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ONLINE VERSION AT [FLORIDABUSINESS.ORG](http://FLORIDABUSINESS.ORG)

**TRADE MISSION RESULTS** – Enterprise Florida, the state’s official economic development organization, has reported roughly \$23 million in total sales resulted from the recent export mission to San Jose, Costa Rica. Small- to mid-sized Florida companies made connections in the Central American marketplace in sectors such as beauty products manufacturing, renewable energy, and hotel and restaurant equipment. In 2016, bilateral trade between the U.S. and Costa Rica totaled \$10.2 billion, with Florida being the leading state for two-way trade. Costa Rica also ranked as Florida’s 12th largest merchandise trading partner in 2016, since it exported about \$3.6 billion in products.

**ACADEMY OF FOOD & AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE** – The academy at Deltona High School prepares students for careers in food science and related agricultural careers. The academy blends agriculture, farm to table, food chemistry and culinary skills with core academics. Students engage with various guest speakers, take part in job shadowing opportunities, participate in field studies, and learn hands-on skills utilizing the land lab. For further information, contact Academy Director Farrah Johnson at [fjohnso@volusia.k12.fl.us](mailto:fjohnso@volusia.k12.fl.us).

**LATEST U.S. ECONOMIC FORECAST AVAILABLE AT FLORIDABUSINESS.ORG** – The UCF Institute for Economic Competitiveness has just issued its latest U.S. Economic Forecast report highlighting projected impacts from the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Read what economists are saying about U.S. GDP, employment, interest rates, consumer spending and much more. Take advantage of the institute’s extensive economic information and insightful commentary by visiting [www.floridabusiness.org](http://www.floridabusiness.org) and selecting the Economic Reports menu or by going to <https://tinyurl.com/y7gdhyna>.

**GOLD KEY/MATCHMAKER GRANT FUNDING** – Enterprise Florida has made the Reimbursable Gold Key/Matchmaker Grant even more valuable for local companies. The reimbursement amount has been increased from a maximum of \$1,000 to now cover the entire cost of a stand-alone Gold Key/Matchmaker Service, or the entire cost of the Participation Fee if the service is part of a trade mission. The Gold Key/Matchmaker Service brings together prescreened and prequalified buyers, agents, importers and representatives with an interest in your company’s products or services in a series of one-on-one meetings in the target country. For details, contact Virgil Kimball at [386-248-8048](tel:386-248-8048) or [vkimball@volusia.org](mailto:vkimball@volusia.org).

**SMALL BUSINESS TAXATION SURVEY** – The National Small Business Association’s 2018 Taxation Survey is seeking input from small business owners. The survey will ask for several pieces of data, including time spent on the administration of payroll taxes, sales taxes and overall federal taxes; which tax is the most financially and administratively burdensome for your business; the largest burden your business faces by the federal tax code; and how the new Tax Cut and Jobs Act law will impact your business in 2018 and beyond. Visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NSBA2018Tax> to complete the survey.

**CONSTRUCTION JOB TRAINING** – As reported, Home Depot will donate \$50 million to train 20,000 people as construction workers over the next decade. The Home Builders Institute, the industry’s education arm, intends to use the money from the Home Depot Foundation to train high school students, disadvantaged youth, veterans and U.S. Army soldiers who will soon be returning to civilian life. Eighty-four percent of contractors surveyed by the National Association of Home Builders and Wells Fargo in December 2017 cited availability of workers and cost as one of their most significant problems last year. Soldiers and veterans are expected to make up about three-fourths of the construction workers turned out by the training program.

**AP EXAM PARTICIPATION** – The number of U.S. public high school graduates who’ve taken an Advanced Placement® exam and the number who have scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam have increased by about 70 percent over the last 10 years, according to the newly released report, AP Program Results: Class of 2017. More than 1.17 million students in the class of 2017 took 3.98 million AP exams in public high schools nationwide, up from 1.14 million students in 2016 and 691,437 in the class of 2007. When it comes to performance, 711,518 students scored 3 or higher on at least one AP exam in 2017, compared to 423,067 in 2007. Massachusetts leads the nation in the percentage of students taking and succeeding in AP exams while Florida ranked fourth. Visit <https://reports.collegeboard.org/ap-program-results> to review the Class of 2017 AP Program results.

**THE PROUD HERITAGE OF OUR MILITARY WOMEN** – Women have served in some capacity in our nation’s military since its inception and have formally been a part of U.S. armed forces since the 1901 creation of the Army Nurse Corps. The end of the draft and the 1973 transition to an all-volunteer force marked a dramatic increase in available opportunities for women to serve in the military. In 2016, there were 1.6 million female veterans living in the United States and Puerto Rico. Three-fourths of these women have served in a wartime period. Read more about our female veterans at <https://tinyurl.com/y9my69eq>.

**NEWS ITEMS WANTED!** – Please send your business news items to Joanne Magley, Volusia County Community Information director, at [jmagley@volusia.org](mailto:jmagley@volusia.org). If you wish to be removed from this weekly broadcast, please let us know.