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BFF Best Furry Friend



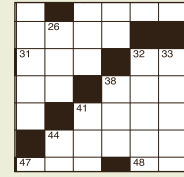
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Inquiring Minds want to know!



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Get to Know ... Michael and Sashell Dragich



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Puzzles

Dog Day Afternoon 2019 breaks attendance records

By Linda Gomolka
mail@floridanewsline.com

St. Johns CARES celebrated Dog Day Afternoon on Sunday, March 31 at Davis Pond Park in Julington Creek Plantation from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. The attendance broke all previous records with 864 people and 345 dogs at the event and \$2500 was raised for the St. Johns County Fire Rescue to purchase additional oxygen masks for dogs and cats.



Photos courtesy Amy Bolick

St. Johns County Fire and Rescue personnel with a dalmatian.

Activities included dog washes, “pet-i-cures” (nail trimming), pet (and family) photographs, a canine obstacle course, a bounce house, face painting, balloon puppies, dog sketches, pet (and their people) specialty vendor booths, a demo by the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office canine unit, a visit from the St. Johns County Fire Rescue with their fire truck, baked goods for humans and dogs and hot

Dog Day cont. on pg. 17

Freedom Crossing Falcons soar through first year

By Heidi Brososky-Weaver
mail@floridanewsline.com

The halls of the Freedom Crossing Academy may echo with the loneliness of summer, but if the walls could talk, one in particular would share the culture of this new school. Near Principal Allen Anderson’s office, an inaugural banner sprawls across an entire wall, proclaiming the school’s vision: “Established in 2018 to Break Barriers.” In addition, the banner features soul-stirring snippets written by faculty and staff, encouraging students to work hard, go after dreams, and soar like their falcon mascot.

Although all these messages are inspiring, first grade teacher Ashley McColum’s note stresses the importance of having a vision “... because one day at least one child will be able to look back and be able to smile at something positive that happened to them in school no matter what is going on in their lives.”

Anderson agrees: “We treat every child like our very own child. We won’t give up on them even if they give up on themselves.”

To accomplish this vision, faculty and staff focus daily on building a family atmosphere. While old-fashioned smiles, verbal praise, and hugs are still high on the list, a hi-tech behavior system called LiveSchool unites students into multi-grade houses with names like Otutu, Ton Throng, and Kalpana. Third graders from Jill Loughran’s class eagerly explain how they earn points throughout the day for positive actions such as showing safety, respect, and responsibility. What’s more, they can watch these points accrue in real-time on monitors around the campus and celebrate victories.

“It’s so much fun working together with my house to earn LiveSchool points,” says middle school student Makenzie Bantum, who is a member of the Meraki house. “I was a little nervous to start sixth grade at



Photos courtesy Heidi Brososky-Weaver
Principal Allen Anderson with the inaugural banner near his office.

a new school, but it has been an awesome year where we quickly felt like one family.”

Bantum is a member of the band, track team, and undefeated girls’ basketball team.

From cheering for the undefeated volleyball teams to reaching new goals in the Principal’s Math Club, the culture strives to have fun

tackling challenges, according to Anderson. “One positive thing I hear is that students want to come to learn and the staff wants to come to work.”

In fact, a group of teachers, faculty members, and administrators took fun to a new level when they transformed into Funky Falcons and flash mobbed students at a home basketball game. Wearing wacky wigs, Assistant Principal Melissa Lime, first grade teacher Julie Haden, and their fancy flock of dancers quickly became a hit with students. They even performed during FCA Spirit Night at the Jacksonville Ice-men hockey game. As one member put it, “We’re dancing through barriers!”

Others might argue that “flying through barriers” might be a better motto considering the school’s mission: Falcons take FLIGHT.



Photo courtesy Julie Haden
The Funky Falcons

As Anderson, a 20-year veteran of St. Johns County Schools explains, FLIGHT school starts with Focus on a vision and a mission.

Then, there is Leadership. “Everybody is a leader. We are all responsible for each other, the building, and representing the school and families,” says Anderson.

Imagination is another key component. “We want students to try things. You learn from trying,” Anderson says. “You fail your way to success.”

As for Grit, it’s part of FCA’s everyday language. Whether it be video games, athletics, or math problems, the idea is to try and try again. “Every year is a do better ... not a do over,” says Anderson, the 2017 – 2018 St. Johns County Principal of the Year.



Students with the hi-tech behavior system called LiveSchool.



Staci Boyer, principal’s secretary/bookkeeper/office manager and St. Johns County’s 2018 – 2019 School-Related Employee of the Year

Falcons cont. on pg. 18

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Bindi Sue!

BREED:
Australian Shepard Mix

FAVORITE ACTIVITY:
Visiting our neighbor as he gives her lots of treats.

FAVORITE TREAT:
Doggie Ice cream

FAVORITE FRIEND:
Her dog friends...Blu, Peyton and Gretchen. She loves seeing and playing with them.

HOW YOUR BFF GOT THEIR NAME:
Since she was part Australian Shepard, our girls decided the name her after Bindi Sue Irwin. We love her so much!!

This month's sponsor:
Nease Animal Hospital
10440 US Highway 1, Ste. 101
www.neaseanimalhospital.com

Do you have a cute pet? Send us your pet's picture and the answers to the five questions above before the 10th of the month. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and you could win a Gift Certificate!
Does your business cater to pets? Would you like to sponsor our contest?
Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet or sponsor the BFF contest.

JUNE Special Section

Real Estate Guide!

PG 12

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around town

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June 1
Friends of Alpine Park meeting
 9 a.m.
 Meet at picnic table behind farmhouse at park; new "Friends" welcome

June 1
Bingo Night at St. Joseph's
 Doors open 6:15 p.m.; Games start 7 p.m.
 Cody Center, 4152 Loretto Road
 Open to the community; (904) 742-8777

June 3
Current Events Discussion Group
 10 a.m. (repeating event on Mondays)
 New location: Amenities Annex, 625 Market St., Palencia
 adsilby@yahoo.com

June 4
World Golf Village Toastmasters
 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
 First Florida Credit Union, 1950 County Road 210W
 Worldgolfvillage.toastmastersclubs.org

June 4
First Coast Card Club - adult card players
 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
 St. Augustine Main Library, 1960 Ponce de Leon Blvd.
 (904) 829-0643

June 5
Jacksonville Camera Club
 6:45 p.m.
 Shepherd of the Woods Church, 6595 Columbia Park Ct.
 www.jax.jaxcameraclub.com (repeating event, first and third Wednesdays)

June 6
2019 St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Golf Classic
 1 p.m. shotgun start
 Slammer & Squire
 Organize a foursome; call (904) 829-5681 or www.sjcchamber.com

June 6
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7
 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.
 St. Augustine Yacht Club near the St. Augustine Lighthouse
 pa@mysafeboating.com

June 6
Rotary Club of Bartram Trail
 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (repeating event on Thursdays)
 Westminster Woods, 25 State Road 13
 lancedmalcolm@gmail.com

June 7
Rotary Club of St. Johns meeting
 7:30 a.m. (repeating event on Fridays)
 St. Johns Golf and Country Club Clubhouse
 www.rotarystjohns.org

June 7
Bartram Friday Book Club: "The Wife Between Us," by Greer Hendricks
 10 a.m.
 Julington Creek Service Center, 725 Flora Branch Blvd.
 (904) 827-6960

June 7
First Coast Newcomers Club Dinner/Trivia evening
 6 p.m.
 St. Johns Clubhouse, St. Augustine
 Limited number; RSVP (904) 829-0643

June 8
Family seining
 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
 Guana Dam, 505 Guana River Road
 (904) 823-4500

June 10
Northwest United for Progress Club featuring Dr. Jennifer Cowart, providing medical care to all Americans
 Social 6:30 p.m./Meeting 7 p.m.
 2777 Race Track Road
 nwsjcp@gmail.com

June 11
Bartram Tuesday Book Discussion: "The Great Alone," by Kristin Hannah
 6 p.m.
 Twisted Compass, 585 State Road 13
 (904) 827-6960

June 11
Empower Yourself: Learn How Not to be Scammed, presented by ElderSource
 12:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
 St. Johns County Council on Aging's River House, 179 Marine St., St. Augustine
 RSVP by June 5: (904) 391-6664

June 12
Dementia Support for Caregivers
 3:30 p.m.
 River Garden, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road
 Repeating event on the second Wednesday of each month

June 12
Community Lunch Discussion: Preserving Independence at Home
 11:30 a.m.
 River Garden, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road
 RSVP for lunch: kbell@rivergarden.org or (904) 288-7855

June 13
Palencia Bridge Club plays Party Bridge
 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. (repeating event on Thursdays)
 Donovan's Irish Pub, 7440 US Highway 1
 Diane Tamplin, (904) 808-7326

June 15
Fruit Cove Cruise In sponsored by Sunshine State Chevelles
 4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
 PDQ parking lot, 194 State Road 13
 Repeating event on third Saturday of each month

June 15
Ancient City Chapter of Florida Writers Association meeting
 10 a.m.
 Main Library, 1960 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd., St. Augustine
 Open to the public; fwastaug@gmail.com

June 17
All Star Quilt Guild
 9:45 a.m.
 First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd.
 www.orgsites.com/fl/allstarquiltguild or (904) 735-0506

June 18
St. Johns CARES meeting
 6:30 p.m.
 Celebration Lutheran Church, 810 Roberts Road
 www.stjohnscares.org

June 18
North Business Council of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
 8 a.m. - 9 a.m.
 Westminster Woods on Julington Creek, 25 State Road 13
 Register at www.sjcchamber.com or call (904) 829-5681

June 22
Traditional Healing with Nature's Plants
 10 a.m.
 Garden of Eatin, Lake Beluthahatchee
 Pre registration required: (386) 972-1891

June 26
Veteran Benefits for Seniors, presented by Jeff Faulkner, NAVF
 11:30 a.m.
 River Garden, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road
 RSVP for lunch: kbell@rivergarden.org or (904) 288-7855

June 28
Helping Hands of St. Johns County
 10 a.m.
 Faith Community Church, 3450 County Road 210W
 jacqphil@aol.com

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take 5

Star watching night scheduled

Night Under the Stars will be held on Thursday, June 6 from 7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. at the St. Johns County Fairgrounds, 5840 S.R. 207 in Elkton. St. Johns County Parks and Rec has partnered with Ancient City Astronomy Club to put on this free educational evening that will include an Astronomy 101. Attendees will learn about the constellations, star names, and more. Telescopes and binoculars will be on-hand to view the moon, planets, and other objects. Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Kelly Ussia at kussia@sjcfl.us or (904) 209-0335 for more information.

Summer reading and math volunteer opportunities

RSVP of St. Johns County is looking for community members to assist once a week in the summer reading or algebra programs in the St. Johns County School District. Hours are flexible, and even those who may be traveling can help out while in town. Orientation for reading volunteers is Thursday, June 6 from 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Fullerwood Auditorium, 10 Hildreth Drive in St. Augustine. Orientation for algebra volunteers is Monday, June 24 from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. at St. Augustine High School, 3205 Varella Avenue in St. Augustine. Contact RSVP at (904) 547-3952 or Cheryl.Freeman@stjohns.k12.fl.us to make a training reservation or for more information.

Kayak trips near Nocatee offered

Nocatee sunset kayak trips facilitated by St. Johns County Naturalists will be offered daily from Thursday, June 27 to Sunday, June 30 from 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m. at Nocatee Landing on Tolomato Road. Participants will paddle the marshes of the Tolomato River and learn about the unique things that live there and why estuaries are so important. At the end of the tour participants will get to experience a beautiful sunset on the water. Fees for St. Johns County residents providing own boat (12-foot minimum length) are \$20 per person or \$40 if using a county boat. Fees for non St. Johns County residents providing own boat (12-foot minimum length) are \$30 per person or \$50 per person if using a county boat. To register, contact Kelly Ussia at kussia@sjcfl.us or (904) 209-0335.

INK!'s Make a Mark campaign spotlights teachers

INK!'s (Investing in Kids) Make a Mark campaign offers a way for people to share their appreciation for the special educators in their children's lives. Pioneered by Cunningham Creek Elementary School's 2016 – 2017 Teacher of the Year, Dana Kelly, and designed after Peter H. Reynolds' book, "The Dot," the six month project allows for an elementary, middle and high school St. Johns County School District teacher

to be recognized for making their mark on students each month. Winners will receive a swag bag full of gifts and prizes from local businesses. If you know a teacher you wish to nominate for this award, visit INK-stjohns.org and complete the quick nomination form. Call (904) 547-7120 with questions or for more information



Photo courtesy Metro Creative

ElderSource launches Virtual Caregiver Support Groups

ElderSource, the Area Agency on Aging and Aging and Disability Resource Center for Northeast Florida, has launched the Virtual Caregiver Support Group, giving caregivers a safe place to share information, ask questions, voice personal feelings and stories. The support group makes it possible for caregivers to connect face-to-face in real time with other caregivers using today's technology. The groups, consisting of 10 – 12 participants, will last six to eight weeks (once a week) with each session lasting 60 to 90 minutes and facilitated by a skilled moderator, who

will guide the participants through their conversations. Any caregiver living in northeast Florida can sign up; however, the group will be focused on those who feel they cannot leave their loved one to attend a support group, but would benefit from participating in one. For more information on how to participate or to make a referral for the Virtual Caregiver Support Group, email Louise Starmann at louise.starmann@eldersourceinstitute.org or call Linda Levin at (904) 391-6610.

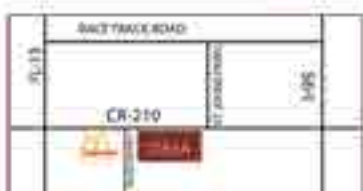
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Julington Creek native graduates from U.S. Naval Academy



Photo courtesy Peter Cummings

Brandon Cummings of St. Johns successfully completed four years of challenging academic, physical, and professional military training, graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy on May 24 with a bachelor of science degree in economics with mathematics and a commission as a U.S. Navy Ensign. Cummings is a 2015 graduate of Allen D. Nease High School and the son of Peter and Tracy Cummings of Julington Creek. The Brigade of Midshipmen is comprised of approximately 4,400 students from every state in the union. Each year, approximately 1,200 young men and women are admitted to the Naval Academy's incoming class. The U.S. Naval Academy's more than 80,000 alumni include 73 Medal of Honor recipients, two Nobel Prize winners, 52 astronauts, more than 4,000 admirals and generals, and one U.S. President.

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with St. Johns County Commissioner Jimmy Johns, (District 1)

Q: Last month we discussed Hallowes Cove and the developer of RiverTown's request to amend the DRI and build a 250-slip marina. Can you give us an update?

A: This issue is a good example of why I need to hear from people. I extend my thanks to those who responded about this issue. I heard from only one or two people in favor of allowing a marina, but many more who were against it. I especially thank those who were part of the historical process for this project and were able to point me in the right direction to research; it was very educational. I shared the overwhelmingly negative community response to the marina request with the developers and they withdrew the application.

Q: Can you shed some insight on the latest on the county's tree ordinance?

A: At the last Board of County Commissioners' meeting we had a preliminary discussion on six to 10 significant modifications to the land development code and one was the tree ordinance, which is very complex. We do want to protect canopies of trees and St. Johns County is so diversified, with everything from moss covered oak trees to scrub pines to palm trees. There is no one-size-fits-all. Like with the Hallowes Cove issue, now is the time for people to weigh in. I prefer to hear specific questions or recommendations. Residents can contact the St. Johns County Growth Management Department directly to learn more specifics about the drafts to the tree ordinance. It is worth noting that the tree ordinance does change from time to time and developments can be built according to the regulations at the time they were approved. So we have a broad spectrum of developments in proximity to each other with different rules.

Q: What is the latest on the county's budget process (as of the interview date, May 16)?

A: Budget hearings will be held the week of May 20. This is the draft request by departments for their budget next year, basically a first round. Commissioners will ask questions in an effort to be responsible with taxpayer money. We need to hear from the public about their wishes throughout June and July. We do expect the budget to be an increase over last year, due to an increase in revenue from the tax collector, but we will need to spend a great deal of money on mandates from the state and federal government, such as the new requirement for bilingual voting supplies and information for the Supervisor of Elections.

Q: Can you give us some background on the increase in cost of recycling for homeowners?

A: At the last board meeting, we approved an increase in this cost to homeowners, which had not been increased for 10 years. It is due to basic supply and demand. China has been the primary receiver of recycled materials from the United States for many years, but lately the Chinese have found more and more garbage included with the recyclables the United States sends. So China reduced the amount they will pay for the recycled material and they reduced the percentage of garbage that they will accept as part of the recycled material. This resulted in an increased cost to the recycling company we contract with and ultimately an increased cost to the homeowner.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?

A: Readers can email me at bcc1jjohns@sjcfl.us or call me at (904) 615-7437.

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with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Q: Can you give us some background on the bilingual ballot language requirements?

A: Last year, we were involved in a lawsuit with 32 other counties in Florida regarding voters from Puerto Rico who evacuated to Florida as a result of Hurricane Maria. They are U.S. Citizens, educated in American schools, but English is not their primary language. The 32 counties were required to provide Spanish sample ballots for the Nov. 6, 2018 General Election in all forms we make them available, such as on our website, mailed, or advertised and at all voting locations.

We also were required to provide additional measures such as hiring additional bilingual poll workers, and be able to provide bilingual assistance as needed. We already had 15 bilingual poll workers, but were able to hire additional and had a total of 38 bilingual workers who worked during early voting and at the polls on election day. Two of our 11 full time staff members are bilingual and available to provide Spanish language assistance anytime.

Now, the judge has moved forward and ordered ballots and all voting materials to be in English and in Spanish for the March 17, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary Election.

Also, in a policy decision, Gov. DeSantis has directed that all Florida counties must provide ballots and voting materials in English and in Spanish for all future elections. Presently, there are 14 counties with at least 5 percent of their voting age population identified as Spanish speaking that do this; now all counties will be required to comply, regardless of the percentage of their population that is Spanish speaking.

Q: So what exactly will you have to do to comply?

A: Pretty much all materials in the Elections Office will have to be in English and in Spanish, to include ballots,

absentee envelopes, provisional ballot envelopes and secrecy sleeves, voter information cards, voter registration applications, voting instructions, voter information guides and pamphlets, Notification of Election, polling place changes and signage and all information available on the Supervisor of Elections' website. We will need to provide a toll-free Spanish-language hotline with at least one bilingual employee for the purpose of translating or otherwise assisting voters.

Basically, all notifications, announcements and informational materials about all stages of the electoral process, including materials concerning the opportunity to register, voter registration deadlines, times, places and subject matters of the elections, the absentee and early voting processes, offices up for election, candidates who have qualified and local issues or referenda and announcements applicable to elections in the county will need to be available in English and in Spanish.

Q: What will this all cost?

A: We received the court order on May 13 and I have ordered staff to determine the cost to replace everything in the office, including our precinct signs and supplies for the polls. My budget is due to the Board of County Commissioners on May 31. I present my office's budget in person to the board on June 18. There will definitely be a cost to the taxpayers to comply and we are working to determine what it is. We are under a federal judicial order and a Secretary of State directive in addition to the Florida policy Administrative Rule from the governor. There are no additional funds coming from the state to comply with this order.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?

A: Readers can email me at voakes@votesjc.com or call me at (904) 823-2238.



with Beverly Slough, St. Johns County School Board Member, District 1

Q: Last month we discussed the Silverleaf high school site. Do you have any additional updates about that?

A: Actually, we are in the process of acquiring another high school site in the World Golf Village area, adjacent to Mill Creek Academy. We plan to move forward to acquire this land in a timely fashion and construction as soon as possible. We are excited about proceeding with building a new high school even sooner than anticipated.

Q: What can you tell us about this site?

A: It is a beautiful piece of property, fully cleared. It is pastureland. At 68 acres it is a bit smaller than some sites, but since it is all uplands, it will work just fine.

Q: So is the Silverleaf site out of the running?

A: No, we are still pursuing that site. But this new site will house our next high school, as previously stated by the district. Silverleaf was never intended to be next in line, since the growth/students are not there quite yet.

Q: Do you have any legislative updates now that session has ended?

A: We are much more pleased with the amount of money we received this year versus last. The base student allocation, which is the flexible money we can use for teacher and staff salaries and new

programs, was only 47 cents per student last year. This year, we are to receive \$75 per student.

We are also pleased that legislation has gone through with an alternative pathway to graduation via career and technical education. This will allow students to substitute some classes, such as higher level math, with still challenging classes that will point them more quickly to a career. We are thankful to Sen. Travis Hutson who was the Senate sponsor of this bill.

Q: Do you have anything else to share with District 1?

A: I'd like to talk about RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) of St. Johns County, the county program which supplies volunteer mentors and tutors to students throughout the school system. Whether it is someone who can read 30 minutes to a kindergartener or someone who can tutor a struggling middle school student, there are adults in our community with a lot of experience who can help our kids. If anyone is interested in learning more about volunteering, they can contact Cheryl Freeman at RSVP at (904) 547-3952.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

A: They can email me at beverly.slough@stjohns.k12.fl.us or call me at (904) 547-7510.

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FYI Contact Numbers

St. Johns County Local Government (www.sjcf.us)
 Sheriff's Office: Sheriff David B. Shoar, dshoar@sjso.org, (904) 824-8304
 Julington Creek Field Office: (904) 209-2150
 Property Appraiser: Eddie Creamer, sjcpa@sjcpa.us; (904) 827-5500
 Supervisor of Elections: Vicky Oakes, voakes@votesjc.com, (904) 823-2238
 Tax Collector: Dennis Hollingworth, taxcollector@sjctax.us, (904) 209-2250
 Clerk of Court: Hunter S. Conrad, (904) 819-3600

St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners
 District 1: Jimmy Johns, bcc1johns@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0301
 District 2: Jeb Smith, bcc2jsmith@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0302
 District 3: Paul Waldron, bcc3pwaldron@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0303
 District 4: Jeremiah Blocker, bcc4jblocker@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0304
 District 5: Henry Dean, bcc5hdean@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0305

St. Johns County School Board (www.stjohns.k12.fl.us)
 District 1: Beverly Slough, beverly.slough@stjohns.k12.fl.us, (904) 547-7510
 District 2: Tommy Allen, tommy.allen@stjohns.k12.fl.us, (904) 547-7510

State of Florida Elected Officials
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 State House District 17: Representative Cyndi Stevenson, Cyndi.Stevenson@myfloridahouse.gov, (904) 823-2300
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WGV Five Star Tigers win tournament

The WGV Five Star Tigers won the Ormond Beach 11U invitational on April

7. The Tigers won three games in a row on Sunday and defeated the Longwood scorpions 21 – 6 in the championship game, led by homeruns from Colin Ulrich and Marc Mitchell. The Tigers made it to the championship game by a stellar, no hit pitching performance by Gabe Gethardt in the semi final game against the East Coast Gators. Blake Warner went seven for seven over the course of the three games with Colin Ulrich, Will Braig, Marc Mitchell and Ayden Ramos batting over .600 respectively. The Tigers are comprised of Colin Ulrich, Austen Pankey, Colin Hartman, Willie Braig, Marc Mitchell, Blake Warner, Philip Furakawa, Gabe Gethardt, Hudson Dye, Justin Osbourne, Ayden Ramos and Tyler Dellbrugge (not pictured). They are coached by Ernie Dye, Adam Ulrich, Kevin Dellbrugge and Steve Pankey.



Photo courtesy Bob Mitchell



with St. Johns County Property Appraiser
Eddie Creamer

Q: Can you give us some background into the homestead exemption audit?

A: Right now, we have 71,000 homesteaded properties in St. Johns County and some are very old. They have never been audited. If something happens that could affect homestead exemption (such as death, divorce, or remarriage) within the state of Florida, we have a good system to discover it. But it's not so for out of state properties. Recall that a requirement of homestead exemption in Florida is that a person can have no other homesteaded properties anywhere.

Q: How will the audit be conducted?

A: We will contract with a third party firm, Exemption Project, which will check against national databases to make sure our homestead here is still valid. The firm will work under my supervision and it's key to understand that any final decisions are mine. My office will investigate and determine if the St. Johns County property has improperly claimed homestead exemption.

Q: How will the third party firm be compensated?

A: There is no upfront cost. Exemption Project is only paid if they find an improperly homesteaded property. If I agree, then we lien the property. When back taxes, penalties and interest are paid, the Exemption Project is paid 18 percent of that. I've presented this to all the taxing authorities in the county and received their approval, since a portion of any taxes collected will be paid to the firm.

Q: What are the penalties for improper homestead exemption?

A: The penalties are severe and include repayment of all back taxes, a 50 percent penalty and 15 percent interest annually. I urge readers to contact me if they are unsure of their individual situation and would like to discuss it.

Q: When will the audit begin and how long will it take?

A: We will begin in late summer and it will be an ongoing process. The initial audit should take approximately 90 – 120 days. Checks will continue to be run as national databases are updated.

Q: What are the benefits to hiring this firm and performing the audit?

A: I selected Exemption Project because they are very qualified and can identify rentals and short term rentals. They can also help us identify unclaimed exemptions, which is exciting for us. They can reverse their search to identify people who are not getting homestead exemption but should be. For the county, the audit is beneficial because not only will we collect back taxes, but it will put value back on the tax rolls in the form of any incorrect exemptions as well as any portability.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?

A: Our office is located at 4030 Lewis Speedway Ste. 203, (904) 827-5500. It is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Also, readers can email me at Eddie@sjcpa.us or call me at (904) 827-5500.

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Where there's a will, there's a fight!

By Scott Grant
ScottGrant@StJohnsBusinessMonthly.com

One of the most lurid and obscene documents you will ever read is the transcript of the trial in the New York lawsuit over the estate of J. Seward Johnson. Johnson was one of the sons of one of the founders of Johnson & Johnson, the company that makes Band-Aids and baby powder. At the age of 76, he divorced his second wife and married the upstairs maid. Basia Piasecka was 34 when she became the new Mrs. Johnson. Twelve years later, in 1983, her husband died and left his entire fortune of between \$400 million – \$500 million to the Polish immigrant who had arrived in New York with \$200, setting off what one writer called “the largest, costliest, ugliest, most spectacular and most conspicuous” probate battle in American history. At the time, Seward Johnson’s estate was the largest ever to be probated in the State of New York.

The case finally went to trial four years later, in 1987. The four-month court battle cost more than \$24 million in legal fees. Seventy-five witnesses produced 15,000 pages of testimony, much of which reflected poorly on the Johnson family, exposing tawdry details of incest, infidelity, cuckoldry, drug abuse, and attempted murder. The trial pitted the Johnson children, each of whom had received a trust that should have been worth \$110 million, and an oceanographic institute versus the widow Johnson. The children accused her of treating her deceased husband like a dog, even keeping him on a leash at times, and bullying him into changing his will just two weeks before his demise. Basia Piasecka Johnson’s lawyers portrayed her as a loving helpmate who cared for and nursed Johnson during his decline.

In the end, the case was settled. Basia agreed to pay the children’s legal fees and give them almost \$50 million. The oceanographic institute, Harbor Branch, got \$20 million and Basia Johnson, the former maid, kept the rest, about \$340 million, making her the 149th wealthiest person in the world. She turned the mansion into a golf course and moved back to Europe to collect art.

The biggest loser in the case was Basia Johnson’s attorney, Nina Zagat. Zagat was a friend of Basia’s and wrote the will that made her executor and trustee of the trust. Nina was to be paid \$9 million as executor and then \$900,000 a year as a trustee for as long as Basia lived. The Johnson children accused her of helping Basia to bully her husband into signing the will. The court cut her executor fees to \$1.8 million and removed her as a trustee. Most of the jurors sided with the children and one indicated that Zagat’s testimony “did most of the damage to Mrs. Johnson’s case.” Zagat and her husband went on to start the Zagat Restaurant guide. They eventually sold it to Google for \$151 million.

It is amazing how frequently estate fights destroy families. They are rarely about money, even the obscene amount of money accumulated by J. Seward Johnson. The fights are about hurt feelings and the type of family squabbles that often ruin Thanksgiving dinners. Outwardly happy families descend into chaos and fight over the most and least consequential of things, shouting about principle while lawyers get rich. There is no solution. It is a tale as old as Cain and Abel.

North Business Council members learn about conservation projects



Photo courtesy Linda Gay

The North Business Council of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 21 from 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. at Westminster Woods on Julington Creek. Guest speaker Jim McCarthy, president of North Florida Land Trust, updated the audience on flood prevention, protection of natural resources, and economic development. A big issue at this time that was also discussed was water quality. Pictured are Joy Bell, Jackie Smith, Jim McCarthy, and North Business Council Chair Stephen Hudson. The North Business Council of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce promotes unity, educates and provides a forum to discuss issues that affect all local area businesses. The Council provides current information on local and state legislation and initiatives that have an economic impact on the areas that make up the North Business Council. Visit www.sjchamber.com for more information.

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Inquiring Minds want to know!

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

Are you puzzled about something going on in NW St. Johns County or wondering about whatever happened on a topic from a previous issue? Email your question to us at editor@floridanewslines.com by the fifth of the month and we will do our best to track down the information for you.

While we will do our best to answer all the questions we receive, we may not be able to answer all questions received each month. Also, due to publication scheduling, the time it takes to research answers may vary.



with Florida State Representative
Cyndi Stevenson, District 17

Q: Now that session is completed, can you give us some updates?

A: We had a good session. There were lots of bipartisan bills passed, but there is still plenty of work to do.

Q: How did your bills that we talked about last month fare (as of interview date of May 15)?

A: For the voter privacy bill, we were able to protect the minors (16 and 17 year olds who have pre-registered to vote) by having their contact information taken out of public records, but the language that would have shielded the phone numbers and email numbers for all voters was not passed due to opposition in the Senate. Public records exceptions have to pass with a two-thirds vote. This bill is currently awaiting the governor's signature.

House Bill 25, the ambulatory surgical center bill, went to the Senate, but it didn't get passed as an individual bill. We were able to get an increase in the length of stay at these outpatient facilities to be a full 24 hours, so there is still work to be done but I'm happy with this expansion.

The language from my Peer Specialist bill passed in a different bill, as part of HB 369, along with some Sober Homes reform.

Finally the language from HB1043, the Cyber Harassment bill, passed with identical language in the Senate version of the bill, SB 1136. This bill also awaits the governor's signature.

Q: What can you tell us about the budget that was passed?

A: Education is very important and

this year we had a \$242 increase in per student allocation, which includes \$75 per student that can be used completely at local school boards' discretion for teacher raises and additional programs. This is the biggest increase we have had in a long time.

The budget also includes some flexibility in Best and Brightest, the teacher bonus program and removed the SAT and ACT requirement. There is now some flexibility in the use of local millage for construction and some additional funding for Community Partnership Schools, of which we have two in St. Johns County.

Q: What are some other benefits in the budget this year for St. Johns County?

A: We received more money for the West Augustine septic to sewer program; funding for more outpatient mental health services; money for dune restoration needed in North Ponte Vedra Beach after Hurricane Irma; and funding for a resiliency project to prevent damage in the event of a flood to Flagler College. Again in Ponte Vedra Beach, \$500,000 was allocated to work on A1A intersection to improve traffic flow without widening A1A (basically adding turn lanes.) Also, six additional detox beds for the EPIC Recovery Center were funded, which was a priority of the St. Johns County delegation.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?

A: Readers can email me at Cyndi.Stevenson@myfloridahouse.gov or call my local office at (904) 823-2300.



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It's time to prepare for hurricane season

By Billy Hohmann, CFP®
mail@floridanewslines.com

Welcome to Hurricane Season! Floridians readily embrace hot summers, beach days, and tubing at the springs, but hurricanes come with the territory as well. While insurance is available to protect our home and belongings, a good understanding of those details can go a long way to make sure you are well protected for the season. Gathering hurricane supplies, watching weather coverage closely, and removing yourself from harm's way when authorities recommend it are vital. Here are some other pointers from an insurance perspective.

As a hurricane approaches, you should consider what can be done to reduce or eliminate problems. Take a survey of your home and look for areas where a hurricane could create a problem. Clean gutters, trimmed trees, and storm shutters are all examples of ways we can help ourselves before the storm comes. After the storm, it is important to find ways to stop further damage from occurring. Depending on the storm, it may be awhile before repairs can start.

Most insurance policies come with hurricane deductibles which are larger than normal claims. It is not unusual to see deductibles 2 percent to 5 percent of the dwelling coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the deductible from a normal claim to a hurricane claim.

Flood insurance is not included in homeowners coverage. The Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA) recently updated the flood maps and St. Johns County was affected. You can find your property status by reviewing the updated map (<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search>). It is important to know flood insurance may not be available while there are active storms and there is a waiting period when new policies take effect.

With today's technology, we have every opportunity to record the personal property in and around our home. Pulling out a smart phone and taking a video will go a long way towards those records. Receipts and spreadsheets are great ways to manage your personal inventory. Big ticket items may require separate coverage, so consider endorsements to your policy. Items kept in a storage facility most often will be covered in your homeowners policy.

Did you know your policy covers expenses and time spent outside your home due to repairs? This feature could play an important role if your home is damaged and needs fixing. Look at your policy to examine your limits and make sure you have good coverage in this area. This portion of your policy also covers lost income if you also rent out part of your home.

Take a little time for preparation and hurricane season will soon be behind you. Visit www.ready.gov for more valuable advice on this and other topics.

Billy Hohmann, CFP® is the agency owner of Florida Shield. Email him at billy@fshieldins.com for more information.

Low speed vehicles — What you need to know

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Last month, The CreekLine featured information about the use of golf carts in NW St. Johns County neighborhoods. This month, low speed vehicles are featured in this information compiled by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office:

What is a low speed vehicle?

A low speed vehicle or LSV is any four wheel vehicle that can travel no faster than 25 miles per hour. Low speed vehicles can be golf carts that are modified to travel greater than 20 miles per hour, but not more than 25 miles per hour. (Most low speed vehicles are golf carts in appearance; however, they are a little faster and have additional requirements.)

Where can low speed vehicles be driven?

A low speed vehicle may be operated on any county road with a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less. A low speed vehicle may not be operated on a sidewalk adjacent to a state or county highway, except a multi-use path.

What equipment is required for a low speed vehicle?

A low speed vehicle must be equipped with headlights, brake lights, turn signals, tail lights, reflectors, parking brakes, rearview mirror, windshield, seat belts and a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).

Low speed vehicles are required to have a license plate and be insured, much like a car or a truck.

Who may drive a low speed vehicle?

Persons driving a low speed vehicle must be licensed drivers and have in their possession a valid driver's license.

Violations of the county low speed vehicle ordinance may be prosecuted via county citation. Fines range from \$75 for a first violation to \$168 for the second and subsequent violations. Violations of this county ordinance may also be prosecuted as a second degree misdemeanor with a fine of up to \$500 and / or 60 days in jail.

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Real Estate Guide

Northeast Florida average home sales price largest since June 2018

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

April was a busy month for real estate activity in Northeast Florida, with 2,889 homes being sold. This figure is a 6.5 percent uptick from a year ago, and the largest number of monthly sales since August 2018. There were also 3,171 pending

sales (those on which a contract has been written but did not close). The pending sales activity was a 5.8 percent increase from a year ago.

The median sales price of \$225,000 was up 2.3 percent from a year ago, but was down from \$229,900 in March. The average sales price was significantly higher at \$276,712, the largest average sales price since \$280,880 in June 2018.

Homes sold quickly in April, with 67 days on market being the average.

A reduced inventory continues to be a major factor in the market, with only 3.6 month's supply on hand.

"Sellers are finding that their properties are selling very quickly and pricing is robust," said 2019 NEFAR President Jeanne Denton-Scheck. "In April, 14.3 percent of homes sold by NEFAR member Realtors were for more than the original list price."

Visit www.nefar.com to view the April 2016 housing market reports for Northeast Florida, made available from the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors. As all St. Johns County and Nassau Realtors are not participants of the NEFMLS, reports provided do not represent the full extent of Realtor sales in those counties.



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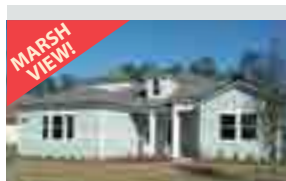
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Bartram Trail Library offers events and services through building closure

By Chett Wood
mail@floridanewline.com

Though the building is closed for fire suppression system renovation, the Bartram Trail Branch Library is offering programming at satellite locations within the community throughout the closure.

Friday, June 7, 10 a.m.: Book Club, "The Wife Between Us"

Located at the Julington Creek Service Center

In June, we are discussing "The Wife Between Us" by Greer Hendricks. Newcomers are always welcome.

Tuesday, June 11, 6 p.m.: Book Club, "The Great Alone"

Located at The Twisted Compass

In July, we are discussing "The Great Alone" by Kristin Hannah.

Friday, June 28, 10:30 a.m.: Crafty Women (Pinecone Flowers)

Located at the Julington Creek Service Center

Make your own flowers that never wilt in red, white and blue to prepare for the birthday of the nation. Space is limited, and registration is required. Call (904) 827-6950 to sign up. A \$5 donation to the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library for craft supplies is encouraged.

Friday, July 5, 10 a.m.: Book Club, "All We Ever Wanted"

Located at the Julington Creek Service Center

In July, we are discussing "All We Ever Wanted" by Emily Griffin. We bring the carbs and coffee; you bring yourself and a friend.



Photo courtesy Chett Wood
Pinecone flowers

Tuesday, July 9, 6 p.m.: Book Club, "Little Fires Everywhere"

Located at The Twisted Compass

In July, we are discussing "Little Fires Everywhere" by Celeste Ng.

Friday, July 26, 10:30 a.m.: Crafty Women (Sunflower Wreath)

Located at the Julington Creek Service Center

Have you ever thought to yourself, "I really want to glue plastic spoons together!" If so, that seems a little odd, but be amazed at the things you can create with spoons, pine cones, and a bit of time. Space is limited, and registration, which opens on June 28, is required. Call (904) 827-6950 to sign up. A \$5 donation to the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library for craft supplies is encouraged.

More on the Bartram Trail Branch Library building closure:

Patrons will be able to request items and check them out from a temporary library located at St. Johns County Recreation and Parks Northwest Office at Mills Field 1721 Race Track Road. Located only about two miles north of the library branch, this temporary location will provide convenient access for patrons to borrow items they have requested and return items during open hours.



Photo courtesy Chett Wood
Sunflower wreath

The temporary library is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Tuesdays, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Patrons are advised that an after-hours book drop will not be provided.

Chett Wood is the Reference and Adult Services Librarian at the Bartram Trail Branch Library.

Due to population increase, St. Johns County needs more bus drivers

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Did you know that St. Johns County is the eighth-fastest growing county in the country? According to a recent population estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau, the county's population increased by 4.2 percent in just one year. And it's not just retirees flocking to the Sunshine State — families with young children are also moving south, which means we need more bus operators to transport children safely to and from school.

"There are so many positives to driving a bus," said Rebecca D'Alessio, bus operator, recruiter, and instructor for the Transportation Department. "It's a meaningful, purposeful, and fun-filled job working with the kids and connecting with them. We like to say that we are the driving force of education."

D'Alessio, a Massachusetts native who graduated from Worcester State University with a degree in geography and spent much of her adult life as a crew member on a passenger ferry in Key West, said she never even considered working as a bus driver until she read an ad in the local newspaper.

"I knew that St. Johns County offered

great benefits and I really wanted a job with stability, flexibility, and room to grow. Becoming a bus operator gave me all of those things plus they paid me to train for my CDL Class B license. I

also love the diversity of working here. We have everyone from C-level professionals and retired public servants to great-grandmas and single parents," said D'Alessio.

St. Johns County School District's Transportation Department is accepting applications for full-time and part-time school bus operators. Training programs are held regularly throughout the year. Candidates must adhere to a strict list of requirements and will be given a \$1,000 sign-on bonus after working as a bus operator for 60 school days. Visit www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/transportation/jobs or contact George Marsh at (904) 547-8818 for more information.



Photo courtesy St. Johns County School District Transportation Department.
St. Johns County is currently seeking bus drivers.

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Running of the Knights unites community for good cause



Photos courtesy Leonard's Studios
Top 5K finishers Kate Landau and Kristopher Shold.



Race Logo contest winner Riley McNaron



Photo courtesy Alan Weaver
Power of Creekside band Centipede team

More than 800 were in attendance for the ninth annual Running of the Knights at Creekside High School on May 10. The event featured a 1-Mile Fun Run, 5K, and centipede team race. The 5K was led by Ainsley's Angels with Team Billy finishing at 18:22. Top 5K finishers, Kate Landau and Kristopher Shold, were awarded \$500. The 2020 Race Logo contest winner, Riley McNaron, received a \$500 scholarship sponsored by Leonard's Studios. All Fun Run and 5K finishers received participation medals, and awards were given to the top three finishers in each age group. The Centipede Division is a big hit each year with the Creekside High School English Department consistently challenging the other teams with their humor and creativity. Sponsored by the Creekside Knights Athletics Booster Club, this fund-raising event enables athletics and band to purchase much-needed, large expense items.

Boy Scouts make improvements to St. Augustine Wildlife Reserve

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

On April 20, the Boy Scouts of Troop 225 in Fruit Cove performed a conservation project to rehab animal cages for two big cats at the St. Augustine Wild Reserve. According to the troop's scoutmaster Martin Hodgson, this project, like all done by the troop, was led by the scouts.



Photos courtesy Martin Hodgson
Scouts from Troop 225 rehab animal cages at St. Augustine Wild Reserve.

"We are a completely boy-led troop," Hodgson said. "Adults provide the direction, coaching, and training that empower the boys with the skills they will need to lead the troop."

Hodgson said the boys took a lot of pride in providing this service to the volunteer-run reserve and to the community. Spending time with the top predators was a fun benefit.



Troop 225 at St. Augustine Wild Reserve.

Troop 225 has a long history, dating back to the early 1980s, which makes it one of the oldest troops in the Northern St. Johns County. The troop has turned out more than 60 Eagle Scouts as well as many scouts involved in Order of the Arrow.



Photo courtesy Deborah Warrick
Java the tiger at St. Augustine Wild Reserve

Troop 225 meets every Monday at 7 p.m. at Geneva Presbyterian Church, 1755 State Road 13 North in Fruit Cove. Visitors, family, friends and fellow scouts that might want to experience what the troop has to offer are welcome to attend. Visit www.troop225.net for more information.

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Briefs

Lightner Museum to participate in Blue Star Museums

The Lightner Museum has joined museums nationwide in participating in the 10th summer of Blue Star Museums, a program which provides free admission to the nation's active-duty military personnel and their families this summer. The 2019 program began earlier than in past years, on May 18 (Armed Forces Day) and will end on Monday, September 2 (Labor Day). Military can find the list of participating museums at arts.gov/blue-starmuseums.

Blue Star Museums is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in collaboration with Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums nationwide. First Lady of the United States Melania Trump and Second Lady of the United States Karen Pence are honorary co-chairs of Blue Star Museums 2019.

"The Lightner Museum considers it a small but necessary opportunity to participate in the Blue Star Program. Honoring our military and its families has been a decades-long tradition at the Lightner," said Robert Harper, Lightner Museum director. "We were the first in Saint Johns County to take part in Blue Star and I am happy to see that other institutions have followed suit. The Lightner and its staff consider it an honor to salute our Military in this way."

The free admission program is available for those currently serving in the United States Military — Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard as well as members of the Reserves, National Guard, U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps, NOAA Commissioned Corps, and up to five family members. Qualified members must show a Geneva Convention com-

mon access card (CAC), DD Form 1173 ID card (dependent ID), or a DD Form 1173-1 ID card for entrance into a participating Blue Star Museum.

Memorial Hospital expands services to northern St. Johns County

Memorial Hospital Jacksonville has acquired property on U.S. Highway 1 as part of the hospital's expansion of services to northern St. Johns County and southern Duval County. Memorial closed on the \$3.8 million parcel of land at the end of February. Services proposed for the area include primary care and specialty medical care services via a variety of medical clinics. The expansion comes during Memorial's 50th anniversary year of serving northeast Florida communities.

"We have an opportunity to bring the first comprehensive medical office building to northern St. Johns County to complement an addition of a planned freestanding emergency center at the same location," said Bradley S. Talbert, FACHE, president and CEO of Memorial Hospital.

The four-acre property will be home to a planned Medical Office Building that will provide specialty services and physician offices with an adjacent freestanding emergency center.

Memorial is anticipating its expansion to be operational by the end of 2020.

Rainfall trends remain steady with some regional variation

While central and northern regions of the St. Johns River Water Management District received typical rainfall for April, below-average rainfall persisted in the southern third of the district.

The northern zone was slightly below average, except for St. Johns County, which received 3.47 inches of rainfall. The central zone of the district was above average, led by Marion County with 4.1 inches of

rainfall. The southern third of the district was below average.

As of May 1, surface water flow conditions in the Upper St. Johns River Basin were mostly in the low-flow range for this time of year. Moving downstream into the Middle St. Johns River Basin, the St. Johns River measured near DeLand also had low flow for this time of year. Further downstream, the Satsuma station had average flow, with low-flow measured at the St. Johns River near Jacksonville.

Visit www.sjrwmd.com/data for additional hydrologic data or to learn more about the St. Johns River Water Management District's data collection program.

Retiring pastor heads for St. Augustine, new pastor coming home

Jim Walker, who has served faithfully for the last year at River of Life United Methodist Church on Race Track Road, has decided to hang up his stole. After a ministry that spans more than 30 years and two continents, Walker is looking forward to taking up residence with his wife Kathy in their old stomping grounds, St. Augustine Beach. His last Sunday at River of Life will be June 16.

Replacing Pastor Jim is Pastor Perri Martin, who is coming from Englewood on the West Coast of Florida. Having attended, and worked at, Crossroads Church near the St. Johns Town Center, Martin is excited to be returning to the Jacksonville area. Along with her husband and four young children, Martin will be starting at River of Life UMC on July 1. Her first sermon on will be on Sunday July 7.

Preschool marks milestone anniversary

The Goddard School of Saint Johns celebrates its 15th anniversary this year as part of the Julington Creek Plantation community. Its on-site owner, Laura Britton, who also lives in the community, works to make

sure every family enjoys a warm, positive experience.

"We strive to provide the highest quality program for each child," Britton said. "Our play-based F.L.EX.® Learning Program ensures that we meet high standards specific to early learning, development and care."

The F.L.EX.® Learning Program (Fun Learning Experience) is grounded in research on how children learn best: children experience the deepest, most genuine learning when they are having fun. It's designed to help build each child's emotional, academic, social, creative and physical skills — including 21st century skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking — to provide a well-rounded experience and help each one become school-ready, career-ready and life-ready.

The Goddard School of Saint Johns introduces STEAM concepts early on to help promote children's natural curiosity in these subjects, increasing the chance that children will pursue STEAM-related careers later on in life.

Goddard School teachers play an active role in each child's education and development, setting the stage for a fun, engaging learning environment. These enthusiastic, creative educators design unique, personalized lesson plans to captivate your child. The faculty also looks for learning opportunities that correspond with the students' natural interests. For example, if an insect flies into the room and the children are captivated by it, teachers adapt the lesson to talk about insect life.

The Goddard School of Saint Johns has earned Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) accreditation, which is a national early learning program accreditation. APPLE is accepted into the Gold Seal of Quality program.

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Get to Know . . .

Michael and Sashell Dragich

By Angela Higginbotham
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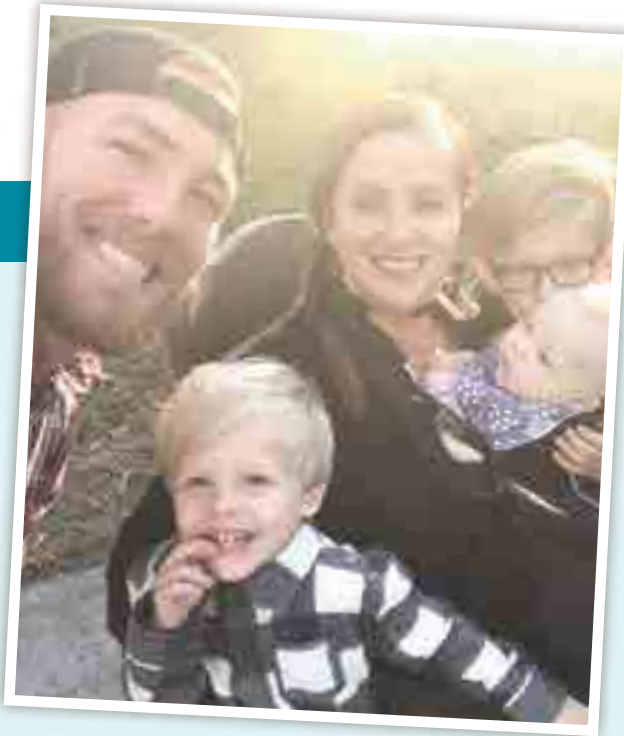


Photo courtesy Sashell Dragich
The Dragich family

Local entrepreneurs Michael and Sashell Dragich grew up on opposite ends of the state. Michael Dragich was born in Ohio and later moved to South Florida while Sashell Dragich is a St. Johns native and has called Julington Creek home her entire life. She was a part of Bartram Trail High School's legacy class (the first class to complete four full years after the school opened). Sashell Dragich attended the University of Central Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University in Ft. Myers, where she majored in business. After high school in South Florida, Michael Dragich joined the Marine Corps.

The two met in South Florida and moved to California, where Michael Dragich was stationed at the time. Ten years later, eager to introduce her husband to her beloved Julington Creek neighborhood, Sashell Dragich convinced him to call north Florida home. As felt by many, life after Michael Dragich's military career was a transition with many questions — questions with answers that lead to the creation of Doody Daddy, a growing business for the couple and one that now supports their family. Michael and Sashell have been married for 10 years and have three children, two boys and a nine-month-old little girl.

1. What do you enjoy most about the area and Sashell, how had Julington Creek changed after being away for 10 years?

Sashell Dragich: I love Julington Creek because it still has that small town feel. Everyone knows everyone and I've always loved that. When we came back

to the area after being away it was almost like a new world to me. So much had changed, but it's still the friendly area I've always known.

Michael Dragich: It feels like a safe community and it's great for a business owner. The people interact with neighbors while supporting local businesses.

2. What is Doody Daddy and how did the idea come about?

Michael Dragich: Doody Daddy is a business that offers the service of scooping dog poop for residential and commercial clients. We are primarily in the St. Johns area, but are growing to serve all of Jacksonville and St. Augustine. We are building customers and adding more drivers. Sashell runs the business from home now. The idea came from a place after serving in the military when I just didn't feel that I could be happy in an office setting. I wanted to offer something to people that wasn't very common.

3. What are your goals for your business?

Michael Dragich: Our goal is to keep growing and expanding. I'd love to franchise the business out to veterans one day. It's often hard to find a place and sense of purpose after the military and I think it could help veterans get on their feet.

4. What do you enjoy doing as a family and personally?

Sashell Dragich: I enjoy going to the gym and diving into community

activities and events at the schools. As a family, we are active in our church and enjoy the beach, pool, and anything outside.

Michael Dragich: I enjoy Jiu Jitsu and volunteering in the wrestling program at a local high school. I did a lot of martial arts in the Marine Corps. I also enjoy wakeboarding. Yes, as a family, anything outside is our favorite way to spend a day.

5. Any jokes received when you explain your profession?

Michael Dragich: My friends joke sometimes, but I tell them that they see brown and I see green.

Sashell Dragich: We always laugh because we say that he's a Doody Daddy because as a daddy of three kids, he's literally surrounded by poop.

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Dog Day cont. from pg. 1

dogs (of course!). Birch Island Veterinary Center provided low-cost micro-chipping.

Ayla's Acres, SAFE, and the St. Johns County Pet Center were at the event with pets available for adoption. Five of the dogs found forever homes.



Liv Bolick cuddling police dog puppy.

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Traveling Backwards to 1864 - The Past Can Be a Blast?

By Heidy Brososky-Weaver
mail@floridanewsline.com

If the truth be told, the thought of driving an hour to watch an American Civil War reenactment is not that appealing to a non-history buff; however, after meeting General Ulysses S. Grant of the Union Army in the parking lot, history started to take on a new meaning. He proudly posed for pictures and carefully explained the significance of his uniform's badges and buttons. His wife, meanwhile, apologized for not being dressed in her finest silks for the occasion.



Photos courtesy Kimberly D. Weaver
General Ulysses S. Grant of the Union Army.

After a short shuttle ride, General Grant joined the crowd on the dusty, wooded path to the actual field where the Battle of Olustee, the only major battle fought in Florida during the Civil War, took place on Feb. 20, 1864. While strolling past musicians playing lively tunes and spotting rows of white canvas army tents, the first shots of the war rang in the distance.

help of remote-control detonators. The excitement continued to build as soldiers on both sides advanced. Truly, this was not an experience found online, and the tidbits picked up along the way made it even more interesting:



White canvas army tents.



Shorty Robbins' mini house.

As the battlefield came into view, canons blasted palmettos into the air — with the

there are ear plugs made for horses, too.

- There's a mini replica of the H.L. Hunley, the world's first successful combat submarine. Unfortunately, three crews were lost on the submarine during trials and after the actual sinking of the USS Housatonic.

- Visiting with historian Shorty Robbins is a trip. That is, she travels around in a mini, Victorian-era house to Civil War reenactments, and her piano opens into a bed.



Outdoor camp items.

- This reenactment is about honoring veterans, encouraging the study of history, and teaching about the horrors of war. The three-day event includes memorials, parades, beauty pageants, concerts, thespian performances, a fun run, medical tents, arts, crafts, foods, and merchants galore.

And for those who don't like diving into history, the area also advertises natural springs (springsrus.com) where tourists can scuba dive, snorkel, and create their own history.

Falcons cont. from pg. 1

Heart is another priority. "It's important to care for your neighbor and have a heart for students in other grade levels, too," the father of two explains. Ever since his first principal position in 2010, Anderson has incorporated "Capturing a Kid's Heart." This program is based on the idea that "if you have a child's heart, you have a child's mind."

Finally, Team is synonymous with the FCA family. "A lot of teamwork went into making this first year successful," says Anderson, who puts a priority on professional learning communities (PLCs). He emphasizes the importance for educators to meet regularly and share expertise so that the students "get whatever they need to succeed."

Following this team theme, teacher Ginger Kastor spearheaded a project for all kindergarten classes to create a time capsule, complete with a copy of *The CreekLine* newspaper.

Clearly, the goals introduced on that banner on the wall have come to life. One message, written by Staci Boyer (the principal's secretary/bookkeeper/office manager and St. Johns County's 2018 – 2019 School-Related Employee of the Year) sums it up nicely: "Together we can make a difference in each falcon (student or staff) who flies through our doors ... and when they leave us, they feel they can accomplish their dreams."

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Nease NJROTC named No. 1 program in Area-12

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

For the seventh time in the past eight years, Nease was named the Most Outstanding Navy JROTC program in Area-12, a region that encompasses 60 schools covering northeastern Florida and the entire state of Georgia.

The award is based on the total achievement of the program, which includes academic performance, community outreach, campus leadership, graduation plans, overall physical fitness and competition results.

"We (seniors) came into JROTC as the number one program back in 2015," said former Battalion Commander Erin Sass, who will be attending the Coast Guard Academy Scholars Program. "And our goal was to leave on top. Mission accomplished."

Among Nease's noteworthy achievements this past year: first place championships at McFarland Drill Meet, Mandarin Drill Meet, Terry Parker

Drill Meet, Area-12 Drill Championship, Middleburg Pentathlon and Lee Ultimate Challenge; qualifying for both Drill and Orienteering national championships; graduating six seniors with Service Academy appointments or ROTC Scholarships; and the completion of more than 7,000 hours of community service.



Photo courtesy Scott LaRochelle
Outgoing Cadet Battalion Commander Peyton Gustafson and incoming Battalion Commander Lindy Gostage receive the Most Outstanding Unit in Area-12 trophy during Nease NJROTC Awards Night.

"We're a cadet run unit — and these cadets like to stay active," said Command

Master Chief Petty Officer Duane Spears, one of the three naval science instructors.

Nease was the number one program in Area-12 from 2012-2016 and again in 2018. Nease is currently the No. 5 ranked program in the nation out of more than 600 schools.

"This achievement is the result of a total Nease family effort put forth by disciplined and hard-working cadets, engaged parents and a supportive school administration," said Captain Scott La-Rochelle, senior naval science instructor.

Creekside sophomore is state champ



Photo courtesy Tracy Mills

Makhaila Mills, a sophomore at Creekside High School, competed in the Florida Track and Field State Championships on May 3 at the University of North Florida. She won the 100m sprint race in 11.66 seconds and was also runner up in the 200m sprint race. She currently holds the school record for both events and is coached by Rickey Fields.



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P.E.O. STAR scholarship awarded

Gracie Groves, a senior at Creekside High School, was awarded the P.E.O. STAR scholarship for the 2019 – 2020 academic year. The scholarship was presented at the Creekside awards ceremony on May 9 by Nancy Wertz. Groves will attend Samford University in the fall, where she plans to study music and political science. Groves is the daughter of Mark and Sarah Groves and was recommended for this scholarship by Chapter HT of Fruit Cove. The P.E.O. STAR Scholarship is a \$2,500 scholarship based on excellence in leadership, extracurricular activities, community service, academics and potential for future success. The program is open to young women who are citizens or legal permanent residents of the United States or Canada and who are graduating high school seniors at the time of application. A student must be recommended by a P.E.O. chapter. Visit www.peointernational.org for more information.



Photo courtesy Dianne Miller

The Jammin' Jaguar Band from Julington Creek Elementary performed for the residents of River Garden Hebrew Home on Tuesday, April 16. The band is comprised of fourth and fifth graders who rehearse before school two mornings a week.



Photos courtesy Heidi Karl

Julington Creek Elementary music students entertain



pictured here with Fang, the team's mascot.

The Singing Jags from Julington Creek Elementary were invited to sing the national anthem for the Jacksonville Icemen's first playoff game on Thursday, April 18. The chorus is comprised of third, fourth, and fifth graders who rehearse an hour after school, one day a week. They are

Creekside tennis teams end season on high note

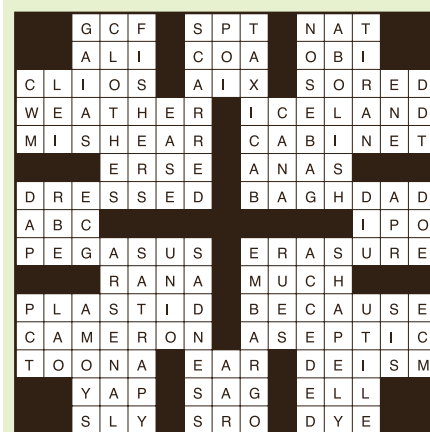


Photo courtesy Kristy Kastlman

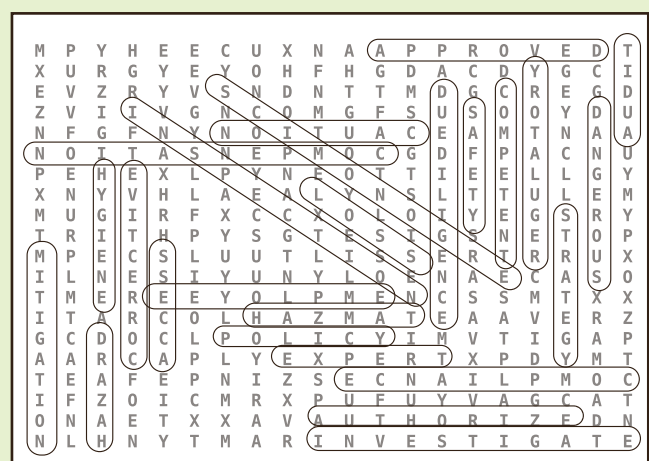
The Creekside High girls' tennis team captured the Region 2 title and competed in the state quarterfinals. The boys team made it to the regional finals, losing in a tight 4 – 3 match up, according to head tennis coach, Justin Vogel. Pictured are Imani Graham (class 3A overall singles champion), Tailynn Keen, Emily Kastleman, Molly Wannamaker, and Chetana Ramesh.

Answers to puzzles on page 24

Answers to our Puzzles



Answers: A. dairy B. food C. milk D. cow



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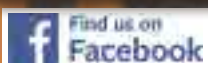
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BTHS Happenings

Bartram Trail DECA students compete in international competition

By Delaney Cantrell
mail@floridanewslines.com

While the end of the school year brings excitement to most students, Bartram Trail DECA members had another reason to be excited. Some members advanced on from the state competition to be able to compete at the International Career Development Conference (ICDC). The students worked all year towards making it to this conference and found it to be a great and memorable experience for them.

Bartram took 15 students and two advisors to the competition in Orlando this year. The location of the competition rotates each year between Anaheim, Calif.; Atlanta, Ga.; Nashville, Tenn.; and Orlando. High school students from all over the United States and eight other countries attended the conference; this year's attendance maxed out at more than 22,000 students.

To attend the international competition, the students must place in their event at the state competition. The Florida state competition, also held in Orlando, took place at the beginning of March. Bartram had an impressive turnout, with 11 students placing and many others receiving awards and scholarships.

Not all students that attend the international conference go because of placement in their competition. DECA also offers students the opportunity to attend a two-day workshop at the convention center



Photo courtesy Delaney Cantrell
Fifteen Bartram Trail High School students and two advisors attended the International Career Development Conference competition in Orlando this year.

where all the competitions take place. DECA's Emerging Leader Series is designed to teach students effective leadership skills through goal-setting, consensus building, and project implementation. Skills learned in these workshops are beneficial to students as they plan for their futures in college

or the workforce. Three Bartram students attended one of these academies.

The students who attended ICDC also had an entertaining time outside of the conference activities, meeting people from all over the world, enjoying a fun performance from the Blue Man Group, and spending an evening in Disney's Magic Kingdom. While no students from Bartram placed at the international level, they all felt that they gained valuable skills and made lasting memories.

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Fishing

Capt. David's Fishing Report

By Captain David Lifka
mail@floridanewslines.com

*With water temps pushing eighty degrees,
Salinity levels are on the increase
And little shrimp are beginning to show
So fishing the St. Johns is beginning to grow.
Yes, summertime fishing has arrived,
So gather your gear and don't be deprived*

Summertime fishing is finally here, and as always, is greeted with great expectations. As the summer progresses, we can only expect to see a steady increase in the variety, quality, and quantity of our fishing efforts.

Current indicators are promising that we are off to a good start for this summer's fishing. A mild winter accompanied by less than normal rainfall has certainly contributed to this current outlook.

With juvenile shrimp starting to show throughout the river, we can now expect the larger species of the underwater food chain to be not that far behind. As summer progresses, the shrimp get larger as does the quantity and quality of the fish that feed on them. With the right weather conditions, late summer and early fall have the potential to provide as good fishing as nearly anywhere else in the state.

Almost certainly we can expect croaker, yellowmouth, redfish, flounder, black drum, seatrout, and sheepshead. If it's a really good year we could even see additional species such as mangrove snapper

and even tarpon. Not bad for our local area of the St. Johns, which is considered from downtown Jacksonville to the Shands Bridge. Officially this area of the river is considered to be freshwater, but in reality it is brackish for most or all of the year.

The latter part of the summer season is looked upon with great expectation as the St. Johns River food chain is made complete by the above water feeders (that's us). Late July or early August is usually when we can expect our annual shrimp run to begin; sometimes lasting well into October, shrimping is a favorite activity for many. A good year shrimping could add up to a freezer full, while a slow year should still provide shrimp enough for bait.

Fishing Report: St. Johns croaker bite continues to warm up with reds showing around docks and pilings. Bonnet-head sharks should be plentiful in the surf this time of year. They're smaller, harmless, easy and fun to catch. Should be a great time for the kids.

Whether you catch one, some or none, the family time spent fishing will last a lifetime.

Email your Catch of the Month photo to catchofthemonthpictures@gmail.com. Be sure to include the name of the person(s) in the photo, the name of the person who took the photo, the type of fish and date and location of the catch. We will select a photo each month for publication.

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Gardening

Allergies, anyone?

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale
mail@floridanewsline.com

I think we are probably over the worst of the pollen season involving common trees like oaks and pines, but my daughter recently found an article in Scientific American, "Botanical Sexism Cultivates Home-Grown Allergies" (<https://tinyurl.com/y8trc4ep>), which she knew I would appreciate. The title certainly piqued my interest! Apparently plant breeders have unwittingly added to our pollen burden by employing specialist cloning techniques in order to offer male trees to the public, so that we don't have to bother with the messy fruits and seeds of female trees. One tree introduction that springs to mind is the sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*; apparently the cultivar *L. styraciflua* 'Rotundiloba' has been bred to produce only small sterile flowers, and since we all know how troublesome the round prickly seed balls can be, that seems like a good thing.

There are not only male pollen-producing clones of trees in the market, but also shrubs. The article made the point that an overabundance of male pollen-producing trees could be causing the increases in allergies and asthma, especially among children. It is also the case that toxins are absorbed by trees, but then they may be released back into the air in wind-borne pollen, which is alarming, since we breathe in those toxins with the pollen.

The article also described how female trees produce an electrical charge that literally attracts wind-blown pollen to their flowers, thereby reducing the amount of pollen that reaches our olfactory systems. It seems to me that we may need to strike a better balance for our well-being by planting a more natural mix of plant material, and simply enjoy their female flowers. This next

article may help: <https://tinyurl.com/yxt6tx6b>. It describes some of the less allergenic woody plants we could use in our landscapes.

Already the weather is heating up. As of early May we have had a reasonable amount of rain, but according to the drought monitor, areas of central north Florida are "abnormally dry" (<https://tinyurl.com/y6d3kkh2>). Perhaps it's time to check on your irrigation practices if you haven't done so already, since we often miss out on those eastward-sweeping rain bands at this time of year.

The latest edition of A New Leaf is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/y6hszolv>, and is well worth reading, particularly if you have an interest in becoming a Master Gardener volunteer. Classes are open to all and you don't need a vast background in horticulture to be considered, just a general interest in gardening and a willingness to learn. The main requirement is that you want to volunteer your time. For vegetable, herb, and fruit growers, Beth Marlowe, our new Urban Garden coordinator, describes the Urban Garden Program and how it benefits our citizens. Terry DelValle reminds us of best lawn mowing practices, and our Urban Forester, Larry Figart, fills us in on the history of our famous Treaty Oak. As always, there are upcoming classes for the general public, and timely tips on what to plant now.

I encourage all NewsLine readers to do their bit for our wonderful Florida. We each have an opportunity, however small our outdoor space, to cater for our wildlife by keeping our immediate environment as chemical-free as possible, and planting beautiful flowers for our valuable pollinating bees and butterflies, and for the other unsung beneficial insects that also do their part. Almost

all our birds rely on insects to feed their young, even the delightful ruby-throated hummingbird, and in doing so they keep insect numbers in check. The more we keep our environment in balance, the more we benefit. This summer I hope that by simply keeping grass clippings, fallen leaves, and fertilizer well inside our own properties, either composting those leaves and clippings, or using them as mulch, or even bagging them for collection, the excess nutrients that fueled the algae in the St. Johns River in recent years will be reduced, and the river will stay healthy. We shall see!

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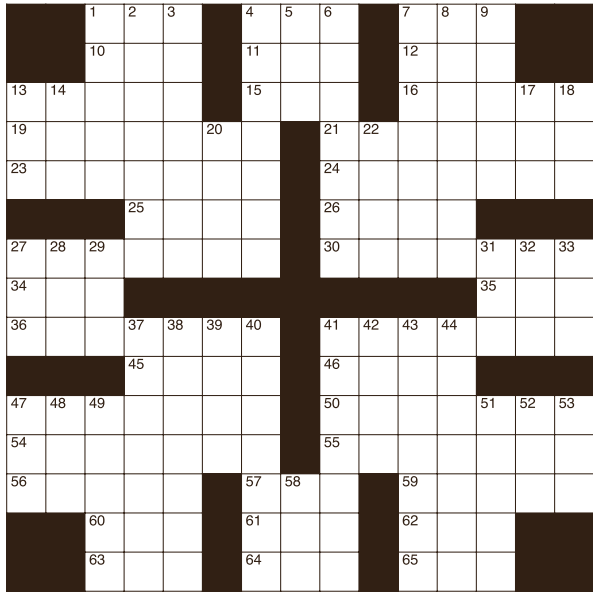
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Puzzles

Answers on page 20
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Mathematical term (abbr.)
- 4. Seaport (abbr.)
- 7. "Unforgettable" singer
- 10. The GOAT
- 11. Used to harvest agave cactus
- 12. Luke's mentor ___Wan
- 13. Muses
- 15. IBM operating system
- 16. Hungarian village
- 19. Popular conversation topic
- 21. N. Atlantic island
- 23. Fail to discern correctly
- 24. The President has one
- 25. Irish Gaelic language
- 26. Gasteyer and Ivanovic are two
- 27. Garnished
- 30. National capital
- 34. Basics
- 35. Initial public offering

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Belongs to the daughter of Chaos
- 2. Wardrobe
- 3. Derek and Jeff are two
- 4. Disfigured
- 5. Hawaiian dish
- 6. What a hack drives
- 7. Horse gear
- 8. Do away with
- 9. Narrow straits between Sinai and Arabian peninsulas
- 13. Corrie
- 14. Hawaiian flower necklace
- 17. Midway between northeast and east
- 18. Insecticide
- 20. Comfort
- 22. Town in Galilee
- 27. Informal greeting
- 28. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)

CLUES DOWN

- 29. Used to check the heart
- 31. Western India island
- 32. Credit card term
- 33. Female deer
- 37. British football team
- 38. Persian jurisdiction
- 39. Freshwater mussel genus
- 40. Opposite of happiness
- 41. Ban on trade
- 42. Bitterly regrets
- 43. Assented
- 44. Well-proportioned
- 47. Part of (abbr.)
- 48. Indigenous people of Thailand
- 49. A man of your stature (abbr.)
- 51. Advantageous
- 52. Female sibling
- 53. Electronic countermeasures
- 58. Swiss river



Solve the code to discover words related to dairy.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 15 = O)

A. 6 10 13 19 8
Clue: Type of food or beverage

B. 2 1 17 16
Clue: Sustenance

C. 24 13 25 14
Clue: Healthy beverage

D. 4 15 26
Clue: Dairy animal

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T E A F E P N I Z S E C N A I L P M O C
I F Z O I C M R X P U F U Y V A G C A T
O N A E T X X A V A U T H O R I Z E D N
N L H N Y T M A R I N V E S T I G A T E

WORDS

- ACCESS
- APPROVED
- AUDIT
- AUTHORIZED
- CAUTION
- COMPENSATION
- COMPETENT
- COMPLIANCE
- CORRECTIVE
- DANGEROUS
- DUE DILIGENCE
- EMPLOYEE
- ERGONOMICS
- EXPERT
- HAZARD
- HAZMAT
- HYGIENE
- INSPECTION
- INVESTIGATE
- LOSS
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Deer

# Travel

## Fort Lauderdale: Beyond Spring Break

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewslines.com

When envisioning South Florida, Miami's South Beach, Art Deco style architecture and an enticing food scene come to mind. Always exciting, but I chose to visit Fort Lauderdale. It's less crowded, carries a similar vibe, and sits just 45 minutes away. Many think of Fort Lauderdale as a party-haven for college students on spring break, but it is also known as the Yachting Capital of the World. The 165-mile network of boat canals crosses the area earns it the nickname, the Venice of America. More than 100 marinas berth some of the largest mega yachts.

Even if you aren't invited on one of those, you may yet embark — on a cruise from Fort Lauderdale's Port Everglades, which ranks as one of the top three cruise ports in the world. It's always a good idea to arrive a day early, so I offer a few suggestions of places to visit and things to do.

To get an authentic feel for the city, hop aboard the water taxi. Pleasing water views of the homes and canals accompany an informative narration about the history of the stunning area. Get off at one of the canal-side restaurants (I loved Shooters), then hop back on with your day pass.

Don't miss driving along Las Olas Boulevard, home to many jaw-dropping mansions and 17 blocks of upscale shopping, sidewalk cafes and nightlife. Make reservations to dine in the rear courtyard at Louis Bossie, an Italian eatery whose magical outdoor setting mesmerizes, especially at sunset.

Shoppers might pop into the New River Fine Art Gallery to gaze upon some original modern art or famous artists' works from the past. I was told that browsers are welcome, even those that can't afford anything. The shop owners

encourage everyone to gain an appreciation for visual art. Besides, it's fun to imagine where you might hang or place a piece in your home.



Bonnet House and gardens

North on A1A, but hidden off the highway, you'll find the Bonnet House, a historic home now managed by the Florida Trust. Anyone interested in history or gardening should not miss this unexpected gem built in the 1920s. Eclectic artists Frederic and Evelyn Bartlett embellished the 1930s beach-

front estate. Their family left the property, brimming with a bounty of colorful art, to the state in 1983. Today's docent-led tour provides fascinating insights into the era. I could have stayed for hours roaming the orchid house, hibiscus gardens and nature trails.

While visiting, I stayed at the centrally located W Fort Lauderdale Hotel and Spa on Beach Boulevard. The posh resort shines bright and airy after a recent \$55 million renovation. The living room style lobby feels welcoming and comfortable. It's also a great place to dine, enjoy cocktails or just people watch. My favorite hangout, however, was the hotel's street-level Mexican themed restaurant, named El Vez.

The Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, just off the ocean, provides one of the calmest and picturesque kayaking spots ever. One moment you might be lying on the beach and less than five minutes later, paddling a kayak or paddleboard among mangroves. The 180-acre park



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
House along canal

offers greenery-lined biking, jogging and walking trails.

I can't forget to mention Fort Lauderdale's famous seven miles of beach, or 23 miles if you add the Greater Fort Lauderdale area. Whether you want to take a stroll in the sand, spend a day sunning, or merely enjoy the view from the drive, this beach is one of Florida's finest.



Kayaking in Birch State Park

Travelers find the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport easy to navigate and convenient to Port Everglades, as well as the beach. A drive to Fort Lauderdale from Jacksonville takes you about five hours.

Visit [www.bylandersea.com](http://www.bylandersea.com) to read more of local travel writer Debi Lander's stories and travel tips.

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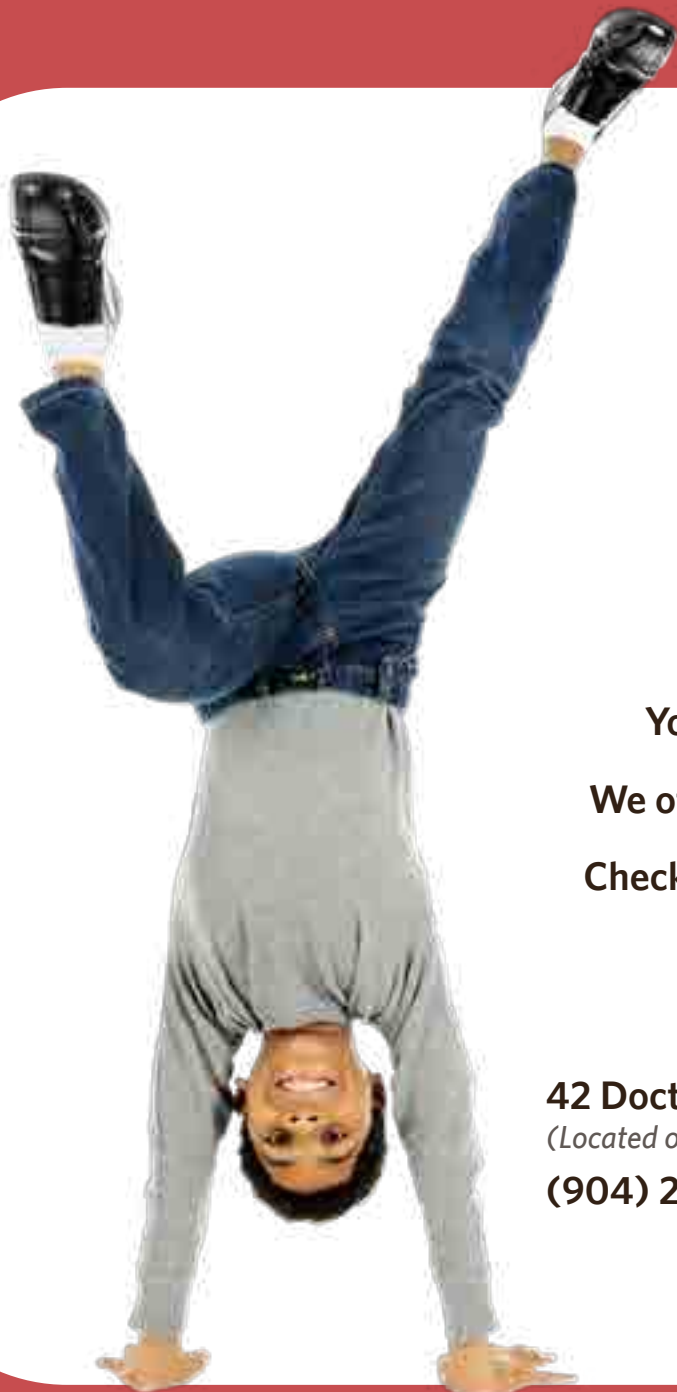
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