

## Help Make a Difference

Come and join the effort to make a positive difference in the Tallahassee-Leon County community on Feb. 21, for the third annual Make A Difference Tallahassee. The service event kicks off at 8 a.m. at the Tallahassee Senior Center, located at 1400 North Monroe Street, where participants will choose from more than twenty different volunteer opportunities, ranging from arts and culture to senior services. Participants are encouraged to provide their own transportation to and from the volunteer sites. Volunteers will provide service until 2 p.m. and then reconvene at the Senior Center for free lunch and door prizes. Pre-registration is required. For more information, contact the Leon County Volunteer Center at 921-3015, or visit [www.volunteerleon.org](http://www.volunteerleon.org).



## CITIZEN ALERT! Your Tax Dollars Are At Stake



CRA? TIF? As a taxpayer, you are probably not familiar with these terms, but the Leon County Board of County Commissioners wants you to know the tremendous impact they are going to have on you. The Board approved pursuing action to challenge the City of Tallahassee's downtown Community Redevelopment Area, or CRA. Under the City's plan, the property tax level in the downtown CRA boundary will be frozen, and the tax growth increases would be reserved exclusively to pay for amenities in the downtown area. That is called Tax Increment Financing, or TIF. Downtown property owners would still enjoy the same City and County services as those outside of downtown, without paying their fair share. For example, there are currently three upscale, high rise downtown developments underway. Under the CRA, instead of the taxes from these properties going toward County services such as Emergency Medical Services and libraries, the tax dollars would fund downtown improvements. Meanwhile, taxpayers outside of downtown would continue to pay, subsidizing these services for downtown CRA residents.

From a taxpayer standpoint, the County will lose those dollars that would otherwise pay for County services, resulting in an amount expected to exceed \$130 million over 30 years. As the state capital, with the highest amount of properties of any county already off the tax rolls, this loss of taxes will result in the County and the City balancing their respective budgets on the property tax paying home and business owners who already carry more than their fair share of the tax burden in our community. If the City Commission approves creating a downtown CRA, the County will be forced to increase property taxes or cut services. And, the City is moving forward without the consent or approval from the County.

If you have any questions about this important issue, call the Leon County Public Information Office at 488-9962 or visit [www.co.leon.fl.us](http://www.co.leon.fl.us). Also, contact your City Commissioners at 891-2000 and share your concerns about this important issue.

## State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP)

Thinking about buying a home in Leon County? We may be able to help. The Leon County Department of Housing Services has an estimated \$700,000 available for the SHIP program, designated to assist first-time, low-income home owners with down payments, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The objective of this program is to promote home ownership in the unincorporated areas of Leon County. Qualification is based on income and family size. Please visit the Department of Housing Services at 918 Railroad Ave., or call 488-7790 to determine if you are eligible.



## Senior Homestead Exemption

Leon County senior homeowners only have a few more weeks to save money on their property tax bills. If you are more than 65 years of age and have a total household income of less than \$21,599, you may qualify for the Leon County Senior Homestead Exemption program. The Leon County Commission approved an additional \$25,000 homestead exemption on Leon County taxes for low-income seniors. The State of Florida homestead exemption already saves homeowners approximately \$554, and the low-income senior exemption saves an additional \$322. All senior homeowners must file an application for this additional exemption no later than March 1st. Forms are available at the Property Appraiser's Office in the Leon County Courthouse, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Leon County will also have tables set up in the Goody's wing of the Tallahassee Mall every Saturday in February from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and staff will be accepting applications at the Senior Center on North Monroe Street on Thursdays, Feb. 5 and 19, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Please call the Property Appraiser's Office at 488-6102 for more information, or if you would like an application mailed to you.

## Attention All Volunteers

Are you a volunteer who would like to learn more about managing a volunteer program? VolunteerLEON, in cooperation with Tallahassee Community College, is offering the first Volunteer Management Training Series (VMTS) in Florida, right here in Leon County. VMTS is a comprehensive course in volunteer management, for community organizations and volunteer managers provided by local volunteer centers. Topics include understanding volunteering, planning and marketing a volunteer program, recruiting, training and placing volunteers, supervising volunteers, and essential strategies for effective partnering with low-income communities and other special groups. The VMTS course consists of eight 4-hour sessions beginning Feb. 26, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The fee is \$28. The deadline for registration is Feb. 20, and the form can be found on VolunteerLEON's website at <http://www.volunteerleon.org>. Please call 921-3015 for more information.

## February Senior Days

Thursday, Feb. 5  
Miccosukee Senior Day  
9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Miccosukee Community Center

Thursday, Feb. 12  
Woodville Senior Day  
9:30 to 12:30 p.m. at the Woodville Elementary School Media Center

Tuesday, Feb. 17  
Fort Braden Senior Day  
9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Fort Braden Community Center

Tuesday, Feb. 24  
Chaires Senior Day  
9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Chaires Community Center

For more information, call 891-4065.

## Instructors and Entertainers Needed

You can be part of an outreach effort to bring services and programs to seniors living in the rural areas of Leon County. Do you have an interest in instructing an exercise class? Art class? Singing group? If you have a skill to share, we have seniors that would like to learn. All sorts of entertainers, musicians, gospel choirs, singers, and dancers are invited to liven up our Leon County Senior Days. Come join the fun and let your talents brighten the day of appreciative seniors! Call Susan Davis, Elder Ready Community Coordinator, at 891-4065.



# Calendar

### February 2004

**4 Development Review Committee Meeting**  
10 a.m. 3401 West Tharpe Street

**5 Capital Cascade Trail Public Meeting Examination Board Meeting**  
6 p.m. Florida Dept. of Transportation Auditorium, 605 Suwannee Street

**Contractors' Licensing & Examination Board Meeting**  
4:30 p.m.  
County Commission Chambers

**6 Science Advisory Committee Meeting**  
8:30 a.m. 3401 West Tharpe Street

**10 Commission Workshop on Management Information Services (MIS) Technology Update**  
2:30 p.m.  
County Commission Chambers

**10 Board of County Commissioners Meeting**  
5 p.m. County Commission Chambers  
Public Hearings begin at 6 p.m.

**12 Board of Adjustment & Appeals Meeting**  
1 p.m. County Commission Chambers

**13 Rededication of Northeast Branch Public Library**  
11 a.m. Bruce Host Center  
5513 Thomasville Road

**16 Intergovernmental Agency Meeting**  
3 p.m. City Commission Chambers  
City Hall

**19 Code Enforcement Board Meeting**  
1 p.m. County Commission Chambers

**18 Development Review Committee Meeting**  
10 a.m. 3401 West Tharpe Street

**23 Mahan Drive Corridor Study Public Meeting**  
5 p.m. Cross Creek Driving Range  
6701 Mahan Drive

**24 Board of County Commissioners Meeting**  
5 p.m. County Commission Chambers  
Public Hearings begin at 6 p.m.

**25 Ft. Braden Branch Library Grand Opening**  
11 a.m. 16327 Blountstown Highway

\*All County Commission workshops and meetings are broadcast live on Channel 16 beginning at 1 p.m.

\*Lists of Commission workshops and meetings, and Board-appointed committees are available on the County's website [www.co.leon.fl.us](http://www.co.leon.fl.us).

\*Persons needing special accommodations to participate in meetings should call the appropriate contact number. The following Florida Relay Service options are also available: 1-800-955-8771 (TDD) 1-800-955-8770 (VOICE)



The County Link is produced monthly. For more information, call Public Information at 488-9962.