

Fort Defiance nabs elusive playoff victory

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Mosquito threats spread across U.S.



Climate change is part of the reason people in many parts of the country are seeing more mosquitoes. The other major factor shaping where mosquitoes live, often overlooked, is humans themselves. PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

Climate, development fuel disease risks

Kylee Rae Noel
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
and Sadie Jane Ryan
University of Florida
THE CONVERSATION



A bucket, flowerpot saucer, clogged gutter, discarded tire, birdbath or even a bottle cap can collect enough water for mosquito larvae to develop.

A mosquito buzzing in your backyard may seem like a minor annoyance. But these tiny insects, with their taste for human blood, are increasingly appearing in areas where they were once rare or absent, and that's raising concerns about the spread of mosquito-borne diseases, including West Nile, Zika and dengue fever.

Florida's struggles with dengue fever in 2026 should be a warning.

Hillsborough County, home to Tampa, had seen more than 350 dengue cases, at least one of them fatal, by late October, and Miami-Dade County had reported more than 200 cases. The dengue outbreak has been described as the largest in modern Florida history. More than 400 of the over 700 Florida cases, including many of those in Hillsborough County and at least seven in the Orlando area, were listed as locally acquired from mosquitoes in the area.

Climate change is part of the reason people in many parts of the country are seeing more mosquitoes. Rising global temperatures and shorter winters expand the area suitable for mosquitoes to live in and transmit viruses that cause diseases. Climate change also brings increasingly erratic storm systems, heat and rainfall patterns that leave standing water, creating conditions ideal for mosquitoes to breed.

The other major factor shaping where mosquitoes live, often overlooked, is humans themselves.

We study entomology and medical geography, including the spread of mosquito-borne diseases. To understand why you may be seeing more mosquitoes, and why communities

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Stuarts Draft man sentenced for raping young girl

Brad Zinn
Staunton News Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

VERONA — A Stuarts Draft man who was registered sex offender and raped a young girl has been sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Sam L. Johnson, 69, appeared in Augusta County Circuit court on Thursday, Nov. 12, and pleaded guilty to charges of rape of a child under the age of 13 and sexual abuse of an animal. A third charge of object sexual penetration wasn't prosecuted as part of a plea agreement.

An investigation began after the victim told her parents in June that Johnson had sexually abused her for several years, starting in 2018 when she was under the age of 10, according to Augusta County Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Joe Perry. He said the sexual abuse lasted until 2024.

During a forensic interview, the victim told authorities Johnson starting "touching" her when she was a young girl, and within about two years he was raping her. She also said he showed her "inappropriate videos," Perry said.

The girl was able to describe Johnson's genitalia, the prosecutor said, which matched his physical characteristics.

The Augusta County Sheriff's Office arrested Johnson on June 15. Following his arrest, Perry said authorities found a screenshot belonging to Johnson that showed two women sexually abusing a dog, resulting in the felony animal abuse charge.

While acknowledging he was having "some difficulty" with the plea agreement, which the victim endorsed, Judge Sean Workowski accepted it and sentenced Johnson to life in prison with all but 18 years suspended.

Johnson will also be on probation for the rest of his life, and the victim was given a lifetime protective order. With credit for good behavior, he could be released from prison in his mid-80s, Perry said.

In court, Johnson declined to make a statement.

Prior to his arrest, Johnson was already a registered sex offender.

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Contractor convicted of construction fraud

Brad Zinn
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USA TODAY NETWORK

VERONA — A local businesswoman who charged two clients more than $600,000 to build homes that were never completed has been convicted of two felony charges.

On Nov. 10, in Augusta County Circuit Court, Judge Shannon Sherrill found Amy J. Argenbright, 46, guilty of two counts of construction fraud.

A two-day bench trial was held Oct. 20-21, but the judge said he needed additional time to sift through the evidence. Following the guilty verdicts, sentencing was set for next year.

Argenbright, of A & Co, was involved in stalled construction projects for two new homes, evidence showed. Augusta County Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Caleb Kramer said she accepted payments for construction costs but said some of the money she received did not go toward the homes. In one instance, he said a $50,000 payment sought by Argenbright that was supposed to go toward one of the homes was instead partially used by her to pay off more than $19,000 on a delinquent mortgage she had through First Bank & Trust. A loan officer testified it was seven months in arrears.

Defense attorney Thomas Weidner IV, who argued during Argenbright's October trial that the case should have been a civil matter, said afterward that it was a "sad and difficult situation all around." Weidner said, given more time, he felt the projects would have been finished.

After being found guilty, Argenbright posted on her Facebook page and said, "I have let Weidner know that I will be careful to hold my tongue but that I also

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