



Above and at right are more scenes from the event at Banks Lake.

Banks Lake paddle

(Continued from Page 1)

its mission and vision: “A healthy watershed with clean, swimmable, fishable, drinkable water.”

The next outing with WWALS Saturday, August 12, a Naylor to Mayday Paddle on the Alapaha River starting at 9AM. If the more relaxed vibe is more your style, WWALS hosts a paddle at Banks Lake every full moon (weather permitting).

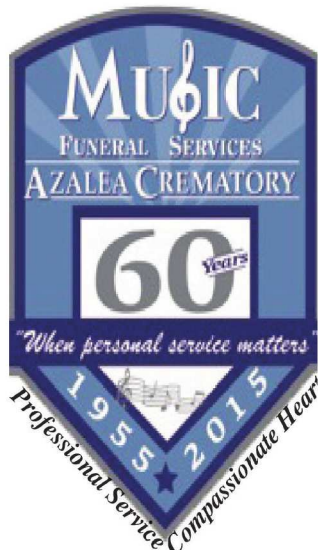
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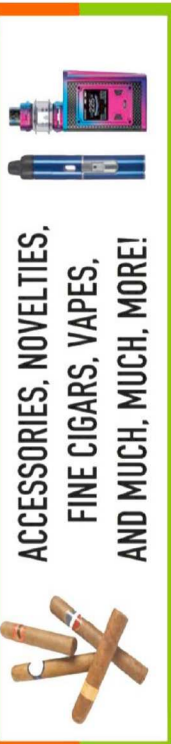
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Alapaha Judicial Circuit District Attorney Chase Studstill addresses representatives from various agencies in Atkinson, Berrien, Clinch, Cook, and Lanier counties at a Child Abuse protocol meeting held in Nashville on July 28.

Alapaha Judicial Circuit discusses child abuse cases

On Friday, July 28, representatives from several agencies in Atkinson, Berrien, Clinch, Cook, and Lanier counties met to discuss how Child Abuse cases will be investigated and prosecuted within the Alapaha Judicial Circuit. The meeting

took place in the Agricultural Building in Berrien County and was spearheaded by Alapaha Judicial Circuit District Attorney Chase L. Studstill.

Members attending included representatives from the Atkinson and Cook County Department of Family and Children's Services; Unison Behavioral Health; Atkinson County Coroner's office; Alapaha Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office; Berrien and Lanier County Health Departments; Berrien, Clinch, and Cook County Magistrate Court; Atkinson, Berrien, Lanier, and Clinch County school systems; Clinch County Sheriff's Department; Lanier County Sheriff's Office; The Haven; Department of Juvenile Justice; CASA; Children's Advocacy Center; and Atkinson, Berrien, and Lanier County Family Connections.

According to District Attorney Studstill, the primary purpose of the meeting was to gather members from these agencies and others within the circuit to implement a Protocol

for the Investigation and Prosecution of Alleged Cases of Child Abuse. Studstill addressed the members in attendance and reviewed the proposed protocol. “The Protocol outlines the procedures to be used in investigating and prosecuting cases arising from alleged sexual abuse and sexual exploitation as well as the procedures to be followed for each agency within our circuit. The Protocol mirrors the state’s model protocol for the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases, but we have modified ours to accommodate our local organizations.”

Studstill went on to state, “We appreciate everyone who attended this meeting and provided input for the implementation of this protocol. Most of the members are part of a multi-disciplinary team which we commonly refer to as ‘MDT’. These team members consist of law enforcement officials, DFCS, the district attorney’s office, the Child Advocacy Center, the Haven, mental health and medical professionals, domestic

violence shelters when a child is involved and others who provide a coordinated response in these cases. The overall goal of this protocol is to increase the effectiveness of investigations while reducing the stress and risk of secondary trauma to children. The MDT currently in place for our circuit meets monthly to share information regarding child abuse cases in Berrien, Cook, and Lanier Counties.”

In addition to implementing the protocol, Studstill said, “I am proud to announce that we are also planning to implement MDTs for the remaining two counties, Atkinson and Clinch. It was my honor to spearhead this meeting and discuss the protocol. We obtained acceptance signatures from all who attended the meeting. The fact that this meeting was so well attended shows the commitment that people within our circuit have for the protection of children. My office is committed to ensuring that we all move forward and implement the best practices for investigation and prosecution of these cases.”

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