

page 3

BFF Best Furry Friend



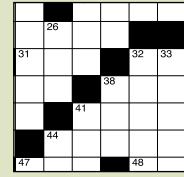
page 12

Bartram Trail Library temporary closure



page 13

Get to Know ... Ali Pressel



page 16

Puzzles

St. Johns CARES announces Pet Food Drive

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Pets continue to be a comfort for so many during the pandemic isolation and the unknown future; however, not only are animal shelters in great need of pet food, but individuals seeking assistance at local food pantries are also concerned about their pets. Unfortunately, some are forced to make very hard decisions to give up their furry companions or give part of their own meager food supplies to their pets, all adding to their life stressors. Senior citizens in particular are more likely to give up their own food to feed their pets.

Like many events, the St. Johns CARES's annual Dog Day Afternoon to raise funds for a different animal organization each year in St. Johns County has been postponed until Spring 2022. Instead, a Pet Food Drive will be held March 8 – March 26. St. Johns CARES' goal is to help those with food supply challenges be able to keep their pets fed and in their home, rather than dropped off at a shelter or abandoned on the streets.

Numerous locations will serve as host donation collection sites including local Publix Supermarkets, St. Johns County Library branches, schools and other businesses and organizations. Donations of dog and cat food can be dropped off in the designated boxes. Some locations are also hosting a second box to collect used towels and blankets for animal bedding. Food

Pet Food cont. on pg. 13

Bartram Trail cheer team: Back to back state champs

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

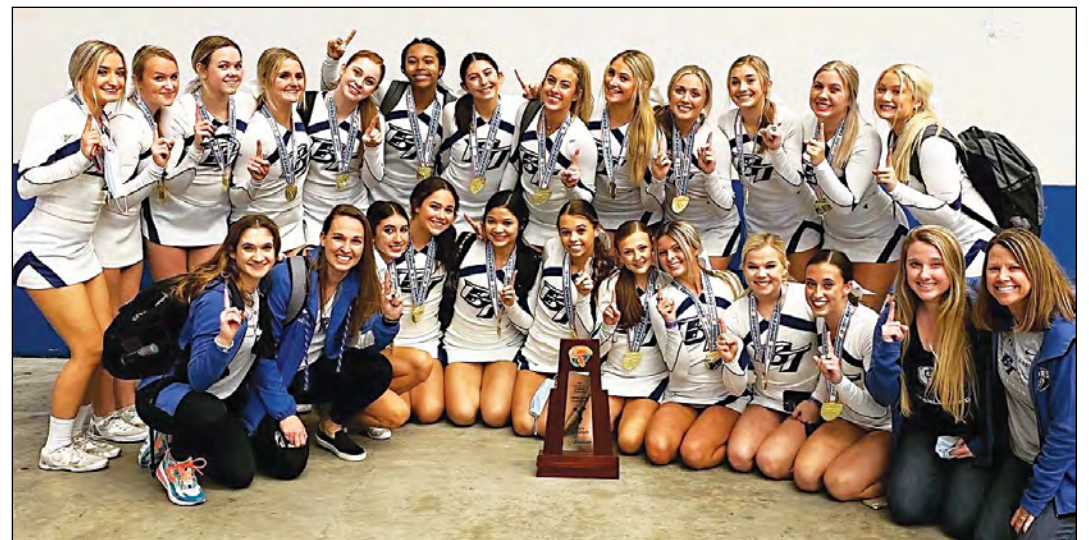
At the RP Funding Center in Lakeland, Fla., on Jan. 22 – 23, the Bartram Trail High School cheer team earned a rare achievement: a second FHSAA state championship in as many years. State championships are not completely foreign to the Bears, though — this was the team's fifth. But according to varsity cheer head coach Danielle Parker, this year's team only included five members from last year's state championship team.

"This really didn't come easy," Parker said. "Not only with COVID, but last year we graduated 14 seniors. Everyone worked really hard and I think this speaks to the strength of our program."

As a high schooler, Parker cheered at Bartram Trail herself and became the varsity head coach in 2012. This year's victory joins previous titles in 2008, 2015, 2017, and 2020.

Parker said this year's season started with tryouts in June 2020, which yielded 19 girls on the competition team; however, due to a variety of COVID-related quarantines, those 19 never competed in a single competition as a team.

"It was a very challenging season," Parker said. "Every



Photos courtesy Danielle Parker

The BT cheer team is once again state champion.

season brings challenges, but this one brought extra."

In December, Bartram Trail finished fourth at the Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA) regionals, which qualified them for the organization's national competition. Normally, Parker said nationals

events and in early January placed second at regionals in Tampa, losing out to first place finisher Hagerty High School. This qualified BTHS for the state competition, where they beat their rival Hagerty for the team's second consecutive state crown.

Impressively, the team won the championship with only having parts of the team practice at a time, again due to COVID restrictions and quarantines.

"We rarely had the whole team together. I think it speaks to the girls' level of talent and

athleticism to make it all work," Parker said.

Parker said the team was especially pleased to win the second state championship in a row, after coming close in previous years.

"It really does feel good," she said, "especially with all the ups and downs

of the season. The girls were able to push through and rise to the challenge. They took what they could control out of many things they couldn't control — and put an amazing routine on the mat."



The team celebrates after their win.

would be held in February, but were pushed back this year to April, so the team will extend its season to participate.

Concurrently, the team participates in Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA)

According to Parker, the team practiced three mornings and two afternoons a week leading up to the regional and state competitions. The seventh period cheer class at school provided extra reps.

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

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Favorite Treat:
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Happy St. Patrick's Day

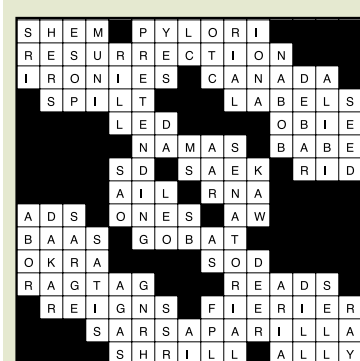
Table of Contents

- 4 Q&A with Eddie Creamer
- 5 Q&A with Beverly Slough
- 6 What's Going On in St. Johns
- 7 Q&A with Rob Hardwick
- 8 Briefs
- 9 St. Johns Business Monthly
- 14 Nutrition Check
- 17 Fishing
- 19 Travel

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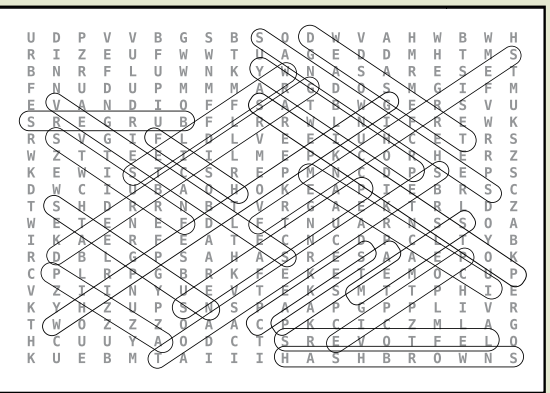
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Answers to our Puzzles PG 16

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Last month's Mystery Photo was the Field of Dreams baseball field in Aberdeen. Our winner was Amy Cape. Congratulations!

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Bartram Trail students honor Marjory Stoneman Douglas students



Photo courtesy Mia Gomez

Bartram Trail High School's chapter of the National Honor Society commemorated those who died in the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14, 2018. Students wanted to honor the victims and survivors, and let them know that they stand with them in solidarity against gun violence.



with St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

Q: Can you give us an update on the Cyclomedia project that provides high resolution street level imagery of residences and businesses, which you introduced to readers in the December issue?

A: This project is complete and all imagery has been published on our website. If you want to look at your property, just enter the address. When the property record card comes up, there will be an aerial photo. Click on that and then click on the blue and white "C" (for "Cyclomedia") in the legend of the aerial view of the street that comes up. After this, you can click on the property or the street for the street level imagery. You can go up and down the street or rotate 360 degrees in this extremely high resolution photo.

It should be noted that all images were completely scrubbed for any identifying information except the address, meaning all car license plates or faces of people who might appear in the photo have been blurred.

Q: How does this technology benefit your office?

A: This type of technology allows us to assess and appraise properties from our desktops in the office. It is more efficient and safer for both my appraisers and for property owners. For context, when I became the County Property Appraiser five years ago, we had 55 employees to assess 125,000 land parcels. Today, we have 38 employees who assess 147,000 parcels — and the office spends 10 percent

less in hard dollars today than five years ago, even including purchasing the technology. (This translates to \$500,000 per year less.) Also, our tax roll is more accurate, per the Florida Department of Revenue's audit.

Q: What can your appraisers discern from these images?

A: They can tell if a roof has been replaced or if maintenance is up to date ... all things we would use in an assessment. We use aerial photography to view the back of a house.

We also use some technology called Push Pin, which digests maps and sketches of buildings on every parcel and tells us if something changes from year to year. For instance, was an outbuilding taken down due to storm damage that would decrease a homeowner's assessment? Or was something built on the property without a permit? It also keeps our assessments accurate for properly permitted items, so we can make an accurate assessment.

To the greatest extent possible, we are trying to use technology to stay ahead of the county's growth without having to increase our office's costs.

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

Q: Can you share an update from the Feb. 16 school board meeting?

A: At this meeting, we viewed the School Improvement Plan (SIP) presentations from our schools. This year, the presentations were basically updates on how hard everyone at all levels has worked in the COVID environment to support our students. It was enlightening to hear about all the varied things offered for our students, from Pre-K through FCTC (First Coast Technical College). Public schools are called upon to meet lots of needs.

Q: What is the update on First Coast Technical College?

A: First Coast Technical College has grown by more than 200 students in the second semester, especially in the automotive and medical programs. It would seem that there are many people who want to get prepared for the workforce. The school is open to anyone in the community of any age, from kids getting their GED to adults looking for a second career. For example, FCTC has partnered with Northrop Grumman to prepare students to build airplanes. There are programs in cosmetology, dental/medical assisting, and diesel mechanics, among others. There are some tuition charges, but financial aid is available.

Q: What can you tell us about the county's Pre-K program?

A: The St. Johns County School District receives students aged three and older. We meet all their needs. We are one of the few school districts that actually runs our own Head Start program, which has a financial threshold for enrollment. Not only do we prepare these young children for kindergarten, but we offer vision and hearing screenings.

Q: What about St. Johns Virtual School?

A: The St. Johns Virtual School grew from 151 students to more than 1,000 this year. It is offered for grades kindergarten through 12th and administrators were challenged to get enough teachers to meet this growth in such a short period of time.

Q: Do you have any information yet to share about this year's graduation ceremonies?

A: We think we will be able to hold the ceremonies in person this year, in some way. The ceremonies will not be held at the University of North Florida because they are not offering their facilities at this time. We are trying to make alternative plans and we will announce them as soon as we know.

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.

Guest Editorial

By Al Abbatiello
mail@floridanewline.com

Good news from the William Bartram Scenic Highway Group

Previous columns announced that the Bartram Scenic Highway Corridor Management will, among other projects, restore the former Switzerland Community Center on State Road 13. This historic building, across from Alpine Groves Park, is a local treasure where long term county residents and their families have fond memories. The objective for restoring this building is to permit future generations to have similar memories.

The history of the building began in the early 1900s as John Seth Church and moved to the present site in 1940. It also served as the Switzerland Community Club. In 1949 a building from

Camp Blanding was floated across the St. Johns River and made a part of the Community Center. In 1952 a concrete block addition served as a volunteer fire station until 2000 when it was turned over to St. Johns County and then abandoned when the county established its present professional fire department.

The Bartram Scenic Highway Group believes a restored Community Center will serve a common good for the NW St. Johns County area as a gathering place for countless functions, including a place for the Council on Aging to serve senior citizens. The scenic highway group worked long and hard to achieve

Guest Editorial cont. on pg. 7



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March

What's Going On in St. Johns?
A modified calendar of events

Community Calendar

The Northwest St. Johns County United for Progress Club will meet on March 8 via Zoom, with social time beginning at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting beginning at 7 p.m. The topic will be state legislative action. Email nwsjcp@gmail.com for zoom meeting details.

St. Johns County Parks and Recreation will present **Exploring the Life of Birds** as part of its 904 Naturalist Series with classes on March 10, March 17 and March 31 from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. at the Solomon Calhoun Community Center in St. Augustine. Field trips will be held on March 13, March 14 and March 26. Call Naturalist Ayolane Halusky at (904) 209-0333 for more information or to register.

First Coast Florida Lifestyles Newcomers Recreation Card Club will host card playing at a coffee shop in St. Augustine on March 14. Arrival is at 2 p.m and card games will begin at 2:15 p.m. Masks must be worn while playing cards and there can be no food on the playing tables. Call the club organizer at (904) 829-0643 (no texts) to RSVP or for information about the club. The club is open to both men and women and is a smoke- and drug-free club.

Friends of the Bartram Trail Library are sponsoring **virtual ACT and SAT review classes** beginning March 16 and running for five consecutive Tuesdays. ACT classes will be from 5:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. and the SAT classes

will be from 7 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. The classes include two contact sessions for Math and two for English as well as one review class. The price is \$45 for the five sessions. Contact the Bartram Trail Branch Library or Phyllis Macy at macy17@yahoo.com for more information or to register.

The Newcomers of North St. Johns will host a meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, March 16 at 11:30 a.m. at Serenata Beach Club, 3175 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd. Doors will open at 11 a.m. The event will feature entertainment by local comedian/magician Mark Alan. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$30 for members. All reservations must be received by March 8. Contact Sue Aird at sjaird@comcast.net to register.

Herbal Medicine for Beginners will be offered on March 20 at 10 a.m. Attendees will learn about traditionally used herbs to promote wellness and health as well as how to create their own tinctures, teas, and salves. Included are guides, plant identification, lecture and herbal snacks. Pre registration is required via phone or text: (386) 972-1891.

Northeast Florida AHEC announces a free **Tools to Quit Tobacco Class**, which includes free nicotine patches, gum or lozenges on Tuesday, March 23, from 3 p.m. – 5 p.m. at Wildflower Healthcare Clinic, 268 Herbert Street in St. Augustine. Call (904) 482-0189 for more information or to sign up.

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**with St. Johns County Sheriff
Rob Hardwick**

Q: As a "walking around" leader, where are some of the places you've been able to walk in your agency this month?

A: As of the date of this interview [Feb. 18], we are 44 days into office. I perform leadership by walking around and that includes things like walking through our human resources department. At least one to two times per week I walk through our entire jail — a distance of one and a half miles — and talk to all of our staff. I even stopped on the way home from a youth sporting event and backed up a deputy sheriff for a traffic stop one evening. I feel like I owe it to our citizens; they want an active and engaged sheriff.

Q: Have you been able to attend any meetings with the Board of County Commissioners or the School Board?

A: Yes. In fact, now at the beginning of each Board of County Commissioners meeting, I or my designee present a Public Safety Update. This addition to the meeting is the result of a bill introduced by Commissioner Jeremiah Blocker and passed by a 5 – 0 vote. I will also stay for any agenda items during the meeting if necessary. I have assigned one of my captains to each of the five County Commission/School Board districts to act as liaison. I have given two of the commissioners a tour of our jail and it is my goal to meet all five commissioners.

I've met with Superintendent Tim Forson and staff to discuss the budget. Since we provide the Youth Resource Officers for schools, it is important for us all to be on the same page and do the right thing for the community.

Guest Editorial cont. from pg. 5

St. Johns County approval with a formal lease document permitting us to begin the planning process, including fundraising.

We're unsure of the total cost to complete the project beyond the cost estimated in St. Johns County's 2010 attempt to restore the building. At that time the estimated cost was in excess of \$500,000. We've obviously taken on a big challenge, but we're confident the community can/will help by getting behind this project.

Q: Do you have any updates on the body camera pilot program?

A: We just finished this pilot program, which ran for 30 days from mid-January to mid-February. Deputies in the Northwest district wore body cameras for all calls for service. Now, I've given them 30 days to put together a presentation to our staff to include researching pricing of the body cameras. I'm also interested in hearing opinions and suggestions from the community about this; interested citizens can let me know via the contact information below. Then I will be able to make a decision. Body cameras are not a budgeted item for this year, so I will need to decide if we perhaps buy a certain number of them now using other funds or wait for next year.

Q: Do you have anything else to share with northern St. Johns County?

A: I want citizens to know that we want to have robust community involvement. We are attending youth sporting events and are interested in attending any other youth events that the community suggests. For instance, in southwest St. Johns County, we have started a boxing program that has attracted 100 kids. In the Northwest, we have an upcoming soccer match with our officers playing versus the Bartram Trail High School varsity squad. We are trying to be innovative, creative, and involved.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you with any questions or suggestions about this article?

A: They can email me at sheriff@sjso.org or call me at (904) 824-8304. Also, our website, www.sjso.org has a wealth of resources, from alarm registration to Crime Stoppers to our Neighbors app.

We're now in the process of increasing membership with reduced membership dues, an improved website, and other social media presence. A Gofundme site has been established and we're in the process of requesting local and other regional/national grants. Will you help? If interested in being part of the restoration work, contact Al Abbatiello at alabbat@comcast.net or (904) 699-8475. Visit www.bartramscenichighway.com to learn more about the Bartram Scenic Highway and access a link to our complete master plan on the county's website.

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Briefs

Tax Aide free service returns

AARP Tax Aide has announced that it will again provide free tax preparation service. This year the tax service will be offered at five locations, all by appointment only. The service will be available starting the week of Feb. 15 and masks will be required.

The AARP Tax Aide service is free and is available to taxpayers of all ages for personal tax returns. AARP membership is not required.

The locations and phone numbers to make an appointment are:

- Main Library: (904) 827-6940
- Southeast Library: (904) 827-6900
- Hastings Library: (904) 827-6970
- Anastasia Baptist Church: (904) 687-7351

Dates and times at all locations will be limited.

Rotary "Service Above Self" Scholarship now accepting applications

The Rotary Club of Palm Valley (formerly Ponte Vedra Beach Sunset) is now accepting applications for its annual Jeff Hart Memorial "Service Above Self" Scholarship (SASS). This year the club will award one \$2,000 scholarship to the top applicant from either Allen D. Nease or Ponte Vedra High Schools. The SASS is open to juniors and seniors enrolled at either school (including those enrolled in virtual classes due to Covid-19) who have demonstrated their commitment to serving others in our community.

The scholarship was initiated in 2011 and chaired by charter member and club past president Hart until his passing in 2019. It is now named in his honor to celebrate his life of service to his community and to provide recognition to students for their exceptional commitment to service. While the program has evolved over the years, this year's Covid-19 pandemic required a number of important changes to the application and scoring process. The pandemic has reduced traditional volunteer opportunities for teens and the pandemic has resulted in more teens enrolling in virtual classes which limits their direct access to school teachers and staff. The SASS Committee adapted the 2021 application to address these concerns in an effort to ensure all student applicants receive equal and fair consideration.

Interested students need to complete an online application using the following

link: <https://forms.gle/e6qC98y3twcEV-jJJ7>. All applications must be received no later than April 3, 2021.

Newcomers of North St. Johns announce March luncheon

Newcomers of North Saint Johns will hold its next member luncheon on Tuesday, March 16, at Serenata Beach Club, 3175 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd., with doors opening at 11 a.m. The event features entertainment by local Comedian/Magician Mark Alan.

Cost for the luncheon and program is \$30 for members. The meeting begins at 11 a.m. with luncheon service beginning at 11:45 a.m. All reservations must be received by March 8, 2021 and, because of space limitations, an early reservation response is recommended. Covid guidelines are in place.

Contact Sue Aird at sjaird@comcast.net for more information about the group or to register for the luncheon.

ElderSource and AARP present live Facebook program for seniors and caregivers

ElderSource, the Area Agency on Aging and Aging and Disability Resource Center for Northeast Florida, and AARP Florida have collaborated to present a live, monthly 30-minute program on Facebook that features a myriad of entertaining and educational topics for seniors and caregivers.

The next program is scheduled for Thursday, March 18 at 12:30 p.m. and will focus on how caregivers can incorporate self-love and self-care into their health routines.

Launched in August 2020, "Let's Do Lunch" airs on Facebook the third Thursday of each month at 12:30 p.m. and is hosted by ElderSource CEO Linda Levin and Justine Conley, AARP Florida Associate State Director. Topics presented have included the 2020 Census and voting in the fall election, yoga to reduce stress, creating art to experience joy, cooking with an Italian twist and facts and myths about the COVID-19 vaccines.

Visit the ElderSource or AARP Florida Facebook page on Feb. 18 to view the program; past programs can also be accessed on each organization's YouTube Channel. Call ElderSource at (888) 242-4464 for more information.

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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Market Insight



Life is mostly froth and bubble

By Scott Grant
ScottGrant@StJohnsBusinessMonthly.com

There is this story, and it is probably made up, but it is a good story. The story goes that JP Morgan got his shoes shined every Wednesday at the same stand. One day, Morgan overheard the shoeshine boy, who had been polishing Morgan's expensive shoes for years, giving stock tips to a fishmonger. Morgan ran back to his office and sold every stock that he owned, reasoning that "If the shoeshine boys are buying stocks, who else is left?"

The following Monday, the stock market crashed, beginning a multi-year decline that would wipe out fortunes and lead to the Great Depression. Whether or not the Morgan story is true, it is true that it is a story, and one that has been oft repeated to illustrate a belief that small investors enter the market late in the game. One of the reasons the Morgan story seems unlikely is that as the crash began, Morgan and four other major bankers bought stock in an effort to prop things up. Morgan's father had done the same thing during the October Panic of 1907.

The JP Morgan in the story is the son of the JP Morgan who became famous for creating trusts like General Electric, AT&T, and US Steel. Morgan realized that by creating a monopoly, you could charge whatever you liked and make more profits. Morgan created a lot of trusts. The public noticed and so did Teddy Roosevelt, who would go down in history as the "Trust Buster." Roosevelt activated a long dormant law called the Sherman Antitrust Act. Passed in 1890, the Sherman Act was named for its sponsor, Senator John Sherman, brother

of William Tecumseh Sherman, who ravaged Georgia during the Civil War.

The first suit brought by Roosevelt as a "Trust Buster" was launched against a Morgan-owned railroad monopoly. JP went to visit the president and said, "If we have done anything wrong, send your man to my man and they can fix it up." The President did not want to fix it up. Roosevelt sued his fellow socialite; the government won. The case went to the Supreme Court and is remembered today for an Oliver Wendell Holmes dissent that "great cases...make bad law."

The stock market crash of 1929 was precipitated by massive speculation in stocks. The Panic of 1907 by manipulation of the copper market. Today, we see many of the same signs. From crypto currencies to silver to GameStop, speculation is again rampant. Daily, friends on social media dispense market advice to each other.

This is what a bubble feels like. The sad part is that knowing we are in a bubble may be information that is difficult to use. Bubbles have a tendency of lasting longer than anyone imagines. During the dot.com bubble of the late '90s, professional investors began to warn the market was bubbling as early as 1997. That bubble did not finally burst until the year 2000, precipitating a devastating three-year market decline. So, when will this bubble burst? When we least expect it.

Scott A. Grant is a local author, historian, columnist, and speaker. He is president of Standfast Asset Management in Ponte Vedra Beach. He welcomes your comments or questions at scottg@standfastic.com.

SCORE Jacksonville to host webinars for business owners

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

SCORE is a national service organization that supports small businesses nationwide. SCORE has a network of more than 11,000 volunteers operating in more than 340 local chapters around the country. The organization is supported by the US Small Business Administration (SBA).

Here are some upcoming SCORE Jacksonville webinars during March:

March 16, 5:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.:

"How to Set a Price for Your Product or Service." Fee: \$15. Registration link: <https://score.tfaforms.net/17?EventID=a105a000006dF9c>

This workshop will cover five methods of product pricing with step-by-step instructions on how to implement them, including Cost Plus Pricing, Competitive Pricing and Value Based Pricing. We will also discuss how to combine some of these methods to determine a specific price and sales volume while generating a profit amount that you specify as part of the process.

March 18, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.:

"How Do I Develop a Product or Service to Sell?" Fee: \$15. Registra-

tion link: <https://score.tfaforms.net/17?EventID=a105a000006dF1x>

Some people want to run their own business but have not identified a product or service to sell. Others have a product idea but don't know how to build it so customers will want to buy it. To succeed, it is important to develop the ability to select and offer the right products or services that your customers will buy in a competitive market. This seminar will cover generating new product ideas, building product concepts and discuss methods of tailoring your product to the right target market.

March 27, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.:

"How Do I Start a Home Based Business in Jacksonville?" Fee: \$15. Register before March 13 for a \$5 discount. Registration link: <https://score.tfaforms.net/17?EventID=a105a000006dF9Y>

Starting a home based business in Jacksonville can be a daunting task. This seminar will discuss what types of businesses you can (and cannot) operate from your home. We will also show you step-by-step what you need to do to get your business up and running, including getting the necessary registrations, licenses and permits from Jacksonville, Florida and United States government entities.

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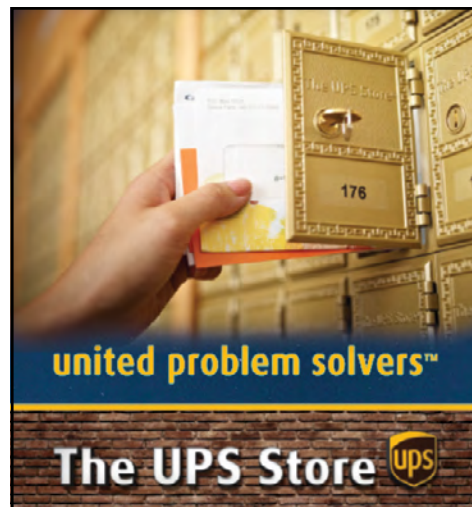
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Sheriff Hardwick and Youth Resource team visit Cunningham Creek

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com



Photos courtesy Minda Gordon

Sheriff Rob Hardwick's team participates with the students.

Thursday, Feb. 4 was an exciting day for the students at Cunningham Creek Elementary School: Sheriff Rob Hardwick and his Youth Resource team visited students in the Sound Connections® Music Therapy program to learn more about this outreach initiative. Sound Connections® Music Therapy is provided to six elementary schools' Exceptional Student Education departments in the St. Johns County School District by the Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach.

During his visit, the sheriff and his team participated in a variety of music therapy activities to promote improved motor skills, communication skills, social skills and teamwork. They didn't miss a beat when handed drums and Boomwackers to work and play alongside the students. There was much laughter and discussion throughout the morning, which resulted in new relationships formed between the students and the team.

Music therapy, an allied health profession, is the clinical and evidence-based use of music therapy interventions by a board-certified music therapist to address the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. Sound Connections® started more than 15 years ago when Minda Gordon, MT-BC, now manager of the program, approached Cunningham Creek Elementary to volunteer as the parent of a student at the school. The teachers quickly saw the benefit of music therapy and forged a connection with

the Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach, which has actively raised close to \$1,000,000 over the last 15 years to support the program.

"The Cultural Center is proud to support this program. There are measurable results in place. We have heard the stories from participating parents; we have seen the love and dedication from the therapists first-hand. Music therapy works!" said Donna Guzzo, Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach president and executive director.

The program has three board-certified music therapists who serve more than 300 students at Cunningham Creek Elementary, Ocean Palms, PV/PV, Valley Ridge Academy, The Webster School, and Osceola Elementary.

Gordon and the other therapists are not employees of the school district; rather, their services are provided at no cost to the district or the parents through the Sound Connections® Music Therapy program, which is fully funded by grants and donations from the community. Sheriff Hardwick generously offered support for the program through the Friday Food Truck program at the courthouse.

For more information about Sound Connections® Music Therapy, or to donate to the program, contact Minda Gordon at minda.gordon@stjohns.k12.fl.us or visit <https://ccpvb.org/arts-outreach/outreach-programs>.

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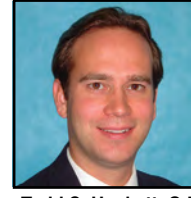
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Photo courtesy Scott LaRochelle
Nease NJROTC's Color Guard team Daniel Mahoney, Isabella Rivera, John Alves and Brandon Donovan perform their winning routine at the Stockbridge Drill Meet.

Nease NJROTC cadets roll to second drill championship

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

The Navy's JROTC powerhouse drill program at Nease continued its winning ways, traveling to North Georgia and capturing the Stockbridge Drill Meet overall championship against 10 other Georgia schools on Feb. 6. The team had never previously competed at the competition hosted by Stockbridge NJROTC; however, with several meets being canceled across the state, the team seized the opportunity to travel north in search of a drill competition when a last-minute cancellation created an opening.

"We'll compete anytime, anywhere," said battalion commander Brandon Donovan. "Stockbridge hosted a fantastic meet. I'm sure we'll be back there again next year if possible."

Nease's drill team needed to bring up several cadets from the practice squad as five cadets fell victim to COVID-19 contact tracing quarantining less than

24 hours before departure. Cadets Benjamin Rider and Diego Molina joined the Armed Exhibition and Basic Drill teams and cadets Lauren Villareal, Hailey Pitches and Rylie Larkin filled in for the Unarmed Exhibition Team. Both exhibition teams require memorizing and learning hundreds of intricate and precise drill movements.

"I am so proud of the cadets," said naval science instructor Gunnery Sergeant Duane Hanson. "We practiced until nearly midnight in an empty parking lot Friday night polishing up the routines."

The hard work and practice paid dividends as Armed Exhibition placed first and Unarmed Exhibition placed second in the competition. Nease took home first place in nine of the 12 events, including Drill Overall, Unarmed Basic, Color Guard, Athletics Overall, Pushups, Situps, 16 x100 Relay, and Personnel Inspection.

Cadets Isabella Rivera and Amber Vidler placed first individually in Female Sit Ups (312) and Pushups (90), while Brady Anderson and Brodie Mongon placed second in Male Sit Ups (190) and Pushups (85). Cadet Ben Prohovsky placed second in Academics.

Nease is currently the No. 1 ranked NJROTC drill team in Area-12 (59 programs covering northern Florida and the state of Georgia), having won the Area-12 Drill Championship each of the past six years.

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As vaccines outpace COVID-19 infections, be wary of vaccine-related scams

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

As of mid-February, the total number of doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered in Florida is now outpacing the total number of Floridians who have been reported to have contracted the novel virus. As the state starts to turn the corner, Attorney General Ashley Moody issued a Consumer Alert to warn Floridians about COVID-19 vaccination scams. With the continuing rollout of vaccines and increasing number of Floridians seeking to secure appointments, scammers have devised multiple methods attempting to take advantage of the highly anticipated vaccination distribution.

Below are a few emerging COVID-19 vaccine scams reported by consumers and the news media in Florida and nationwide:

Paid appointments: Scammers may post fraudulent appointment booking pages or call, text or email offering to set up a vaccine appointment or expedite access to a vaccine appointment for a fee. Know that any offer requiring payment in order to place the consumer on a waitlist, secure an appointment or expedite access to the vaccine is a scam.

Supposed in-home vaccinations through Medicare: Fraudsters claiming to be from Medicare may offer seniors in-home vaccination appointments and request a senior's Medicare card in order to schedule, but this too is a scam. While Medicare cards no longer use Social Security numbers, the card number is still private data that

could be used to commit Medicare fraud and should be protected. Additionally, know that Medicare representatives will never visit seniors at home nor call to sell something.

Scam appointment calls: Scammers may also call would-be victims posing as county health officials or a vaccination site representative setting up an appointment. Rather than requesting payment, these callers are seeking private information to be used to commit identity theft or fraud. These scam artists may even tell victims to arrive at a known local vaccination site at a specific date and time to bolster the ruse. Be wary of anyone soliciting personal information — such as a Social Security number, Medicare card number or credit or banking information — in order to secure an appointment.

Identity theft using vaccination cards: Do not share vaccination cards online. Vaccination cards issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention include the recipient's full name, birthdate and vaccine location — information scammers can use to hack online accounts or commit identity fraud. Additionally, these cards may be used to create convincing-looking fake vaccine documentation.

Anyone who suspects a COVID-19 vaccine-related scam should report it to the Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.

Bartram Trail Library scheduled to close temporarily

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com



The Bartram Trail Branch Library, part of the St. Johns County Public Library System, is scheduled to temporarily close at 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 6, 2021 for a roof replacement project.

The 14,980 square foot library, which opened in 1997, will undergo a project to replace the roof, which is over 20 years old. Because this project addresses the entire building, the branch must remain closed to staff and patrons throughout its duration; this includes the parking lot. Work is anticipated to last approximately seven weeks with an expected reopen date in late April 2021.

During the closure, an annex location will be staffed by Bartram Trail Branch employees at 725 Flora Branch Blvd. This location will be open for curbside hold pick-up only. Beginning Wednesday, March 16, the annex hours will

be: Tuesday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Due to space constraints and no access to the library building, the Bartram Trail Library Annex will not be accepting returns.

Maribeth Beck, Bartram Trail Branch Manager, said, “Bartram Trail Library staff understand this temporary closure will inconvenience patrons during an already unprecedented time, but we are happy to offer a curbside service for holds pick-up. When the library re-opens in April of 2021, it will be with a beautiful new roof to protect us during the upcoming rainy months.”

Items will not be due during the closure and no fines will accrue during this time.

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Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

Ali Pressel

St. Johns County's 2021 Teacher of the Year, Creekside High School's Ali Pressel, grew up a self-proclaimed tomboy in southern New Jersey — known as the "Garden State" for a reason.

Pressel said she thrived there and was that kid who was always outside in nature — getting dirty and tired. She became interested in environmental science at an early age and wanted to be "Jane of the Jungle." By her junior year in high school, she talked her parents into letting her attend the School for Field Studies, along with mostly college students, in Costa Rica.

She said this adventure opened her eyes to a new interest, sustainable development and how humans impact the environment. She earned a bachelor of science degree in Human Ecology from Rutgers University and during her time there had an internship with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, which led to her first job there after graduation. Her first teaching position was with a high school in Maryland where she taught biology and human anatomy before moving to Florida due to her husband's job relocation in 2007. After a one year stint teaching eighth grade science at Fruit Cove Middle School, she became one of the original teachers at Creekside High School. By the school's second year, she became the Academy of Engineer-

ing and Environmental Sciences' lead teacher, a position she holds to this day. She and her husband Josh have two cats — and Ali is always known to take in other creatures in need.



Photo courtesy Ali Pressel
Ali Pressel

Q: How did you segue into the teaching profession?

A: I took a brief hiatus from my job at the New Jersey DEP to take an internship at a small coastal town in North Carolina, where I developed a sea turtle nest evaluation program for volunteers. I found that I had an interest in environmental education for both children and adults and so I began

taking the required education classes to become a teacher. Before I finished my degree, I was hired by a school district in Maryland where I was thrown right in to teaching.

Q: What do you like best about teaching?

A: Definitely the relationships I am able to build, especially with Creekside's Academy students, whom I see for all four years. I enjoy watching them grow and mature. By the time they graduate, we are very close knit and our classroom is truly a community. I also enjoy the one-on-one relationships I have with our business partners, who help the Academy by providing internships for students, developing students' interviewing skills and serving as guest speakers. They become like my partner teachers. Since

2008, our Academy Advisory Board has grown from 12 to 30 business partners.

Q: What are some of the benefits of being affiliated with the National Geographic Society for your students at Creekside?

A: As a National Geographic Certified Educator, I am able to partner with the National Geographic Society to help students with service learning projects. For example, as part of the National Geographic Explorer Exchange Program, last year my students partnered with a scientist in Uganda who worked in a National Park trying to save lions from poachers. The students helped develop maps that the park rangers could use. Also, a few times a month my students engage with the National Geographic Explorer Classroom where they join, online during class, with a scientist from somewhere in the world. They have been able to ask questions of marine biologists, forest ecologists and scientists performing bird migration studies, to name a few.

Q: How did you find out that you were the Teacher of the Year?

A: It was all such a surprise. First, my peers at Creekside nominated me for the Creekside Teacher of the Year, which is quite a recognition. Then that information was shared with the district office and I was surprised to be named a finalist for the county. Then, I was absolutely floored to be named the St. Johns County Teacher of the Year. The other finalists were so deserving. I'm just really honored and flattered.

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Interested in being featured? Email Martie Thompson at editor@FloridaNewsLine.com

Pet Food cont. from pg. 1

and linen items will be distributed to local animal non-profit organizations, with some food allocated for local food pantries for clients with pets.

Monetary donations to purchase pet food can be made by visiting www.stjohnscares.org. Individuals wishing to hold a neighborhood pet food drive should contact president@stjohnscares.org. Following is a list of host donation collection sites in northern St. Johns County:

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St. Johns County Public Library Branches: Bartram Trail and Ponte Vedra;

Ponte Vedra Beach: Primrose School at Crosswater Parkway, VyStar;

Palencia: The UPS Store at Palencia Commons;

St. Johns: Bartram Academy, Bartram Trail High School, Goddard School St. Johns, Kiddie Academy St Johns, Pet Supermarket, Plantation Dry Cleaners, Rebel Yoga, The UPS Store at Julington Village

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Nutrition Check

Nutrition Check: Fiber, what's the big deal?

By Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RDN, LDN, CLC and Crystal Liebenberg BS
mail@floridanewslines.com

We've all heard that dietary fiber is good for us, but do you actually know why that is? To answer this question, let's talk about what fiber is and how we can add more of it to our diet. Fiber is the part of a plant that cannot be completely digested in the human body. As fiber exits the stomach and enters the colon, our intestinal bacteria can feed off it, and then it is ultimately excreted. It might seem counterintuitive to say that we need to eat more of what we cannot digest or absorb, but there are many health benefits that come along with increasing your fiber intake.

Fiber helps maintain bowel health by regulating bowel movements so that they are not too hard or too loose, which decreases the risk of developing diverticulitis (inflammation of the colon) and colon cancer. Fiber also increases the weight and size of your stool making it easier to pass, decreasing the chance of constipation. Additionally, high-fiber diets may lower cholesterol levels and benefit the heart by reducing inflammation and hypertension. Finally, fiber tends to make us feel full quicker, stay satisfied longer, and helps control blood sugar levels as it can slow the absorption of glucose.

Here are a few simple ways you can increase your fiber intake:

- 1** Choose whole grain options. Look for the whole grain symbol when choosing items such as bread, pasta, cereals, and other carbohydrate rich foods.
- 2** Eat the skin of your fruits and vegetables instead of peeling it off. The skins contain not only ample amounts of fiber, but also extra vitamins and minerals.
- 3** Sprinkle some seeds and/or nuts over snacks and meals like salads, smoothie bowls, oatmeal, yogurt, etc.
- 4** Add berries to your meals such as blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries.
- 5** Eat more beans. Beans are a good source of fiber and they are also high in protein. Some bean-rich meals include hummus, chili, three bean salad, black beans burgers, bean stew, and bean soup.

Kristen K. Hicks-Roof Ph.D., RDN, LDN is an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Brooks College of Health, University of North Florida.

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The Pantry Raiders

Spring ahead with fresh flavors

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Now is the time to trade in those hearty, filling dishes that are perfect for cold winter nights for lighter fare. Recipes like “Pasta Primavera” from “Seasoned America” (William Morrow and Company, Inc.) by Chef Paul Prudhomme can be brought out in spring and enjoyed throughout the warmer seasons. In Italian, “primavera” means “spring,” making this classic, vegetable-infused pasta dish a favorite this time of year. The vegetable inclusions below can be switched out for your own favorite produce as well.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Pasta Primavera

Pasta Primavera

Makes about 8 cups

Seasoning Mix:

- 2 ½ tsp. dried sweet basil leaves
- 1 ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. dried thyme leaves
- ¾ tsp. white pepper
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. onion powder
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 1 cup thin strips prosciutto
- 2 cups cauliflower florets

- 2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
- ½ cup sliced carrots (cut on the diagonal)
- 2 cups sliced zucchini
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 tsp. minced fresh garlic
- 1 cup asparagus tips or ¾ cups snow peas
- 1 cup chopped green onions
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 9 oz. of your favorite pasta

Combine the seasoning mix ingredients thoroughly in a small bowl.

Heat olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over high heat. When oil is very hot, add the prosciutto, cauliflower, mushrooms, carrots, and zucchini. Add the butter and, as it melts, stir in the garlic and the seasoning mix. Stir in asparagus tips or snow peas and green onions. Stir well and cook just until the vegetables are crisp-tender, about 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in the cream and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to medium and cook until the sauce has thickened a bit, about 3 minutes.

Cook the pasta according to package directions; drain. Add the cooked pasta to the skillet, toss well and remove from the heat. Serve immediately.



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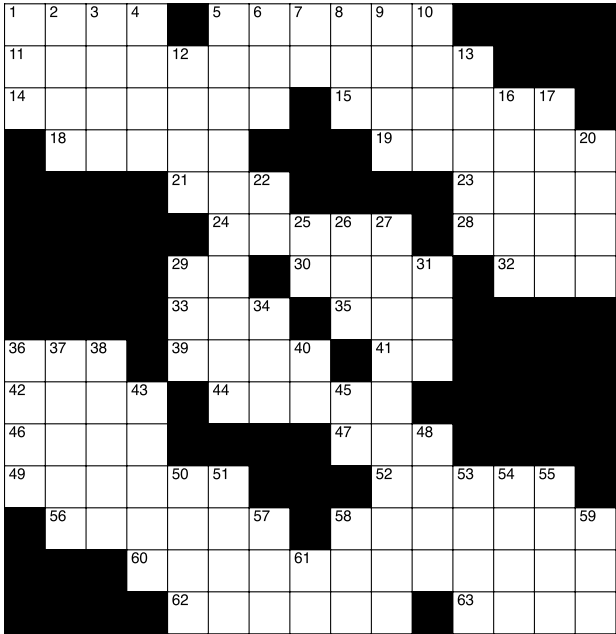
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. One of Noah's sons
- 5. Openings
- 11. Rising from the dead
- 14. Expressions for humorous effect
- 15. North American country
- 18. Flowed over
- 19. Tags
- 21. Long-lasting light bulb
- 23. Off-Broadway theater award
- 24. Khoikhoi peoples
- 28. Beloved movie pig
- 29. South Dakota
- 30. Tai language
- 32. Get free of
- 33. Afflict
- 35. Transmits genetic information from DNA
- 36. Commercials
- 39. Digits

CLUES DOWN

- 1. A title of respect in India
- 2. His and ___
- 3. Employee stock ownership plan
- 4. A type of bond (abbr.)
- 5. Acting as if you are
- 6. Affirmative
- 7. Not caps
- 8. Type of medication
- 9. Monetary unit
- 10. Private school in New York
- 12. Small stream
- 13. A person of wealth
- 16. Exclude
- 17. Someone who vouches for you
- 20. Vegetable part
- 22. Gov't lawyer
- 25. Term to address a woman
- 26. Swiss river
- 27. About senator
- 29. ___ Paulo, city
- 31. Native American tribe
- 34. "Titanic" actor
- 36. Campaign for students' rights (abbr.)
- 37. Capital of Senegal
- 38. Slang for military leader

- 40. Football's big game
- 43. Women who threw themselves on funeral pyres
- 45. Equally
- 48. Forest animal
- 50. Heavy stoves
- 51. Releasing hormone (abbr.)
- 53. Song
- 54. Type of pickle
- 55. Offer in return for money
- 57. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 58. Burns wood (abbr.)
- 59. Beloved singer Charles
- 61. Three-toed sloth



Solve the code to discover words related to frozen foods. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 22 = E)

A. 21 16 22 22 3 22 16
Clue: Cold storage

B. 15 22 21 8 9 1 22 16 7
Clue: Extra portions

C. 21 15 5 7 2
Clue: Done quickly; in a ___

D. 20 12 22
Clue: Frozen water

FROZEN FOODS WORD SEARCH

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

WORDS

- BURGERS
- CAKES
- DESSERT
- FISH
- FRENCH FRIES
- GARLIC BREAD
- HASH BROWNS
- ICE CREAM
- LEFTOVERS
- MEALS
- NUGGETS
- PANCAKES
- PASTA
- PIZZA
- POT PIE
- POTSTICKERS
- POULTRY
- SANDWICHES
- TOASTER CAKES
- VEGETABLES
- WAFFLES
- WHIPPED TOPPING

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

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# Virtual Black History exhibit published by Clerk of the Circuit Court's Office

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Brandon J. Patty has announced the publication of an exhibit focusing on events involving local Black residents via recorded documents in the county's deed books.

"The African American community has a rich and complex history in

St. Johns County that sometimes is overshadowed by our Spanish roots," said Clerk Historian, Dr. Susan Parker. "Leveraging the Clerk's vast archives can bring to light some surprising and enlightening stories from our past."

"The history of our county is a tapestry of individuals and families all seeking to build their lives," said Patty. "Our office is charged

with recording and maintaining significant life events, like those found in the exhibit, and we're honored to be able to share these important documents with the public."

The clerk's office began recording documents when Florida became a United States territory in 1821. Residents would bring their original documents to the clerk's office to be re-

corded, the clerk would enter the information verbatim and return the original document to its owner. Parker, the clerk historian, was able to locate records showing free Blacks purchased, sold, and mortgaged property and enslaved Blacks who were bought, sold, and mortgaged.

Visit <https://stjohnsclerk.com/black-history-exhibit/> to access the exhibit.

# Help save migratory birds by turning off lights at night

Northeast Florida is the second-largest area that birds migrate along the Atlantic Coast. Undertaking such a long journey comes with its challenges, but one significant hurdle has had a huge impact on bird populations over the past several years: the increase of artificial light shining into the night sky. According to the National Audubon Society, 70 percent of North American bird species migrate and 80 percent

of those species migrate at night — primarily small songbirds. How can you help migratory birds during their Spring (February – May) and Fall (September – November) Migrations?

- Turn off your lights during the darkest period of night — between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. during migration seasons.
- Direct your lights to point downward, instead of upward into the sky.

- Switch floodlights to timed lights or motion sensor lights.
- Encourage the businesses you frequent to turn off their lights or reduce the amount of time their lights are on at night.

Source: *Lights Out Northeast Florida, a collaborative partnership between Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, Duval Audubon Society, and St. Johns County Audubon Society.*

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# Fishing

## Capt. David's Fishing Report

By Captain David Lifka  
mail@floridanewslines.com

If you fish, and have lived here for more than a few years, then you are probably getting excited. If you are new to our area and fish, or a recent transplant who wants to start fishing, then it's time for you too to get excited. March has arrived, and it is officially spring for our part of the state. That means if you fish, or you are looking to get started, now is the best time of year.

Just like birds, many fish have begun their migrations northward to our area waters. Other species of fish are waking up from their winter dormant retreats of deeper, warmer water and are hungry and ready to spawn.

You don't have to look far to get started fishing this time of year. The Mayport Jetties, the surf, the St. Johns River, the Intracoastal Waterway, and area creeks and streams are all coming alive as water spring progresses and water temperatures rise.

For freshwater, bass, bream, and catfish will be your main catches. For saltwater, drum, whiting, sheepshead, pompano, and bluefish are likely to make the early springtime scene. For our brackish area of the St. Johns River you can expect almost any species of freshwater fish along with a handful of saltwater species.

Freshwater fishing is a great way to get started, especially for kids. Equipment can be simple and inexpensive. Live worms, bread, or even hot dogs can be used for bait. No boat is needed, as any shore or bank to a nearby creek or pond will pro-

vide all the access needed. Same accesses would apply to the bass fisherman, with a plastic worm on a Carolina rig, or even better, a live shiner on a float.

If you're ready to give saltwater fishing a try, then the beach is the perfect place to begin. Again, no boat is needed, and costs are minimal. An average size rod with a fish finder rig and dead shrimp for bait is all that is required. Springtime fishing in the surf is probably the best and easiest time of year for whiting and blues, with other species following close behind.

Boat owners are fortunate to have the ability to target varieties of species throughout the year. But still, the month of March and springtime also offer boaters fishing opportunities that don't necessarily exist the rest year. Just off the beach, boaters can expect a Spanish mackerel run that will provide the best Spanish mackerel fishing for the year. Inshore starting at the jetties, sheepshead, black drum, and reds will be available with more black drum in the Intracoastal Waterway and throughout the lower St. Johns River.

Fishing Report: Largemouth bass are your top contenders on the freshwater scene. Fishing the surf is almost a sure thing for nice catches of whiting, blues, and pompano. Local bait shops should have all the information needed to get you started and even where to go.

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

# Gardening

## Signs of Spring

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewslines.com

It is early February as I write and already there are signs of spring, with redbuds and maples blooming, and honey bees taking their fill of pollen and nectar. Bees and other insects are also enjoying the profusion of flowers of some Chinese greens, another valuable early food source. Our local population of hummingbirds can be spotted, if fleetingly, feeding on still-flowering shrimp plants.

While many lawns are probably still in winter dormancy, by early March we will be seeing them showing more green. As we go into the seasonally drier spring, it is well worth ensuring that irrigation systems are functioning properly. Check out [tinyurl.com/2xx6fmcz](https://tinyurl.com/2xx6fmcz) for articles covering many aspects of how best to manage your lawn and landscape irrigation. It does need stressing that flower, vegetable, and shrub beds need different watering schedules to lawns.

It is also worth reminding ourselves about fertilization best practices. One widely observed, but not advisable, lawn practice is the use of "weed and feed" products. While it's tempting to be able to apply something once, and be done, any seasonal weed problems should either be tackled before they emerge (using a pre-emergent product) or spot-treated in the case of perennial weeds. Applying a weed and feed product at the correct time to deal with weeds would mean the lawn fertilizer component being applied too early, before the grass is fully growing and able to take advantage of the fertilizer. That is really doing your lawn a disservice when

it's trying to come back from its winter rest, as well as being a waste of money. See [tinyurl.com/1v22ian9](https://tinyurl.com/1v22ian9) and links therein for more information.

Many people enjoy seeing wildlife around their homes, and in Florida we are lucky to have some beautiful birds all year round, but especially during spring and fall migration. I had been waiting to see the more usual characters, like American robins, which in the past have descended in flocks to rummage through leaf litter, and they duly arrived on Feb. 13. Just a few days before, I was lucky to spot cedar waxwings ([tinyurl.com/12fnu9kn](https://tinyurl.com/12fnu9kn)) high in my neighbor's bare-branched hickory. They enjoy fruits of trees like the loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*) and Carolina cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*), but seemed to be zipping in and out of the trees after insects. Overwintering birds include the black and white warbler (<https://tinyurl.com/2es2l2zx>), which is so striking, and also cheeky yellow-rumped warblers (<https://tinyurl.com/qagdk15o>).

By expanding my plant palette I hope to attract a wider variety of insects, especially pollinators, but with a quick draining sandy soil, they will need to have at most a medium requirement for water, and preferably lower needs. Native plants will feature, such as those found in this Xerces Society recommended list: <https://tinyurl.com/44693m98>, and of course Florida-Friendly flowers have a place too (<https://tinyurl.com/3rynujby>).



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# Travel

## Grand Lake and Rocky Mountain National Park

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewsline.com

John Denver's "Rocky Mountain High" speaks to the euphoria of the Colorado landscape, capturing serenity when he sings, "The shadow from the

starlight is softer than a lullaby, Rocky Mountain high." You can get that feeling, warmed by ideal summer temperatures and transported by breathtaking scenery — just head to the

resort town of Grand Lake and Rocky Mountain National Park. You'll find them a two-hour drive from Denver.

Grand Lake sits north of the Colorado River headwaters, at the base of Shadow Mountain. The tiny town, established in 1881, boasts a year-round population of only 282, but swells during warm summer months bringing visitors, many of whom return year after year.



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Driving into Rocky Mountain National Park.

stand-up paddleboards. The lake offers the perfect place to drop a fishing line in search of cold-water varieties, mainly sockeye salmon and trout.

Landlubbers spend relaxing afternoons on the Grand Lake beach's sandy shores, enjoying temperatures in the 70s to mid-80s. But only those brave enough dare a swim in the frigid water.

The Rocky Mountain Repertory Theater offers a contrasting bonus. The long-running theater brings in professional actors and actresses and puts on top-notch full productions of Broadway favorites.

One of the biggest draws to Grand Lake is its status as the western gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park. Colorado's crown jewel encompasses more than 265,000 acres of wilderness — prime territory for viewing wildlife, hiking, camping, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Trail Ridge Road, nicknamed the "Highway to the Sky," ranks as the highest continuous paved road in the U.S., connecting Grand Lake to Estes Park. Bring a jacket and get ready to spin up and down 48 miles of twisty, hairpin turns, and steeply graded pavement edging sheer drops.

In no time, you'll enter the aspen forest at mid-mountain. Snap selfies at the Continental Divide sign along the Milner Pass. The Divide marks the split where rainwater falls either to the East or the West.

Expect your ears to pop and whoa's and ohs (or perhaps something stronger) to spill from passengers. Even if you don't get out of your car, the Rocky Mountain National Park smacks you in the face. The bold scenery envelops you and sends imagination soaring.

The tree line dwindles, and winds pick up near the summit. Stop at the Alpine Visitors Center (elevation 11,796 feet) to see tundra exhibits speaking to the altitude's harsh conditions. The Trail Ridge store offers indoor bathrooms, hot coffee, and a



The author at the Continental Divide.

Though small, history runs deep. The village aptly sits on the shores of Grand Lake at the surprising elevation of 8,369 feet. It's home to the world's highest yacht club, the Grand Lake Yacht Club. They annually host a race whose competitors vie for the ornate silver, ever so prestigious trophy, donated by legendary tea purveyor but less-well-known yachtsman Sir Thomas

J. Lipton. Grand Lake is indeed remarkable, ranking as the deepest and largest natural body of water in Colorado.

The old-fashioned boardwalks add a touch of Western and boating flare along Grand Avenue. Look for hitching posts and Wild West-style architecture, art galleries, boutiques, and gift shops. Stop into the casual restaurants and watering holes, often featuring live music.

Naturally, water activities remain the big draw. The marina handles boat rentals of all types: kayaks, canoes, paddle boats, and



Grand Lake.

National Park gift shop. You can hike a short distance to the trail summit from here.

Back in the car, begin your descent toward Estes Park, a ride more enthralling than the uphill. The panorama changes around each turn, and thankfully there are many pullouts and small parking lots. Sharp, snow capped mountains, rolling hillsides, and deep valleys extol the mountain beauty and diversity. It's a Colorado Rocky Mountain high for sure.

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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