

GULFCOAST



Bay Haven School of Basics Plus students and parents walk to school for the annual Ruby Bridges “Walk To School Day” 2023 initiative. SAMANTHA GHOLAR/SARASOTA HERALD-TRIBUNE

Annual walk leads to visit by civil rights icon Bridges

To speak at Booker High town hall set for Nov. 12

Samantha Gholar
Sarasota Herald-Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK

It took a grandfather, a teacher, a nonprofit, a junior league and an entire city pulling in the same direction, but when civil rights icon and leader Ruby Bridges walks into two Sarasota schools on Nov. 12, she will be greeted by a community that planned meticulously to ensure her visit came to fruition.

The tickets to the evening town hall sold out in 12 hours when they went on sale in early September. In early October, 550 backpacks had been packed and assembled for students.

And the first school in Sarasota County to fully integrate will welcome the woman who made integration history just before the Thanksgiving school break.

A walk that became a movement

It started with a teacher. Five years ago, Bay Haven School of Basics Plus educator Teidra Everett brought a national, commemorative walk to the Sarasota elementary school — the Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day initiative. Year after year, it grew. More students, more parents, and more signs reading “Brave Like Ruby.” This year, Everett will serve as grand marshal of the walk she



Ruby Bridges is escorted into William Frantz Elementary School by U.S. Marshals in November of 1960. She'll visit Bay Haven in Sarasota on Nov. 12, then speak at a town hall at Booker High that night. PROVIDED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

helped build. Newtown native and community leader Walter Gilbert had always wanted to bring Ruby Bridges to Sarasota. For years, he kept it to himself but supported his granddaughter who has participated in the walk from its inception. Then at the fourth annual walk in 2025, standing in front of the students, he finally said it out loud. “I said to those students, ‘Next year, we’re going to have Ruby here,’” he recalled. “I don’t even know what I was thinking when I said it.”

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Ruby Bridges speaks at the 2025 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration in Spartanburg, South Carolina. ALEX HICKS JR./SPARTANBURG HERALD-JOURNAL

These tips can help you save on groceries

Experts and shoppers share some suggestions

Clayton Park
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

As the cost of living continues to climb, USA TODAY Network-Florida asked several Florida consumers and a national expert for their grocery savings tips.

Their suggestions ranged from waiting for BOGO deals (buy one, get one free) at Publix; joining membership warehouse clubs such as Costco, Sam’s Club and BJ’s; shopping at discount grocers such as Aldi; and not being afraid to try private-label brands.

But price is not the only important consideration, some added.

Here’s five tips (and a bonus sixth tip) for consumers on how to save on groceries:

1. BOGOs are great buys, but not in every case

Denise Weigand of Lake Worth Beach in Palm Beach County takes advantage of Publix BOGO deals, but only if she can use the second item before it goes bad.

“Many purchases are worth the BOGO, but some are not,” she wrote adding that BOGOs are worth it for canned goods, condiments and juices, (but) “perishables and meats are often not good bargains. Some fruits, vegetables, etc., are not often good buys if you wind up throwing most of it away.”

BOGOs are a big draw for many, but not for Judith of North Port in Sarasota County.

“People needing these items can’t sit around and wait for them to become BOGOs,” she wrote.

2. Membership clubs offer low prices, but there’s a catch

Some readers said they save money by belonging to member-only warehouse clubs such as Costco, Sam’s Club and BJ’s.

The catch is you have to buy items in bulk.

Because of that, Weigand wrote membership clubs are not a viable option for her and her husband. “Not everyone wants to have to sign up for a membership in order to shop, not to mention the fact that you are buying in bulk to save money.”

That doesn’t bother Julie Davis of Melbourne in Brevard County, who noted membership clubs offer other advantages, too:

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Caragiulos’ Fellini-inspired location to open Oct. 27

Earle Kimel and Wade Tatangelo
Sarasota Herald-Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK

Following a packed, invitation-only first-look soirée on Wednesday, Oct. 14, a cherished downtown Sarasota restaurant has announced an opening date for its new location, featuring an eye-catching exterior and a warm, richly de-

tailed interior inspired by classic Italian cinema of the 1960s.

Caragiulos Italian American Restaurant is scheduled to open Oct. 27 at 1833 Ringling Blvd.

When the Caragiulo family sought a design for the new location, they turned to longtime family friend Luciano Botta, a Milan-based designer who envisioned the interior of the 150-seat, 4,300-

square-foot space as a set for a classic Federico Fellini film.

“We’re very pleased,” Paul Caragiulo told the Herald-Tribune. “I think Luciano nailed it.”

“If we were shooting a period piece, we could do it,” he added.

“We like to put on a show and make spaces that are memorable and it seemed appropriate,” Caragiulo told the

Herald-Tribune in June. “I’m excited to see people’s reaction and hope that they like what they see.”

Returning patrons will likely see many familiar faces, since several longtime employees have been working at other restaurants owned by the family while the new space was being built.

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Bridges

Continued from Page 1C

Then he got to work. He recruited Victoria Kasdan, a retired nonprofit executive, and told her he wanted her on his committee. What he didn't mention was that she was the committee.

"Within a couple of weeks I realized there really wasn't a committee," Kasdan said with a smile. "I was the committee."

She built one from scratch — pulling in Embracing Our Differences as fiscal sponsor, marketing support from Magnified Good, co-chair Renee James Gilmore, and volunteers from the Junior League of Sarasota, Project Pride, ASA-LA and Booker High School students. In a span of several months, more than \$130,000 has been raised. The event's net proceeds will be split between Embracing Our Differences and the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition.

The Junior League of Sarasota, whose members assembled every backpack by hand, saw the project as something larger than logistics.

Katie Rose Cianfaglione, the organization's executive vice president, said the initiative captured exactly what the league was built for.

"This is women leading — Ruby Bridges, Teidra Everett, the women of the Junior League showing up with their hands and their time," Cianfaglione said. "That through line is not lost on us."

The league's members spent weeks sourcing, assembling and hand-packing every backpack — one for each Bay Haven student who will walk in Bridges' footsteps on Nov. 12.

"Five hundred and fifty backpacks don't pack themselves," Cianfaglione said. "Our members showed up because they understood what was being asked of this community and they wanted to be part of the answer."

From Bay Haven to Booker

The community that rallied around Gilbert's vision will see it come to life across two stops on Nov. 12.

The day begins at Bay Haven — and the choice is deliberate.

In September 1962, two years after Bridges walked into William Frantz Elementary in New Orleans, Bay Haven be-



Members of Junior League Sarasota prep for backpack assembling on Oct. 15, just one month ahead of Bay Haven's annual Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. PROVIDED BY MAKSCHU PRODUCTIONS

came the first school in Sarasota County to fully integrate, enrolling approximately 29 Black students in what was described at the time as passing "almost routinely" and "remarkably peacefully."

When Bay Haven's 550 students arrive at 9:30 a.m., each will find a branded backpack at their desk — assembled by Junior League members and stocked with a Ruby Bridges book, a purple folder, pencil, wristband and pennant flag. This year marks the first time the Sarasota County School District has approved Robert Coles' "The Story of Ruby Bridges" as classroom curriculum.

Students will then parade around the school grounds before gathering in the cafeteria, where Bridges will give a roughly 20-minute presentation.

That evening at 5 p.m., Bridges will take the stage at Booker High School's Visual and Performing Arts Center — a venue chosen for reasons written into the school's own history.

Booker students were among the first to integrate Sarasota High in 1963. However, just four years later, the district closed both Booker junior high and high school campuses in 1967; its all-black enrollment was split and bused to Sarasota or Riverview high schools. The change was part of the Sarasota County School Board's plan to integrate the education system in the wake of the 1964 Civil Rights Act records show.

Two years later, when the district threatened to close Booker Elementary, Newtown residents and local NAACP leaders took a stance. They enacted a

weeklong boycott and built makeshift classrooms in homes and churches in the historically Black community of Newtown to keep their children learning, launching what are now referred to as Freedom Schools.

When community leaders floated venues larger than Booker's Performing Arts Center for the evening event, Gilbert refused to budge.

"It couldn't be anywhere else," he said.

Bridges will be interviewed on stage at Booker High School to a sold out crowd by Charlayne Hunter-Gault — activist and journalist who integrated the University of Georgia in 1961 — and MC'd by Mercedes Soler, a former CNN en Español anchor and Sarasota-based media executive.

Art, education and a moment that 'completes something'

Embracing Our Differences CEO Sarah Wertheimer has watched Ruby Bridges' image hang in EOD exhibitions for years. Now the woman behind the art is coming to Sarasota.

"We've had Ruby Bridges-inspired artwork in our exhibitions, and we'll have it again in 2027," Wertheimer said. "To have her here in person, it completes something."

EOD, an internationally recognized arts-education nonprofit, serves as the initiative's fiscal sponsor and is making sure the visit outlasts the day.

Every Bay Haven student will take

home a copy of Robert Coles' 'The Story of Ruby Bridges'. Every participating elementary school in the county will receive a classroom copy for its students. Wertheimer said the class book was a small but deliberate investment in the next generation of students who will learn her story — not as distant history, but as history with a direct connection to their own school and community.

"She is so forward-thinking and so hopeful about the future," Wertheimer said. "And I think this is a time when we all need that."

Quietly shaping local history

The morning Ruby Bridges Walk at Bay Haven is not open to the public but will be visible from the street.

The evening town hall at Booker High School's Visual and Performing Arts Center is sold out. The event will not be recorded or live streamed publicly. The Bay Haven morning presentation will be streamed securely at 14 Sarasota County elementary schools whose principals opted in — out of 22 invited — reaching more than 6,500 students across the county. District officials and school board members are expected to attend.

For more on the Walk Forward initiative, visit engage.embracingourdifferences.org/ruby-bridges.

Samantha Gholar is a reporter for the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, part of the USA TODAY Network. Connect with her via email at sgholar@usatodayco.com for stories and news tips.

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