

# METRO

## City shops for \$12.6M toy factory

**Incentives package aimed at bringing toy manufacturer and 21 jobs**

By David Bauerlein  
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A \$12.6 million toy factory for northwest Jacksonville and an office expansion for 79 high-paying jobs at another Jacksonville location could each receive several hundred thousand dollars in

taxpayer incentives.

The Mayor's Budget Review Committee on Monday approved an incentive package totaling up to \$638,000 in city incentives for a deal code-named

Project Buckeye that would bring a manufacturing and distribution center for children's toys, art and stationery products.

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### FIRST COAST RELIEF FUND READY FOR STORM SEASON



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### MOM CHARGED WITH DEATH OF BABY LEFT IN HOT CAR

## Suspended City Council members plead not guilty

**Katrina Brown, Reggie Brown face federal fraud charges; trial set for September**

By Steve Patterson  
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Suspended City Council members Katrina Brown and Reggie Brown pleaded not guilty to federal fraud charges Monday and lawyers started preparing for a September trial.

The two, elected from neighboring districts in Northwest Jacksonville, were indicted last month on a combined 38 counts revolving around a federally backed loan to help Katrina Brown's family launch a warehouse and factory for the barbecue sauce developed by her father, restaurant owner Jerome Brown.

Katrina Brown and Reggie Brown, who are charged with conspiracy, mail and wire fraud and illegal financial transactions, are not related.

Prosecutors say Katrina Brown filed fake invoices, some worth tens of thousands of dollars apiece, to get part of the \$2.65 million small-business loan, which was parceled out as the business incurred expenses.

The indictment said the invoices came from two companies — RB Packaging, and A Plus Training and



**Suspended Councilwoman Katrina Brown enters the federal courthouse before her arraignment Monday on federal fraud charges. She and fellow council member Reggie Brown, also suspended, pleaded not guilty.** [BOB SELF/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION]

Consultants — that Katrina Brown incorporated, listing Reggie Brown as the head of the firms.

The companies didn't do any actual work, the indictment said, but ended up receiving checks totaling almost \$265,000. At least \$165,000 of that was later sent back to Katrina Brown and Basic Products, the company that ran the never-opened warehouse and factory, the indictment said.

Parts of the case against

See **BROWN**, B2



**Suspended Councilman Reggie Brown walks past members of the media as he arrives at federal court for his arraignment Monday on fraud charges. He and fellow council member Katrina Brown both pleaded not guilty.** [BOB SELF/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION]

### ONE OF US

## Reyes Rodriguez headed to science camp



Charlie Patton

Gabriel J Reyes Rodriguez, a junior at Englewood High School at the time, got an unexpected letter in the mail last January.

The letter informed Reyes Rodriguez that John C. Mather, winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Physics,

had nominated him to represent Englewood at the annual conference of Future Scientists and Technologists, a three-day conference in Lowell, Mass. The conference begins Friday and continues through Sunday.

Reyes Rodriguez said he isn't sure how he came to the attention of Mather but was honored by the invitation.

Reyes Rodriguez, who played wide receiver on Englewood's football team

See **PATTON**, B2



**Englewood High School student Gabriel J Reyes Rodriguez received a letter last January informing him he'd been nominated by John C. Mather, winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Physics, to attend the Congress of Future Science and Technology Leaders in Lowell, Mass., this summer.**

## Third transgender homicide draws worry

**Groups getting proactive this week in lobbying for protection**

By Dan Scanlan  
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Sunday's shooting death of another black transgender woman in Jacksonville is getting national attention as well as local lobbying for protection as at least two events are planned this week.

It was Jacksonville's third transgender homicide in four months, making up 23 percent of the nation's 13 transgender victims so far in 2018, according to the Human Rights Campaign.

That puts Jacksonville at the center of a "crisis of violence" targeting the transgender community, according to the national campaign's spokeswoman Sarah McBride. Members of the city's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities plan to speak out in front of Jacksonville's City Council Tuesday night, with a rally set the next night at the Duval County Courthouse.

The latest homicide was outside the Quality Inn and Suites on Dix Ellis Trail. The Sheriff's Office listed the victim as 24-year-old Donald Christopher James of Bishopville, S.C. It did not say whether she went by another name. The shooting happened about 1 p.m. at the motel just south of Baymeadows Road. The only suspect information was that investigators are looking for a man in a beige vehicle. The Sheriff's Office said witnesses told investigators the victim

See **EVENTS**, B2



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LAW & ORDER

# Mother, baby critical in stop sign crash

The Times-Union

A baby is being treated for life-threatening injuries following a three-car crash early Monday in the 5000 block of San Juan Avenue, according to the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Police said the crash occurred about 8:15 a.m. in the Lake Shore South community just west of Blanding Boulevard when a car was headed south on Vista Avenue.

"They ran a stop sign at Vista and San Juan avenues," Sgt. A.E. Domingo said. "A pickup truck traveling west on San Juan hit that vehicle and pushed it into a third vehicle."

Police did not know if the baby, whose age and sex were not given, was in a baby seat at the time of the crash with the Ford F-150 pickup truck and car. The baby's mother also suffered serious injuries, the sergeant said. The crash remains under investigation by the Sheriff's Office's traffic homicide division.

Dan Scanlan

## OP terror suspect sentenced to 10 years

A 23-year-old Orange Park



**A wrecker service secures one of the three vehicles involved in Monday morning's crash on San Juan Avenue that left a baby with life-threatening injuries. The Ford truck on the right hit a car that ran a stop sign, then both hit a third vehicle, police said.**

[FIRST COAST NEWS]

terror suspect was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison Monday after he pleaded guilty last year to conspiring to have a pressure-cooker bomb detonated at a 9/11 memorial event in Kansas City, according to Times-Union news partner First Coast News.

Joshua Ryne Goldberg was arrested in September 2015 at his home in the 3100 block of Pine Road. Federal officials say he assumed different online personalities, including one in which he claimed to be an Islamic State militant. Authorities said he never made a bomb.

He faced charges of distributing information relating to explosives, destructive devices and weapons of mass destruction, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

A federal judge initially found him incompetent for trial due to multiple mental health issues.

He pleaded guilty in 2017 as part of a deal with the U.S. Attorney's Office, facing a max penalty of 20 years in prison with a five-year minimum term of imprisonment.

First Coast News

## NASSAU COUNTY Mother, son arrested after children found in filth

A Callahan mother and son were arrested Saturday night on child abuse and neglect charges after four children ages 2 to 7 were found in a bug- and feces-infested home, according to the Nassau County Sheriff's Office.

Brandon Sawyer Brantley, 25, and Sylvia Butler, 44, were both booked into the Nassau County jail early Saturday on three counts of child neglect and one more of child abuse and remain behind bars on \$45,000 bail each, jail records state.

Deputies were sent to the home to check on the children after a neighbor reported concerns about their living conditions, according to the arrest report. Deputies asked Butler if they could check inside, but she brought her 5-, 6- and 7-year-old grandchildren outside. That's when one deputy saw "copious amounts of trash, animal and insect feces, soiled clothing and other debris" piled "chest high and higher" inside through the partially opened door.



Brantley



Butler

The deputy also saw insects on the floor as well as on a 2-year-old toddler strapped into a car seat with dogs walking over the child after moving through bugs and feces, the report said.

Deputies went inside and found an "overbearing" odor of rotting food, feces and trash, plus "copious" flea, bug and mice infestation in rooms filled with trash and rotten food in the malfunctioning refrigerator, the report said.

Butler told deputies she had taken custody of the four children about two years ago when their mother was charged with child neglect, then mother and son moved in together, the report said. The Florida Children and Families Department was contacted to investigate while the children went home with another grandmother.

Dan Scanlan



**Police investigate Sunday's third reported homicide of a transgender woman in 2018 outside the Quality Inn and Suites on Dix Ellis Trail. The victim was a 24-year-old transgender woman from Bishopville, S.C., the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office said.**

[FIRST COAST NEWS]

## EVENTS

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was "participating in illegal activity."

The Human Rights Campaign is mourning James as well as 38-year-old Antash'a English and 36-year-old Celine Walker killed this year. McBride said they were young women worthy of respect. Now it's time for Jacksonville officials to find out why they were killed, she said.

Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Melissa Bujeda said there appears to be no connection between the homicides or a June 12 aggravated-battery shooting of another transgender woman who survived.

"There is no evidence or information gathered that leads us to believe there is any such pattern or trend involved," Bujeda said.

McBride said for years there has been a crisis of violence targeting the transgender community,

particularly transgender women of color.

Jacksonville Transgender Awareness Project director Paige Mahogany Parks, who wants police to better protect that population, said it's time for their voices be heard at City Council 5 p.m. Tuesday and in front of the Duval County Courthouse at 7 p.m. the next night. The Jacksonville Transgender Action Committee is calling Tuesday's effort "Take Action! Demand Justice." It and the Transgender Awareness Project are calling Wednesday's rally "Trans Lives Matter: A Call for Justice."

"We are getting proactive," Parks said. "We are coming together with one cause — let's solve these crimes."

Jacksonville's first transgender homicide this year occurred Feb. 4 when Walker was found shot inside a room at the Extended Stay America motel on Skinner Lake Drive, the Sheriff's Office said. Police released no more on her death. The second transgender homicide was about 3:45 a.m. June 1, when English was

shot between two abandoned homes in the 1500 block of Ella Street. She told officers the shooter was a man in a gray hoodie, then died at a hospital.

A 23-year-old transgender woman also was seriously wounded about 4 a.m. June 12 in the 1000 block of West 29th Street near Golfair Boulevard, the Sheriff's Office said.

McBride said they have been "deeply troubled" by the repeated misgendering of Jacksonville's transgender homicide victims by law enforcement and implore everyone to respect their gender identity. The Sheriff's Office said its policy is to use a homicide victim's most current form of government-issued identification, which may not properly reflect their preferred gender.

No arrests have been reported in any of the cases. Anyone with information can contact the Sheriff's Office at (904) 630-0500 or First Coast Crime Stoppers at (866)-845-8477 (TIPS).

Dan Scanlan: (904) 359-4549

## PATTON

From Page B1

last year and also wrestled, came to Jacksonville a little over three years ago when his father, who works for U.S. Customs, was transferred from Puerto Rico to Brunswick.

The family bought a home in East Arlington and Rodriguez's father, Pedro Reyes, commutes to work in Brunswick.

"I knew he was performing very well," Pedro Reyes said of his son. "But this was a surprise invitation."

Last school year, Reyes Rodriguez carried a course load that included honors U.S. History, advanced placement Spanish,

anatomy, weight training, geometry, English composition and strategy for life skills.

Next fall, while remaining an Englewood student, he will take all his courses at Florida State College at Jacksonville's South campus under a dual enrollment program.

Reyes Rodriguez will remain a member of Englewood's football team and he plans to play a second sport, either wrestling again or playing soccer, a sport he played regularly while growing up in Puerto Rico.

"My goal is to become an athletic trainer," he said.

He is considering the University of Florida, the University of North Florida, Jacksonville University and Valdosta State University as places where he might

continue his education after next school year.

Reyes Rodriguez, who has two older siblings, stays in touch with many of his friends from Puerto Rico by playing video games against them on his Play Station.

An admirer of Brazilian soccer star Neymar, he has been rooting for Brazil during the World Cup tournament now being played in Russia.

As for his trip to Massachusetts, which will be his first, he said he hopes spending three days listening to Nobel Laureates and National Medal of Science recipients talk about scientific research "helps me achieve my goals academically."

Charlie Patton: (904) 359-4413



**Two economic development deals with a combined 100 jobs will head to Jacksonville Council after winning support Monday from the Mayor's Budget Review Committee.**

[BOB SELF/THE TIMES-UNION]

## FACTORY

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The unidentified company, which can remain confidential under state law while the incentives are considered, does its manufacturing in the Midwest and operates a warehouse and distribution center in New Jersey. The company wants to consolidate those operations. Jacksonville is among the cities the company is eyeing, including two others in Florida, according to the city Office of Economic Development.

Kirk Wendland, executive director of the Office of Economic Development, said "it's not a done deal" if the incentive package is approved, but the city needs to "get our best offer on the table."

The business would generate at least 21 jobs by the end of 2021 at an average wage of \$53,298 plus 50 seasonal jobs.

The incentives, which go next to City Council for its approval, mainly consist of \$626,000 in property tax rebates over 10 years. The rebates would be based on 50 percent of the increase in property taxes that would come from a 293,000 square foot manufacturing facility.

The state and city also would provide up to \$63,000 through the state's Qualified Targeted Industry program, or \$3,000 per job that is actually created. The city's share of that incentive would be 20 percent, or up to \$12,600.

The other code-named deal is Project Grid for expansion of office jobs at an unidentified location.

"They're an existing

## BROWN

From Page B1

the council members rest on stacks of paperwork that defense lawyers have to digest to plan their case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney A. Tysen Duva estimated Monday that 25,000 documents are being assembled to deliver to defense attorneys in the exchange of information known as discovery.

That volume of paperwork

figured into the trial being scheduled for September rather than August, when it could have been held to meet deferral speedy-trial rules.

Thomas Bell, Reggie Brown's court-appointed lawyer, told U.S. Magistrate James Klindt he needed time "to at least assess what's out there and what we need." A hearing to check the case's status is scheduled for Aug. 20 before U.S. District Judge Marcia Morales Howard.

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