chad Corbitt, the group's chairperson. Meridian is a conservative group focused on Florida elections for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate, Corbitt said by phone.

Meridan registered in Florida in June, according to public records. The PAC is in the process of registering with the Federal Elections Commission, Corbitt said. He described it as "a

See SHAPIRO, Page 2A

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