



Laura Byrnes  
**CAREER  
SOURCE**

## Want to construct a career?

**A**t CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, we are used to partnering with organizations that help build better communities.

And that is certainly the case with the Citrus County Builders Association — after all, “your partner in building a better community” is not only the CCBA’s tagline, it is literally what the not-for-profit construction industry association is all about.

The association is made up of licensed and insured building contractors, developers and subcontractors, as well as members who are in allied industries — all striving to promote quality, affordable housing for Citrus County while creating a favorable business climate for its members.

You’re no doubt familiar with the old saying, “you have to crack a few eggs to make an omelet”? Well, in the construction industry you have to build a few homes, or commercial structures, to enjoy a favorable business climate. And you can’t build anything without an able-bodied workforce.

CareerSource CLM is pleased to be able to work with CCBA to help ensure its members have the workforce needed to build on their success.

Toward that end, we are hosting a Construction Job Fair in partnership with CCBA and Withlacoochee Technical College for those interested in working in the construction industry.

The job fair takes place Saturday, Oct. 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at WTC, 1201 W. Main St., in Inverness. CareerSource CLM will also hold a free Job Fair Prep Workshop on Tuesday, Oct. 3 from 10-11 a.m. at the CCBA office, 1196 S. Lecanto Highway, in Lecanto.

Preregistration is not required for the construction job fair or preparation workshop. There is no charge to attend either event. Attendees are urged to save time by completing a full registration in advance through Employ Florida at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com).

For prospective construction workers, you should know that while the industry took a hit during the recession, it is rebounding.

Florida had 62,880 construction establishments employing 460,695 as of the first quarter of 2016, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics quarterly census of employment and wages. Fast forward to the QCEW for the first quarter of 2017 and the number of establishments has grown to 67,968 while the number of employees jumped to 499,019, a job-growth rate increase of 8.3 percent.

During that same period, the number of construction establishments in Citrus County grew from 420 to 427 and the county added 420 new construction jobs for a total of 2,878 employees — a job-growth rate of 6.4 percent.

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## Changing times: The vanishing mall

**A** confession: I am an enthusiastic comic book collector.

I’ve seriously been one since the late ’60s and, ever since moving to Florida in 1983, have traveled far and wide to get my “fix” at one of the few comic shops around. I’ve gone to Tampa, Hudson and New Port Richey to get my books. There are no shops in Citrus County.

For the past 20 or so years, I’ve been frequenting Yancy Street Comics. Based in Pasco County, this place has moved frequently but for the past 10 or so years, it’s been a fixture at the Gulf View Square mall off U.S. 19 in Pasco County.

At one time, that would have been considered a “plum” location — inside a major mall and subject to all kinds of foot traffic. But, last month, the owner of Yancy Street moved out of the mall to a storefront across the street. It had nothing to do with rent or square footage. The owner had plenty of room for comics and special events.

The move was partly due to the declining fortunes of the



Michael D. Bates  
**MIKE'S  
MUSINGS**

**Crystal River Mall is  
almost devoid of  
customers one day  
this past week.**

MATTHEW BECK/Chronicle



Gulf View Square mall, which has seen a steady exodus of major store chains the past five or so years. It’s gotten so bad there is chatter about the mall closing. I don’t think that will happen, but, given the state of the place, who can say?

It’s telling that the owner of a specialty store in a great inside location at a mall left in part because he thinks business will be

better somewhere else.

### ‘The times, they are a-changin’

Blame the advent of online shopping and changing cultural habits for the demise of malls.

Here’s a telling statistic: Online and other non-store sales in July increased 1.3 percent from June and 11.4 percent

year-over-year, according to the National Retail Federation (NRF)

This didn’t happen overnight. Malls used to be gathering spots for teens who would frequent the trendy clothing stores and hang out at the food court. Even seniors who used to meet up in the mornings and do their

See [BATES/Page D5](#)

## Home, sweet business

TANIA’S HOUSE STRIVES FOR FAMILY ATMOSPHERE

SHARON ANDERSON  
*For the Chronicle*

**“W**e love to make people happy through food,” said Tania Houle who,

along with her husband, Michael, own and operate Tania’s House, 7911 W. Gulf-to-Lake Highway, the former site of Quiznos, in Crystal River.

“I have always had a passion for baking, Michael loves meeting new people and we both enjoy food.”

Though the doors have been open since July 10, Tania’s House will hold its grand opening Wednesday, Sept. 27, from 4-6:30 p.m. Events will include a ceremonial ribbon cutting, courtesy the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, at 4:30. The public is invited to drop in during that time and enjoy free samples of Tania’s homemade specialty breads — including her chocolate zucchini bread.

There will also be door prizes, a visit from the Kona Ice Truck, and a booth where folks can sample Bush Boy’s honey, which the restaurant uses and sells.

“All the food at Tania’s House is made using as many locally sourced ingredients as possible, and made to order,” said Tania. “We proudly serve locally roasted Cattle Dog Coffee, Bush Boy’s Beehives Honey, and Kari’s Jams.”

Tania’s house is open Monday through Saturday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Sunday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. The morning menu includes breakfast sandwiches, croissants, cinnamon rolls, bagels, muffins, waffles and pancakes.

Lunch features soups, salads and specialty hot and cold subs on a variety of freshly baked breads. Customers can choose their own ingredients or select from the menu. Homemade sides include pasta and potato salads. At least two specials are offered per day, Tania said.

Tania’s House also provides catering for both breakfast and lunch. Plus, Tania said, “We do build-your-own pizza and build-your-own cupcake birthday parties.” If an organization needs a place for a private meeting, she said, Tania’s House will host it during their off hours and provide the food at a preset fee.

“My passion is baking, while Michael loves to meet all the new people that come into Tania’s House,” Tania said.

*“I love talking and learning about people — what they like and why they come here,” Michael said. “I like making friends because a friend is different than a customer. This is called Tania’s ‘House’ because we want it to have a homey, family atmosphere. It’s not just a business.”*



SHARON ANDERSON/For the Chronicle

**Tania and Michael Houle are preparing for the grand opening of their new business, Tania’s House, in Crystal River.**

Free Wi-Fi is available, Michael added, “so come in, set up your computer and work, or just hang out and talk. Don’t just get your food and go.”

The couple met in 2000 when both were employed by an ambulance service in West Hartford, Connecticut, Tania said. They married in 2004 and have a 14-year-old daughter, Autumn, who attends Lecanto High School. They also have two older sons, Kyle, who resides in Connecticut and is pursuing a professional firefighting career, and Keith, who is serving in the U.S. Army.

The Houles both worked for years as EMTs and paramedics in Connecticut, Tania said, before entering a new field helping many receive transplants.

“Working in emergency medicine was a passion,” Tania said. “After 13 years, I decided I needed a change and was introduced to the world of organ, eye and tissue donation.”

Prior to moving to Citrus County to be near family, they lived for a year in Hawaii, where Michael opened an eye lab.

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# Chamber Connection

915 N. Suncoast Blvd., Crystal River, FL 34429 · 352-795-3149 · 106 W. Main St., Inverness, FL 34450 · 352-726-2801

## Congratulations to the Leadership Citrus Class of 2017

Leadership Citrus is an annual program designed to enhance the leadership potential of individuals living in Citrus County who are in business, professional and community service oriented. Through an intense program of lectures and structured activities, participants will become familiar with current issues, community resources and other factors influencing the quality of life and direction of Citrus County's future. This is a Citrus County Chamber of

Commerce program.

For more information on how you could become part of this amazing program, visit [www.leadershipcitrus.com](http://www.leadershipcitrus.com), or call the Chamber of Commerce at 352-795-3149.

Join this group and fellow alumni on Thursday, Sept. 28, at the College of Central Florida from 5:30-8 p.m. This will be an alumni celebration, as well as a chance to find out if this program is for you! This event is free!



**Leadership Citrus Class of 2017.** Back row, from left, are: Cregg Dalton, Citrus County Sheriff's Office; Alex Hampton, Seven Rivers Regional Medical Center; Janet Mayo, Citrus County Chamber of Commerce; Lindsay Tozer, Citrus County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller; Linda Cridland, Cridland Real Estate; Dianne Perkins, Citrus County Chronicle; Dawn Horton, Priority Patient Services; and Debbie Reilly, Citrus County Library Systems. In front, from left, are: Dave Perry, Hunter Springs Kayak; Kelly Carpenter, Citrus County Property Appraiser's Office; Julie Schaefer, Oak Hill Hospital; Bobby Bessler, Citrus County Fire Rescue; Mike Penn, Florida Forest Service; Kristin Demers, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners, Budget Director; David Reed, Citrus County YMCA; Craig Stevens, Citrus Sheriff Fire Rescue; and Renea Teaster, Citrus County Anti-Drug Coalition/Community Alliance.

## Mermaids & Margaritas new date to be announced soon!



The widely anticipated "Mermaids & Margaritas" festival may have had to be postponed as a result of Hurricane Irma, but it will survive and surface again!

Stay tuned for an announcement about its new debut date in the very near future!

## Chamber Member News

### Construction Job Fair: Oct. 7

The Citrus Construction Job Fair Employer Registration is now open to all construction-related businesses, regardless of Citrus County Builders Association membership status. Advertising for this event is targeting people who are ready to work as well as both students and adults who need a little training before they enter our industry.

Now is the time to register for your employer booth at the Construction Job Fair on Oct. 7 at Withlacoochee Technical College from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Registration deadline is



**CONSTRUCTION  
JOB FAIR  
OCTOBER 7, 2017**

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!  
Start BUILDING a strong future!  
Plan to participate in the upcoming Construction Job Fair at Withlacoochee Technical College. Just for members of the Citrus County Builders Association and Construction Job Seekers.

For more information, contact a CCBA representative at 352-746-9028 or CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion's Business Development Team (850-746-8950).  
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Oct. 2. For information, contact Donna Bidlack at [donnab@citrusbuilders.com](mailto:donnab@citrusbuilders.com) or 352-746-9028.

### 30th Annual Scarecrow Festival: Oct. 14

Join Chamber member The Shoppes at Heritage Village on Oct. 14 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for their annual Scarecrow Festival.

The 30th year will provide fun for the entire family, as all of the Village shops in downtown Crystal River will be "Celebrating the Classic Movies" with their shops decorated in movie themes and employees dressed in character!

For more information, call 352-564-1400.

For information on all events or to purchase tickets and to RSVP, call the Chamber at 352-795-3149.

### FIRE UP CITRUS!

■ Oct. 5 — 6-9 p.m. at Tuscany on the Meadows at the Quality Inn and Suites, 350 E. Norvell Bryant Highway, Hernando. Admission is FREE — Complimentary hors d'oeuvres & cash bar. Produced by the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce.

### "SALUTE TO BUSINESS" LUNCHEON

■ Oct. 13 — 11:30 a.m. at Black Diamond Ranch, 3125 W. Black Diamond Circle, Lecanto. \$23/person for Chamber members; \$25/person for non-members. Confirmed speaker: Duke Energy Florida State President Harry Sideris; invited speaker: U.S. Sen.

Marco Rubio. Sponsored by Sunflower Springs ALF.

### BAM BBQ

■ Oct. 19 — 6-10 p.m. at M&B Dairy, 8760 S. Lecanto Highway Lecanto. \$35/person (includes two drink tickets); tickets available at Chamber offices in Crystal River and Inverness. Produced by the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce.

### BAM MIXER

■ Oct. 26 — 5-7 p.m. at Insight Credit Union, 1101 E. Fifth St., Crystal River. Insight hosts this special mixer in recognition of Business Appreciation Month.

## Chamber Legacy Partners

The Chamber recognizes our Legacy Partners that have made a special investment in the Chamber to support the programs and mission of the Chamber. For information on becoming a Legacy Partner, please contact the Chamber at 352-795-3149.



## Chamber events calendar

Oct. 5 — Fire Up Citrus! at Tuscany on the Meadows  
Oct. 13 — Business Appreciation Month Annual Luncheon, Black Diamond  
Oct. 19 — BAM BBQ!, M&B Dairy  
Oct. 26 — BAM mixer, Insight Credit Union, Crystal River  
Nov. 3 — Chamber Luncheon at Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church; Poverty Simulation Project by United Way; Sponsor is HPH Hospice  
Nov. 11 — Lake Hernando Dragon Boat Festival  
Dec. 2 — Crystal River Christmas Parade  
Dec. 9 — Inverness Christmas Parade  
Dec. 14 — Christmas Mixer; Fidelity Title/Eden Law Group  
Jan. 13 & 14 — Florida Manatee Festival  
Jan. 24 & 25 — Legislative Days in Tallahassee

**New date coming soon for Mermaids & Margaritas Festival!**

For more information on all Chamber events, call 352-795-3149 or go to [www.CitrusCountyChamber.com](http://www.CitrusCountyChamber.com).

## RECENT RIBBON CUTTINGS

**Welcome New Chamber Members:** The Chamber continues to grow weekly! We welcome our new members and thank all of them for joining the Chamber. We encourage the community to patronize their businesses.

### Fred's World Famous Barber Shop



The Chamber is pleased to welcome Fred, Gina, Leaoni and Bones of Fred's World Famous Barber Shop in Crystal River. It offers a super-clean and friendly atmosphere for men, women and children, so feel free to bring the whole family. Fred will be sure to keep them all entertained with one of his exciting stories. No appointments are made, simply walk in to Fred's Barber Shop in Crystal River and get a trim whenever it is convenient for YOU! We get you in and out, with no long wait times. Several Ambassadors were on hand to welcome them. Fred's is at 864 NE Fifth St. in Crystal River. Be sure to like them on Facebook.



# HOME

Continued from **Page D1**

Ultimately meeting the demanding physical and emotional toll such work requires made family life difficult, Michael said. While both still work per diem remotely for Legacy of Life Hawaii, they now have plenty of time for family and to indulge their passions as baker and restaurateur.

"When we made the decision to make a change and be closer to family I tossed out the idea of opening a bakery and after much searching we found this sandwich shop for sale in Crystal River," Tania said. They are residing with Michael's parents in Lecanto while building their business, she said.

Since opening the restaurant, the Houles have redecorated using mostly reclaimed and

repurposed materials and relics, Tania said. For example, "Our coffee bar is a desk that was handmade in the 1950s and the barn doors used for our tribute to the troops area are from 1850," she said.

"Michael and I feel supporting the community is important and have joined the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, the Citrus County Builders Association, and donate to local schools and charities," Tania said. They've also set up community boards in the restaurant on which to share upcoming events, and local artwork.

After Hurricane Harvey, the Houles decided to support the staff of LifeGift — the organ procurement organization in Houston, Texas, whose employees lost so much, but still kept performing their jobs and completing organ donation cases, Tania said.

"That led to my 'Loaves for

LifeGift' sale for the month of September in which all the profits from the specialty bread loaves sold will go to a fund set up by LifeGift."

Tania added, "I am currently working on matching with a local organization to support those who lost so much right here in Citrus County during Hurricane Irma." The details of this venture will be announced when finalized, she said.

Patrons are invited to follow Tania's House on Facebook (@taniashousefl), on Instagram at Tania's house, or visit the restaurant website at Tanias house.com. Questions are welcome by phone, at 352-795-7955, or via email to questions@taniashouse.com.

**This display features locally produced Bush Boy's Beehives Honey, Kari's Jams and Tania's baked goods.**

Special to the Chronicle



# BATES

Continued from **Page D1**

mall walk for exercise are finding alternatives.

And, with a classic "if you can't beat 'em join 'em" nod, many malls in the nation are now setting up "Amazon lockers," where customers who shop online can pick up their purchases from a secure location. Hey, anything to get shoppers to step foot inside.

Ironically, phone stores and kiosks are probably the top destinations at malls these days.

You've got to have a decent smart phone so people can stay home and shop online for stuff without

ever setting foot back in the mall.

Bottom line: If malls are to survive, they need to think out of the box.

Mark Mathews, with the National Retail Federation (NRF), said the highly competitive retail industry is undergoing rapid change.

"Consumer behavior, abetted by technology, is forcing retailers to adjust to this change at a speed that is unprecedented," Mathews said. "In this sort of environment, some businesses will struggle, but others will adapt and exciting new businesses will spring up to take the place of those that can't."

NRF chief economist Jack Kleinhenz said it's not that

consumers aren't shopping anymore. They've just changed their behavior.

"Consumers don't spend the way they used to," Kleinhenz said in an NRF article. "Younger consumers have drastically different buying habits, make life decisions later and seek more experiences — opposed to products — than older generations. People still want to shop. It's recreational. It's social."

## Guilty

I'm as guilty as others when it comes to online shopping. It's easy and convenient.

I was never much of a "mall rat." When my wife and family took our frequent mall

excursions, I would spend most of my time at the book store while the family walked the mall. I'd meet them at the food court for lunch.

Today, books are pretty much relegated to an increasingly small area of a grocery store. And even those are mostly best-sellers by a handful of the same authors. Given my esoteric tastes in reading, I have no choice but to buy online.

And maybe that's the key to the mall's survival: appealing to more specialized shopping tastes. For example, would an antiquarian book store survive today? Don't know if you don't try.

Or consider stores built

around demographics. In Citrus County, would a "Seniors World," specializing in mature customers' needs, make a profit at the mall?

I don't have the answers. But if the mall is to survive, owners must ditch the traditional mindset. Heck, maybe installing nice, convenient social media stations — with comfortable seats, free Wi-Fi hot spots and refreshments — would lure more people to the mall.

Anything to get them in the doors, right?

Contact Chronicle reporter Michael D. Bates at 352-563-3205, [mbates@chronicleonline.com](mailto:mbates@chronicleonline.com).

# BYRNES

Continued from **Page D1**

By any measure, that's solid job growth. And average weekly construction industry wages also increased by 10.6 percent over the year to \$717, or \$69 more per week.

Donna Bidlack, CCBA's executive officer, said the initial goal of the job fair was to be able to help meet members' immediate hiring needs.

"We lost a huge amount of our labor force in the downturn and that's starting to circle back around on us," Bidlack said. "We have employers who desperately need to fill positions with qualified individuals, we believe they are out there but just don't know opportunities exist ... (employers) need help now, I mean like five minutes ago."

Bidlack added that the job fair is open to both members and nonmembers of the builders

association.

As of this writing, 15 construction industry and related employers — all with jobs to fill — have registered for the event, including Galaxy Homes Solutions, Mike Scott Plumbing, Citrus Hills Construction and BKW Construction.

Bidlack noted that as planning for the job fair progressed, it became clear that in addition to meeting employers' immediate needs, it could help meet short- and long-term

needs as well by helping identify and develop a talent pipeline for the industry.

"Short term, we're talking about postsecondary individuals who are not quite ready to go on a job site," she said. "At this job fair, we can identify those who are thinking about the industry, entering it for the first time or changing careers."

Those individuals would be ideal candidates for a core construction class that gets underway at WTC in

January.


As for long term, Bidlack said there is interest in building a construction academy, including on-the-job training, available to Citrus County public high school students where graduates earn industry certification so they are ready to go to work, if interested.

For more information, call Business Development Manager Jordan Steelfox at 800-434-5627, ext. 3206.

CCBA members and nonmembers interested in


participating in the job fair may register at [www.citrusbuilders.com](http://www.citrusbuilders.com), or call 352-746-9028.

Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC, communications manager at CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, is accredited in public relations, a certified public relations counselor and a Florida Certified Workforce Professional. Contact her at 352-291-9559, 800-434-5627, ext. 1234, or [lbyrnes@careersourceclm.com](mailto:lbyrnes@careersourceclm.com).



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