

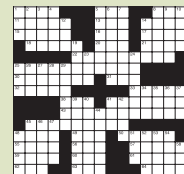
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HUGS St. Johns expects to clothe 500+ local kids-in-need this upcoming school year

By Brette Reiman
mail@floridanewline.com

Local nonprofit HUGS St. Johns expects another busy school year providing emergency food, clothing, school supplies and more to hundreds of St. Johns County children-in-need. Founded in 2009, HUGS (formerly Hugs Across the County) works closely with St. Johns County school counselors, as well as nonprofit partners like the Betty Griffin Center domestic violence shelter to provide children-in-need with basic necessities, from food to toiletries.

According to Jessica Gamble, child advocate with the Betty Griffin Center safety shelter, "The emergency clothing bags from HUGS help provide a sense of normalcy for the children, and ease the difficult transition into our shelter by meeting some of their most basic needs."

This year, HUGS expects to pack emergency clothing bags

HUGS cont. on pg. 2

Creeks Crushers 8U win State Championship

By John Dross
mail@floridanewline.com

The Creeks Crushers 8U softball team won the Babe Ruth Florida State Championship, held June 23 – 27 in Lake City, Fla. During the five-day tournament, the Crushers faced little resistance as they finished with a record of 5 – 0 and outscored their opponents by a combined total of 58 – 20.

In Game 1, the Crushers faced off against the Oviedo Blaze. After giving up five runs in the first inning, the Crushers' bats came alive, scoring 11 unanswered runs on their way to a 17 – 9 victory. The offensive efforts were led by Isla Kruayai and Braylee Rosette, who each collected five hits.

In Game 2, against the Wrigley 8U All Stars, the Crushers pounded out 10 runs on 19 hits, while allowing only two runs to the opposition. The defense was the key to victory, as the Crushers only allowed nine hits to Wrigley. Chloe Harkins and Grace Cordero played outstanding defense and collected multiple hits each to lead the way.

In Game 3, the Crushers cruised to a 12 – 6 victory against the Lutz All Stars. Lorelei Bascelli, Jordan Williams, and Camyrn Kruayai shined on offense with big hits late in the contest to put the game out of reach.



Photos courtesy John Dross

The Creeks Crushers are the 8 and under 2022 State Champions.

In Game 4, the Crushers faced off against the Debarry All Stars. A tightly contested ballgame through the first three innings quickly turned in favor of the Crushers with a six run explosion in the bottom of the fourth inning. Avery Brown led the charge with an RBI single to open the scoring. The Crushers' suffocating defense was the difference in the game. The Crushers' catcher, Ella Hofrichter, was the star of

the game on defense. A late charge by Debarry was thwarted by a tremendous play behind the plate to stop a would-be rally. With a final score of 13 – 3, the Crushers set the tone heading into the championship game.

The championship game was a rematch against the Wrigley All Stars. The Crushers collected six runs on 17 hits in the contest. Once again, the Crushers displayed outstanding defense, shutting out the Wrigley All Stars while allowing only five total hits. Timely hitting by the Crushers was the key to victory. Emma Ash belted two doubles, leading the team in extra base hits. Georgia Griffin came through in the clutch with a two-run triple in the fifth inning to extend the Crushers lead to 5 – 0. This was followed by an RBI single from Aubrey Dross to all but seal the victory.

Along with the State Championship, the Crushers now have the opportunity to represent the state of Florida in the Babe Ruth National Championship Tournament to be held in late July.



Photos courtesy John Dross

The Creeks Crushers finished with a record of 5 – 0 and outscored their opponents by a combined total of 58 – 20.

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HUGS cont. from pg. 1

for more than 500 local children who face poverty, homelessness or domestic violence. Each bag includes five to seven outfits, new underwear, new shoes, full size toiletries and school supplies so that children can attend school with dignity.

“Each year in the St. Johns County School District, approximately 800 students are identified as homeless per the McKinney-Vento Act. Some of the many priority needs of identified students are clothing and hygiene supplies,” said Michael Israel, St. Johns County McKinney-Vento Liaison. “HUGS St. Johns has been a huge support in meeting the needs of hundreds of students each year. Their thoughtfulness is shown in each package they provide, and the sense of pride that our identified students have when they can put on a fresh set of clothing items each day is invaluable.”

HUGS clothing program volunteers

help organize its clothing warehouse, pack emergency clothing bags for kids referred by counselors, or deliver clothing bags to local schools. HUGS also appreciates when neighbors, book clubs, and civic groups coordinate clothing, toiletry or food drives for the organization.

“As an all-volunteer organization, we cannot do what we do without the support of the incredibly huge-hearted St. Johns County community,” said volunteer clothing program coordinator Karen Burke. “Our tiny team especially needs more volunteers to help us with our very busy and impactful clothing program — even just one to two hours each month is a huge help!”

For more information about volunteering or donating, HUGS can be reached at info@stjohnshugs.org or (904) 580-4847. Visit www.stjohnshugs.org or follow on social media for more information.



Photo courtesy Brette Reiman
HUGS board member Martine Smith, who is with the St. Johns County School District.



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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Sally Jean!



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Favorite Activities:
Taking naps and chasing her favorite ball.

Favorite Treat:
Blueberry Greenies

Favorite Friends:
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How did your BFF get her name:
We thought the name Sally Jean was just perfect for her.

Do you have a cute pet? Send us your pet's picture and the answer to the five questions above before the 10th of the month. Also tell us you saw the BFF contest in The CreekLine! Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in The CreekLine! Email editor@floridanewslines.com to enter your pet.



Primary Election Guide in this issue! Pages 11 - 15

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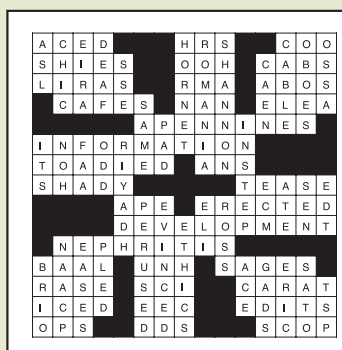
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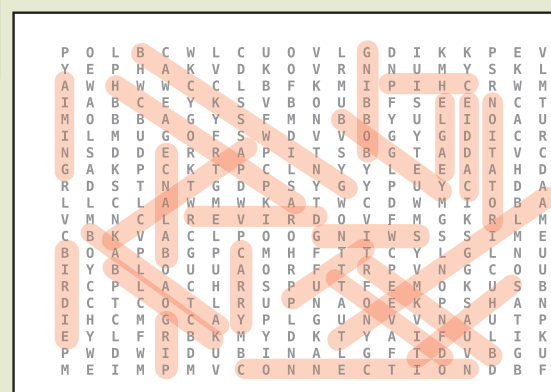


Last month's Mystery Photo was the entrance to Durbin Crossing



Answers: A. tee B. clubs C. course D. handicap

Answers to our Puzzles PG 18



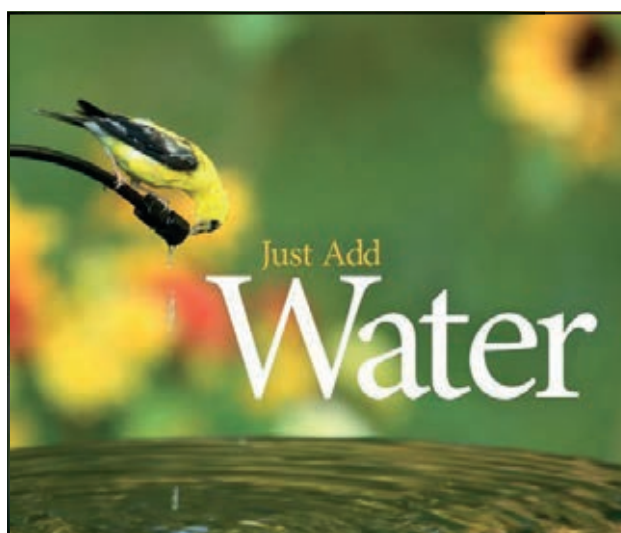
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August

Community Calendar What's Happening in St. Johns

Trout Creek Senior Center offers activities for seniors on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 6795 Collier Road in Orangedale. Cards, crafts and games start each day at 9 a.m. with trivia, nutrition/exercise, Bunco and Bingo among the additional activities before lunch at 11:45 a.m. each day. Contact Program Coordinator Anne Marie Forsythe at (904) 552-1611 for more information.

Playing HOOKie, a group for those who enjoy knitting, crocheting and looming (with all items donated to charity) meets every Wednesday from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. at the outside eating area at Belgian Sweet House Bistro, 12276 San Jose Blvd. (next to Harbor Chase). Visit the group's Facebook page (Playing HOOKie) or email playing-hookie31@gmail.com for more information.

Jokers Wild, a local card group, plays the game of "Hand, Knee, and Foot" on Wednesdays. If you are interested in joining, please call (904) 230-6962 and leave a message.

2nd: Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, Aug. 2 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church in the Loft on the County Dock Road side of the church at 2501 Loretto Road. The guild will celebrate its 35th birthday with an '80s themed

dinner served for \$10 per person. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

4th: The Jacksonville Camera Club will meet on Aug. 4 and Aug. 18 from 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. at Shepherd of the Woods Southside, 7860 Southside Blvd. There is a social "hour" of 30 to 45 minutes before the meeting. Visit jax.jaxcameraclub.com for more information.

8th: The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable will meet on Monday, Aug. 8 at 12 p.m. via Zoom. The meeting will feature guest speaker Reuben Franklin, Public Works Director, City of St. Augustine. Email info@sjcroundtable.org to register for the meeting or visit www.sjcroundtable.org for more information about the St. Johns County Civic Roundtable.

10th: First Day of School for St. Johns County Schools.

13th: Bartram Trail Friends of the Library Book Sale will be held at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd., on Aug. 13 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

13th - 20th: Early Voting location at the Julington Creek Annex, 725 Flora Branch Blvd., Aug. 13 - Aug. 20, from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. daily.

14th: St. Patrick's Episcopal Church will host its annual "Back-to-School Blessing Sunday" worship service on Sunday, August 14 at 9:30 a.m. at 1221 State Road 13. Students and teachers returning to school should bring their backpacks and they will receive a blessing for the year ahead. Visit www.stpatricksepiscopal.org for more information.

15th: The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, Aug. 15 at the First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. The meeting will feature an exchange with Friendship Guild. Members of Friendship Guild will present a trunk show of quilts made by members. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

16th: Happy Hookers crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on Aug. 16 from 5:30 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. The group crochets or knits blankets for cancer patients at area hospitals. All skill levels are

welcome. Visit www.sjcpls.org or call (904) 827-6960.

19th: Adult Craft - Fall tote bag will be held at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, at the entrance to Julington Creek Plantation, on Aug. 19 from 10 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Paint will be involved in decorating a tote bag for fall, so dress accordingly. Supplies provided by Bartram Trail Branch Friends of the Library. Registration is required; call (904) 827-6960 beginning on Aug. 1 to sign up.

20th: Herbs for the Wise Woman will be offered on Aug. 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 at (386) 972-1891.

27th: Dress a Girl Around the World at Bartram Trail Branch Library on Saturday, Aug. 27 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Learn to make dresses and shorts to make clothing for girls around the world. You can pick up a kit to create at home, or turn in dresses you created to the library. The organization also accepts fabric and notion donations.



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with St. Johns County School Board Member Patrick Canan, District 5

Q: Do you have any information about the construction bid for the new K – 8 School NN?

A: We approved the bid for this school to be built in the Shearwater neighborhood. It's a lot of money; more than we've ever paid before. This school is scheduled to open for the 2024 – 25 school year.

Q: What is the status of K – 8 Schools OO and PP?

A: They are on hold for now. We definitely have a need for these schools and will be revisiting them in the near future.

Q: Can you give any insight into the state statistics released over the summer?

A: St. Johns County was once again the No. 1 school district in the State of Florida, which is something to celebrate. I believe it's the 14th year in a row. I always say that a school's grade or a school district's grade from testing doesn't necessarily signify success, but it certainly an indicator, especially considering the growth we've experienced. This year, we had 29 "A" rated schools, seven "B" rated schools and three "C" rated schools, with no "D" or "F" rated schools.

A couple of tidbits: in the past 10 years, our school district has grown by 45 percent, or more than 10,000 students. In the coming 10 years, the

anticipated growth is another 15,800 students. This equates to approximately eight more schools of students.

Q: What can you tell us about the end of summer happenings and the upcoming school year?

A: Our newest school, Beachside High School, will be opening this school year and there is a lot of excitement about that.

Principals, who we consider to be the "captains of their ships," are very busy attending leadership conferences, hiring staff, and managing their budget. There is a lot going on at the end of the summer while students enjoy the last few weeks of their break. We are looking forward to everyone returning to school refreshed and ready to go.

I'd like to remind parents about the State of Florida's Back to School Tax Holiday, which runs through Aug. 7 and will provide some financial relief on the purchase of back to school items. Be sure to check with your child's school at orientation or the school's website to determine what supplies are needed.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

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



with St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Brandon J. Patty

Q. You recently launched an electronic newsletter to residents of St. Johns County. What is the purpose of the newsletter? How do people sign up?

A. We launched our monthly informational newsletter in early June. It is distributed just once a month, and our goal is to share information about valuable services we offer and Clerk and Comptroller news that can impact residents. We focus on topics that are actually useful to St. Johns County residents, like our free property fraud alert service, the unclaimed funds being held by our office, and real-life scams happening here in St. Johns County and in counties nearby. We also offer a "service spotlight" each month that shares a service or program that offers real-world benefits to taxpayers and residents. Keeping the newsletter current and genuine is important — we want it to be worthy of the time our subscribers invest in reading it. Subscribe by emailing communications@stjohnsclerk.com or directly from last month's newsletter, <https://contacc/3Ihg5MG>.

Saturday, Aug. 6 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. to process new passport applications or take passport photos for new and renewed passport applications. We recognize the challenges of getting away from work to do business at the courthouse, particularly for people who work standard Monday through Friday business hours or want to bring in their minor children to get a passport. Holding a special Saturday event is a great way that we can meet the needs of our residents, particularly before school resumes and before the holiday travel season. If you're planning to get a passport, we strongly encourage folks to review our webpages at <https://stjohnsclerk.com/passports/> in advance to gather the required documentation and bring the correct forms of payment (<https://stjohnsclerk.com/passports/passport-fees/>), as the U.S. Department of State only accepts checks or money orders.

Q. How do people get in touch with you or your office?

A. Call the office at (904) 819-3600 for general information or call me directly at (904) 599-8688 if I may ever be of service. The St. Johns County courthouse, the Richard O. Watson Judicial Center, is located at 4010 Lewis Speedway, along U.S. 1 just north of the city of St. Augustine.

Q. What can you tell us about Passport Saturday?

A. Passport Saturday is a special event where our St. Johns County courthouse location will be open on



with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: With school starting back this month, can you give us some information about your office's Youth Resource Deputies?

A: First, I'd like to challenge our students and families to meet our Youth Resource Deputies in their area schools. They are very approachable; introduce yourselves and get to know them.

We have 56 deputies assigned to our Youth Resource Division under Captain Peggy Tennyson. Included in the 56 deputies are Lt. David Tarbert and Lt. Wes Kennedy. Additionally reporting to Capt. Tennyson are our school crossing guards. We have 73 crossing guards who are part time and seasonal and two supervisors, Nick Dekrell and Nancy Heburn.

Our Youth Resource Officers are assigned to 40 public schools; there are a total of 43 schools, but three of them are within the city limits of St. Augustine, so they are covered by deputies with the City of St. Augustine Police Department.

Q: Will you be making any changes this year?

A: Different this year will be that within the 56 deputies, some will be "floaters." All high schools will have one assigned deputy plus one floater. Our goal is to have two Youth Resource Deputies at each high school.

Q: How does your office view its role in protecting our schools?

A: It's all about partnerships. We have a partnership with the St. Johns County School District to work hand-in-hand and provide expertise on the security of each individual school. We want to have a partnership with our families and students, who need to know that we have

safe spaces for learning, but if anyone sees anything suspicious, they need to let us know and let us triage. Call either the non-emergency number, (904) 824-8304 or 911 immediately and provide us with as much information as possible as soon as possible. Our deputy sheriffs have lots of training and are well armed and equipped — but it's still a partnership and this is where getting to know and form a relationship with the Youth Resource Officer is so important.

Q: Do you have any safety tips for Back to School?

A: I encourage all community members to sign up for the Fortify Florida app (www.getfortifyfl.com) where you can report a tip or call 911, which immediately is routed to our emergency communications center.

As the school year approaches, let's not get complacent. I'd like to remind school employees and volunteers to ensure that their school is secured at all times. Parents, please plan your route to school and leave in plenty of time so that you are not rushing or speeding to get there. Plan for how to meet and get in touch with your children after school. Be open, honest and transparent in discussions with your children and advise them to always pay attention to their surroundings.

If you see something (person, place or thing) that is suspicious, call us immediately or tell a school employee.

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@sjsso.org, or call me at (904) 824-8304. Also, our website, www.sjsso.org has a wealth of resources.

Guest Column

Old Switzerland Community Center update

By Al Abbatiello
mail@floridanewslines.com

Good news — St. Johns County and County Parks and Recreation has recently decided to take over the project to restore the Old Switzerland Community Center. The community center restoration project was originally started by the William Bartram Scenic Highway Organization about three years ago with continued community interest as evidenced by recent columns in The Creekline issues of June and July. A recent Bartram Scenic Highway promotional flier developed in concert with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and its Florida Scenic Highway Program and email efforts helped increase community interest as well.

The county's decision to assume control of this project was made shortly after the William Bartram Scenic Highway Management team met with Commissioner Christian Whitehurst to discuss the purpose of the project and our fundraising efforts. Also, we asked St. Johns County Commission Chairman Henry Dean for a place on a future Board of County Commissioners agenda for us to present our project objectives to provide a place

for District One community gatherings and a potential place for Council on Aging activities for our senior citizens. The county also recognizes they have more funding options available to facilitate completing the restoration project than does a non-profit volunteer organization. A very true observation.

The interest of our county's commissioners also seems to be based on the rapid population growth of District One and the fact our district doesn't have a community center, whereas other districts have at least one and up to three facilities for local activities. The William Bartram Scenic Highway team continues to work with the Parks and Recreation Department with the expectation we'll soon have a place for our community to gather for business and fun activities.

I suggest interested residents continue to show our Board of County Commissioners their interest in having a place available to enjoy the benefits of life in NW St. Johns County.

Al Abbatiello is chairman of the William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway Management Group

Guest Column

What you need to know about voting in St. Johns County

By Vicky Oakes

It's Election Time! Are you ready to vote? Visit our website at www.votesjc.gov and use My Voter Status to access your voter record and view your sample ballot. Sample ballots are currently available online and will be mailed to every registered voter on Aug. 2, so look for yours to arrive in your mailbox soon. There are three ways to vote: By mail, during early voting, or at your precinct on Election Day.

Vote-by-Mail: The deadline for requesting a vote-by-mail ballot to be mailed is 5 p.m. on Aug. 13. The law has changed for vote-by-mail drop boxes. Now called Secure Ballot Intake Stations, they are monitored by an Elections Office staff member at all times and are available at early voting locations only during voting hours. The secure ballot intake station in front of the Elections Office is no longer available. If you wish to return your ballot to the Elections Office, it may only be returned during the regular business hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. In order to be counted, vote-by-mail ballots must be in the Elections Office no later than 7 p.m. on Election Day, Aug. 23.

Early Voting: There are eight days of early voting between Aug. 13 and Aug. 20, including two Saturdays and a Sunday. All six locations are open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best thing about early voting is there is no wrong place to vote as long as you vote

within your county. Pick the location and time which is most convenient for you.

Election Day: Many changes have occurred since the last election. The 2020 Census and the 2021 redistricting process brought us new voting districts, new precinct lines, and some new polling locations. If you plan to vote on Election Day, please verify your voting location before going to vote as your polling location may have changed since the last election.

Are you a prepared voter? Ensure a smooth voting experience by making sure your address is current on your voter record. You can update it prior to voting with a quick call to the Elections Office before heading out to vote. This is especially important for voters who choose to vote on Election Day. Staff can process your address change on the phone and route you to your correct polling location the first time. This can be a real time saver. View and mark your sample ballot before going to vote so you are ready to vote when you arrive. Be sure to have a photo and signature ID ready to hand workers when entering the polling room.

For more information on the August 23 Primary Election, please see our ad in this paper, visit our website at www.votesjc.gov, or call the office at (904) 823-2238 for assistance with any questions. Looking forward to seeing you at the polls!

Be sure to see our Primary Election Guide beginning on page 11!



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with St. Johns County Tax Collector Dennis Hollingsworth

Q: With the start of school this month, what can you tell us about your office's driver education offerings?

A: The St. Johns County Tax Collector's Office is one team of 65 – 70 employees working out of four locations. All of our driver education training is handled by our employees and I'm excited that we just came out with the schedule for the next school year. We will be offering driver education at each of our county's high schools.

Q: How did your office begin handling driver education in the county?

A: Several years ago, I noticed we were having a high failure rate for our learners' permits. I went to the School Board and convinced them that we could do the best job educating our future drivers. So, via an intralocal government agreement with the school district, we now offer driver education three times per year at each high school.

Q: What do the classes involve?

A: Phase I is a classroom setting. We offer 24 of these per year, three times at each of our eight high schools. The first set of classes (10 days each) begin in August, with classes scheduled to begin Aug. 11 at Nease, Aug. 12 at Bartram Trail, Aug. 29 at Creekside, Aug. 30 at Ponte Vedra High, Sept. 19 at Beachside, Sept. 20 at Toco Creek, Oct. 7 at Pedro Menendez, and Oct. 10 at St. Augustine High.

Successful completion and passing of the test will result in the issuance of the student's learner's permit.

Then, a year later, we offer Phase II, which is behind the wheel driver training for a permanent license. Also, on six Saturdays throughout the year, we offer defensive driving at the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office track.

Q: How does one sign up for the classes?

A: Sign up and more information is available on our website, www.sjctax.us under Featured Resources and then select Driver Education. These classes fill up quickly, so register early.

Q: Has the program been successful and resulted in fewer driving test failures at your office?

A: Yes, we have a good record. In fact, the State of Florida recognized St. Johns County as having one of the highest passing rates in the state. Last year, we offered 3,949 road tests, 191 driver education written tests and 145 driver education driving tests.

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

A: A lot of questions can be answered by visiting our website, www.sjctax.us. I may be reached by calling (904) 209-2250 or emailing taxcollector@sjctax.us.



with St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

Q: What can you tell us about the proposed new exemption for first responders?

A: There is a proposed Constitutional Amendment that will appear on No-

vember ballots which seek to provide an additional homestead tax exemption for first responders of \$50,000 on the assessed value of homes between \$100,000 and \$150,000. It would apply to property owned by classroom teachers, law enforcement officers, correctional officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, child welfare service professionals, active duty members of the US Armed Forces and Florida National Guard.

Q: How did this proposal come about?

A: State Sen. Jason Brodeur, R-Lake Mary, and State Rep. Josie Tomkow, R-Polk City, championed the bill in the Legislature, implementing HB 1563, companion bill HJR 1. If passed, it will create Florida Statute 196.077.

Since homestead exemption is in the Florida Constitution, exemptions must be passed by voters as Constitutional Amendments, which require at least 60 percent of the vote.

Q: What are the details of the pro-

posed exemption?

A: It would provide an additional \$50,000 homestead tax exemption on values between \$100,000 – \$150,000. It does not apply to school district levies and it applies only to property owned by individuals working in these certain enumerated professions. Applicants must be employed on Jan. 1 in a full-time position in one of the qualifying professions and annual applications will be mandatory.

Q: When would the exemption be effective?

A: It would be effective as of Jan. 1, 2023 if the amendment is approved by at least 60 percent of the voters at the November 2022 general election.

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 Ed-die@sjcpa.us or call me at (904) 827-5500.



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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Upcoming SBDC at UNF training events announced

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The Florida Small Business Development Council at the University of North Florida's programs deliver up-to-date management advice, training and information to help business owners make sound decisions and to assist potential owners in getting started on the right foot. The Florida Small Business Development Center at University of North Florida serves 18 counties with full-time offices in Duval, Clay, Marion, St. Johns, Nassau, and Putnam counties and is part of the Florida SBDC Network and the national Association of Small Business Development Centers.

Here are some of the training events scheduled for this month:

QuickBooks 101 - Hands-On Workshop, Aug. 5 from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. at UNF Hicks Hall

You've made the first step and decided to utilize the QuickBooks program for your business, now what? Not sure

where to start? This introductory workshop will provide you with the information you need to get started on the right foot. Learn how to use QuickBooks in this easy-to-understand, hands-on class. Attendees will work in a computer lab with a Quick-Books Pro Advisor Instructor, Lisa Barnidge of Sharkbooks Consulting, LLC, on examples for real experience using QuickBooks for PC. (This class will use the QuickBooks Desktop version, not to be confused with the QuickBooks Online version - they are different products.)

Visit www.sbdc.unf.edu/events/quickbooks-101-in-person-event/ to register.

How to STARTUP Your Own Business Webinar, Aug. 23 from 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

This no-cost webinar workshop will give an overview of the seven basic requirements for business STARTUP: Selecting an idea, Testing the market, Acquiring capital, wRiting a plan, Turning for help, Under-

standing legal requirements and Putting it all together.

Visit <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7814427471384520462> to register.

Navigating QuickBooks Online, Sept. 23 from 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Identify the benefits of using QB Online and determine which subscription level is best for your business in this no-cost webinar. The webinar will also include examples showing what businesses would be a good fit for each version. Setting up the QuickBooks Online company correctly is so important. In fact, the way you set up the file has the greatest impact on your experience with QuickBooks Online. Take the time to establish your business plan and workflows. Then choose a subscription level and begin setting up the company. This is an interactive session with a demo file and your live file if you have it set up already.

Visit www.sbdc.unf.edu/events/navigating-quickbooks-online/ to register.

Second location for dance academy opens




Photo courtesy Maureen Straub Craig @creativebrandingstudious

Heather Loveland Dance Academy celebrated the grand opening of its second location on July 1 with a ribbon cutting ceremony. The dance academy's new location, in Fruit Cove, is in the former Mark Spivak's Dance Extension on State Road 13. Families came out to the grand opening to meet new teachers, see the space, enroll for classes, and enjoy shave ice from the Kona Ice truck. Pictured are owner/director Heather Loveland and studio manager Bethany Kellar cutting the ribbon.

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Briefs

Volunteer opportunities available with St. Johns County boards

The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners provides residents interested in serving their community and participating in local government with a variety of board and committee opportunities. The volunteer positions consider and make recommendations regarding various topics, including planning and zoning issues, development projects, libraries, parks and recreation facilities and programs, arts, culture and tourism. The following boards and committees are currently accepting applications:

- Contractors Review Board (application deadline Aug. 8, 2022)
- Library Advisory Board (application deadline Aug. 1, 2022)
- Northwest Communication Tower Advisory Board (application deadline Aug. 5, 2022)
- South Anastasia Design Review Board (application deadline until filled)

Visit the Boards and Committees webpage at www.sjcfcl.us/boards to view the requirements and duties of each board and committee, download

an application, or contact the Board of County Commissioners office at (904) 209-0300 or jspencer@sjcfcl.us for more information.

Higher mortgage rates begin to put brakes on housing market's wild ride

Although house prices rose higher in June, there was tangible evidence that higher mortgage rates and inflation are beginning to put the brakes on the wild ride that Northeast Florida's housing market has taken over the past two years.

The median sales price for single-family homes in the region settled at a historically high \$400,000 in June, a 2.3 percent increase over the month before; however, this number is based on closed sales that included offers from a few months ago before the market began to feel the impact of rising mortgage rates.

Meanwhile, the number of closed sales, pending sales, and listing prices received have all started dropping, tangibly demonstrating that the market is slowing down. Added to that is active inventory, which increased 17.4 percent, as well as a 46.2 percent increase in the median number of days on the market. These are all indications that prices may slowly begin to "normalize" in the coming months.

"This is good news for both buyers and sellers as we move into the third and fourth quarters of 2022," said 2022 NEFAR President Mark Rosener. "It's encouraging for buyers, as they now have more homes from which to choose. On the flip side, while we still have a significant "seller's market" at just 1.8 months' supply, sellers need to heed the counsel of their REALTORS® to price their homes accordingly."

Specifically in June, closed sales on single-family residences registered at 2,336, a 4.1% decrease since May. June also registered 2,077 pending sales, a 13.2% decline from May when there were 2,393. And the list-price-received category dropped from 101% in May to 100.6% in June, with 38.9% of sellers getting above their asking price, a decline of 8.7% from May. Meanwhile, the active inventory of single-family

homes increased to 4,109 in June, a significant increase from May 2022 when only 3,501 homes were on the market. June's inventory represents 1.8 months of active inventory. Meanwhile, the combined condo and townhouse market showed a significant 46.3% gain in homes for sale over the previous month when the number of units increased to 1,090. The median days on the market also increased by 16.7% to 14 days.

Although higher interest rates may be slowing down the market, they are not helping to make the area more affordable. With single-family home prices still at historic highs, the home affordability index slipped down 1.3% to 78. The index measures whether a typical family earns enough to qualify for a mortgage on a typical home, based on current interest rates, median income, and median home prices. Higher numbers mean greater affordability. In June, the combined condo and townhouse affordability index remained unchanged from the month before at 115.

"There is no question that the Real Estate Market in Northeast Florida is continuing to shift, and I am proud of the NEFAR REALTOR® members who have responded to these shifts with flexibility and professionalism," Rosener said. "They continue to deliver outstanding service to those looking to buy and/or sell in the Greater Jacksonville Area. For those that have a real estate need, it has never been more important to have a trusted advisor to help you navigate this process."

In St. Johns County, prices began to drop in June with \$554,900 coming in as the median price of single-family homes, 4.1 percent less than May. The median days on the market was 21, a 61.5 percent increase from the month before, and the active inventory rose to 1,099 homes, a 26.9 percent increase from May and 1.8 months' supply. Approximately 35 percent of sellers received more than their listing price in June. Although the affordability index inched up to 56, St. Johns County continues to remain the least affordable area to live in the region.



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RETURNING IN SEPTEMBER

Back to School Guide



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Primary Election Guide

Meet your local candidates

By Martie Thompson
 editor@floridanewline.com

In advance of the Primary Election to be held on Tuesday, Aug. 23, The CreekLine invited each of the candidates that will appear on northern St. Johns County voters' ballots for State Senate District 7, County Commission Districts 2 and 4, and School Board District 1 to submit a statement for this Primary Election section.

The CreekLine offered this opportunity to all candidates for these Primary Election races as a community service; no purchase of advertising was required. The content of the statements was left up to each candidate; the only stipulation was that the statement could not exceed 200 words. No editing of the statements took place. Each statement is printed in its entirety, as submitted by the candidate.

State Senate, District 7
Travis Hutson (R)

Senator Travis Hutson is honored to serve our 7th district in the Florida

Senate. Governor Ron DeSantis endorsed Travis Hutson for his proven leadership.

In Tallahassee, he has been focused on the economy, education and public safety. He helped craft enhancements to Florida's Career and Professional Education Act, responding to Florida's critical workforce needs. He closed loopholes in the release of sexual violent predators making north-east Florida's most vulnerable citizens safer. In addition, Travis fought for improved water quality in Florida, as he successfully championed water policy reform and hurricane recovery.

Travis Hutson is A-rated by the NRA, and has earned the endorsements of Congressman Mike Waltz, Right to Life PAC, Florida Fraternal Order of Police, American Conservative Union Foundation, Associated Industries of Florida, Florida Chamber of Commerce, NFIB, and many others.

Gerry James (R)

I am running for office because my opponent, the incumbent, is using his office to destroy our quality of life

in this district. He uses his political access to essentially force mega-developments to be approved for his family business, and with that comes traffic and increased crime. Our schools cannot handle the uncontrolled rate of growth, and our children are suffering — that is unacceptable!

My opponent uses his elected office to write bills that benefit his family's land development business. I am not anti-development, but I am anti-overdevelopment and cronyism.

In other areas, my views are aligned with Governor DeSantis. I believe in medical freedom, free speech, and smaller government with lower taxes. I am the most conservative grassroots candidate running for Senate.

My opponent publicly stated that he was against an audit. If I am elected, I will push for real election reform, not the watered-down reform the incumbents have passed. There should be no mail-in ballots besides verified absentees, and no Dominion voting technology or any other machines.

Meet the Candidates cont. on pg. 12

Re-Elect

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KRISTA

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CHUCK

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Had enough?

Aug. 23rd, vote twice to stop overdevelopment that is destroying our county.

Had enough clear-cutting? Had enough traffic? Had enough portable classrooms? Had enough of kids being bused out of neighborhood schools? Have you had enough developer-driven government?

Krista believes Commissioner Blocker's 71 out of 73 approvals of new development (in his first three years alone) is excessive and harmful to our quality of life. Learn more about this mom of two U.S. Navy SEALs, her experience and qualifications, and why she's so committed to taking back St. Johns County. ElectKrista.com

Chuck will NOT continue Commissioner Arnold's uncontrolled approvals. In her first 5 months, she voted for more acreage to go under the bulldozer than any other commissioner. That's 2960 acres! Chuck has 8 years county experience. And as a former Marine and combat vet, he's ready to fight for our county. ChuckForCommissioner.com

Primary Election Guide

Meet the Candidates cont. from pg. 11

Many of our elected officials are not following the wishes of their constituents and so they need to be replaced. I hope I can count on your vote.

County Commission, District 2 Sarah Arnold (R)

My name is Sarah Arnold, and I proudly represent District 2 on the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners following my appointment by Governor Ron DeSantis. As a wife and mother of four children, my faith and family are most important to me. I'm a lifelong Republican, a defender of the Second Amendment, and am invested in the future of St. Johns County.

On the Commission, I have been a champion of smart growth practices and will always hold the line on overdevelopment. I support our first responders, our Sheriff's office, and our firefighters, and I believe it is our duty to provide critical support and care to our veterans, who have ensured our freedom and safety.

Additionally, as a fiscal conservative, I have been a leader for managing

and balancing our county budget to ensure all resources are spent responsibly, and I will continue fighting through the bureaucratic red tape and wasteful spending to ensure our tax dollars work for us, and not the government. Let's keep St. Johns County on the Right Path. I kindly ask for your vote on Aug. 23.

Nelson David Cline (R)

Did not submit a statement.

Johnny Coe Counts (R)

I am a seventh generation Floridian, married 31 years to my wife Gina. We have two sons, two daughters, and two granddaughters, all part of a pioneer family ranch operation. I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. I am also a small business owner of 34 years.

I propose a moratorium on large development projects to redress the \$500 million deficit of "infrastructure" in one of the most prosperous counties in Florida.

"We the People" should vote "no" on 1 cent added sales tax. I believe government needs to reduce to what is necessary as we all do in tough times.

This "power" to tax is what needs to be carefully guarded. We cannot succeed as a free society without personal and public solvency.

Let's look at procurement, spending, and the budgeting process by first getting an accurate audit of the public purse that is the authority we have given to the Clerk of Courts.

An Enterprise Financial System that the County Administrator has been requesting is needed to allow the free flow of information between departments that can be accessed and reported more accurately and efficiently. Make your vote4counts.com on Aug. 23.

Charles (Chuck) Labanowski (R)

I'm a Marine Corps combat veteran. I have lived in the county for 15 years with my wife Carol.

Now my goal is to protect the quality of life that we cherish here in St. Johns County, as we watch development exploding countywide. We need to make the infrastructure (schools, roads, parks) before the development. The infrastructure credits that developers are receiving are just one of the reasons that our infrastructure is deficient.

I am not in favor of the new proposed sales tax increase. We do not need to burden families anymore that are facing the ever-rising cost of living like gas and food costs. Our commissioners are now asking us to pay what developers should have paid when their projects were approved.

Law enforcement runs deep in the Labanowski family. I'm a proud father of a deputy sheriff. I was also honored to attend the St. Johns County Citizen Law Enforcement Academy.

We need to support and help our local farmers sustain their business for the betterment of St. Johns County and the state of Florida. I fought for my country and now will fight for you and St. Johns County.

LaShawnda L. Pinkney (R)

I was born and raised in St. Augustine, attended local schools. I'm the proud mother of five wonderful adult children and seven beautiful grandchildren.

After receiving my MS in Criminal Justice, I became a Child Protective Investigator for the State of Florida. I was also a District Resident Services Supervisor, serving Urban Development-subsidized apartment complexes in seven counties. Currently, I'm a Human Resources Generalist for the City of St Augustine, responsible for employee records, administering benefits and payroll, recruitment, pre employment screenings and new hire orientation.

Board member of several other organizations in West Augustine: West Augustine CRA Steering Committee, served as Cultural and Quality of Life Chair, West Augustine Community Development Cooperation, West Augustine Improvement Association, American Legion Auxiliary, Post #194 and founder of Off Limitz Ladyz Riders motorcycle organization. I play a key role in the annual West Keep Calm and Walk for Cancer, annual Domestic Violence Awareness Brunch, Site Coordinator for the annual Toys for Tots giveaway and Christmas in the Park.

My priorities if elected would include Voting No! for the sales tax increase, stop overdevelopment, jobs, jobs, jobs, support for our veterans, first responders and youth. Faith, Family, and Community is who I am!

County Commission District 4 Jeremiah P. Blocker (R)

My name is Jeremiah Blocker and I am running for re-election as your St. Johns County Commissioner representing District 4. I am a combat veteran, father, business owner, and former prosecutor. My wife and I live

Meet the Candidates cont. on pg. 13

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COUNTY COMMISSION



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Primary Election Guide

Meet the Candidates cont. from pg. 12

in Nocatee with our two children and God has blessed us with a third child on the way!

I am committed to the best interests of St. Johns County and its residents. During the last four years, I have consistently put St. Johns County first by improving our public safety through increased funding for law enforcement and first responders. Additionally, the Commission has ensured that thousands of acres in the county are forever preserved and protected as well as nourishing our beaches. We have improved infrastructure and fostered a business climate to create jobs while still lowering taxes and fees. Finally, I carefully review development projects on a case-by-case basis, only supporting smart and controlled growth; consistently voting against overdevelopment.

You can find more information on our website at jeremiahblocker.com. Please consider voting for me on Aug. 23 in the Republican primary!

Krista Keating-Joseph (R)

1. Slow down growth. My opponent

approved 71 out of 73 proposals to develop undeveloped land in his first three years. This unacceptable rate of growth is compromising our quality of life.

2. Save our children from learning in unsafe, unsecure portable classrooms (according to FDLE) and being bused to schools out of their areas. We have more developments being approved than our school system can handle.

3. No to a 15 percent sales tax increase. The last thing we need is to raise the sales tax on our hard-working families, especially as we face high gas and food prices and inflation. Our budget surplus does not justify burdening residents with a sales tax.

4. Developers must cover the costs of infrastructure so that St. Johns County taxpayers are not stuck paying for their roads and recreational areas. We also need a new tree code to discourage clear-cutting.

5. Put our First Responders first. They should not have to leave the county to get a pay raise.

I'm a mom of five including two Navy SEALs, a Marine and a teen. I can say

"no" to unbridled development and take St. Johns County back for the people who live here now.

School Board District 1
Racheal Marie Hand (N/P)

My name is Racheal Hand; I am running for School Board, District 1. St. Johns County is a beautiful, highly sought after county in the greatest state in the country. We are known for our outstanding schools and beautiful scenery. We must protect and preserve the wonderful things that made this county so desirable.

Unfortunately, things have begun to change in our schools. It is time to put people willing to stand up for our children, parents and teachers in the forefront. Complacency and lack of accountability is what has allowed this mess to begin. Our schools can't keep up with the overcrowding that has created unsafe conditions. We have inappropriate books accessible in our schools and our teachers are overworked and underpaid. We have drifted from academic focus to social emotional learning and our children's special needs are struggling to be met.

My goal is to reignite the parent/

teacher relationship for the sake of our children. Parents must be held accountable for their student's behavior. Teachers must be able to focus solely on academic curriculum. If you are looking for someone who is not afraid to stand up for what is right, vote Racheal Hand on Aug. 23.

Beverly Slough (N/P)

I am proud to be running for re-election to the St. Johns County School Board, the number one district in the state of Florida for the last 15 years. Through our partnership with parents, our focus on the achievement of each individual student, development of career academies to engage our students and offer choice, and our emphasis on good character among our students, we have created an atmosphere that allows our students to grow and thrive in their educational journey.

In the next four years, my goals are to improve engagement and communication with parents, increase teacher/staff pay, enhance working conditions, and focus on core academics for our students.

Meet the Candidates cont. on pg. 14

Faith & Allegiance to the Constitution

Raised in a military family, Casey Woolsey knows what it means to protect the Constitution and do one's duty to Country. As County Judge, Casey Woolsey will bring those same values to the bench.



Meet Casey



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Republican Primary: Tuesday, August 23

JeremiahBlocker.com

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Primary Election Guide

Meet the Candidates cont. from pg. 13

Identifying ways to engage our students and ensure great classroom behavior will be pursued. Effort will also be placed on continued management of the incredible growth in student population by providing new schools and sensible zoning to avoid overcrowding as much as possible. Proven Leadership - Sustained Success. Vote Bev Slough for School Board, District 1.

Nancy Tray (N/P)


I am an active Saint Johns County parent and have been involved in the public schools of my three children for the past decade. I have enjoyed helping our schools through PTOs, SACs, volunteering, organizing clubs, and substitute teaching. My professional experience and education in social work and nursing have prepared me well to serve our community.

I am running for school board to find workable solutions to the problems facing our rapidly growing district. I am not running to further the interests of a political party, a special interest group, a business, or a religious agenda. Our students, teachers, staff, and families are my only agenda. I care deeply about our community and would make the school board my full-time job.


As your school board member, I

would work to (1) permanently alleviate the perpetual cycle of overcrowding in our schools, (2) improve the programs and services offered to all our students, (3) ensure better support for our teachers and staff, and (4) increase SJCSD salaries and funding for education. I will listen and respond to our constituents in a way that unites our community and depolarizes the political issues that get in the way of progress.

Vote on August 23rd




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- ★ University of Florida Law School

Legal Experience

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- ★ 12+ years
- ★ 1000+ legal matters

- Will Follow the Law As It Is Written
- Common Sense
- Honesty, Integrity & Character
- Small Business Owner
- Community Servant

Political Advertisement, Paid for and Approved by Alyssa Shorstein for County Judge

Senator/developer Hutson has only one interest: self-interest.

"The unseen leak in your home has powerful allies in Tallahassee" - Orlando Sentinel

Feb. 4, 2022

"A law that makes it difficult to sue builders over construction flaws is about to get worse, The legislator behind this monumentally bad bill (SB 736) works in a family construction company, with 20,000 home sites in northeast Florida and plans for [12,000] more."

"The law will become more tilted in favor of shoddy builders and against homeowners... the bill cuts the 10-year latent defect deadline to five years for single-family homes..."

"It's about as anti-consumer as you can possibly get."



"Who's behind it? The Sponsor of this fast-moving bill is Travis Hutson, R - St. Augustine, a vice president of the Hutson Companies, whose website claims some 20,000 Jacksonville area homesites..."

"Specifically in north Florida where Hutson is located... the houses are built over wood frames and they apply stucco. If they don't do it properly, water will penetrate - but it doesn't show up until six, seven or eight years until after the home is built."

"The legislature does not require members to avoid conflicts of interest unless the issue in question would benefit a specific legislator and no one else."

This article says it all. Travis Hutson is using his senate seat to benefit his business, and make us pay the price.

Fortunately, this bill died. But it's one of many self-serving bills that he has tried to push through. And some of them succeed.

We need a senator who will work for us, not for the Hutson Companies.



We need a senator who will work for us. Gerry4Senate.com

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PRIMARY ELECTION ★ August 23, 2022

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Due to the 2020 Census and Redistricting process, voting districts, precinct lines, and some Election Day polling locations have changed. Visit **VOTESJC.GOV** for more information.

ON OUR WEBSITE www.votesjc.gov

- Register to vote
- Check your voter status
- Change your address before you vote
- Verify your polling place
- Track the mailing and receipt of your vote by mail ballot
- View and print your sample ballot

FLORIDA IS A CLOSED PRIMARY STATE

- Democrats receive a Democratic ballot
- Republicans receive a Republican ballot
- Voters registered with no party affiliation or a minor party receive a nonpartisan ballot
- Universal Primary Contests are the exception. There are two on the Primary ballot, both Republican races. Representative in Congress, Dist. 5 and State Representative, Dist. 20. If you live in these districts, regardless of your party affiliation these Republican races will appear on your ballot.

Vote: It's Your Choice!

Call 904-823-2238 for your vote by mail ballot today! You can also use the online request form on our website www.votesjc.gov. Deadline to request a ballot to be mailed is 5 PM August 13th.

Make sure your vote counts!

Has your signature changed? If your signature on your voter record and signature on the vote by mail ballot certificate envelope do not match, your vote by mail ballot may not count. Update your signature using a Florida voter registration application.

Drop your mail ballot in a secure ballot intake station at any early voting site during the hours of voting. Your voted mail ballot is due in the Elections Office no later than 7 PM on Election Day. If it is late, it will not count.

ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF ID WHEN VOTING IN PERSON

Voter information cards are not a valid form of identification when voting. Be sure to bring a current and valid photo ID when voting in person. If the photo ID does not contain your signature, an additional ID that includes your signature shall be required. Example: Photo on Student ID and signature on a library card are acceptable. If you do not bring any ID, you will be allowed to vote a provisional ballot.

- Florida Driver License
- Florida ID Card issued by DMV
- United States Passport
- Debit or Credit Card
- Military ID
- Student ID
- Retirement Center ID
- Neighborhood Association ID
- Public Assistance ID
- Veteran Health ID
- Concealed Weapon ID or Firearm License ID
- Government Employee ID

EARLY VOTING LOCATIONS

★ DATES & TIMES ~ August 13th – 20th ★ Hours: 9 AM – 6 PM Daily At All Locations

Julington Creek Annex
725 Flora Branch Blvd.
St. Johns, FL 32259

Supervisor of Elections Office
4455 Avenue A, Suite 101
St. Augustine, FL 32095

Southeast Branch Library
6670 US 1 South
St. Augustine, FL 32086

Ponte Vedra Branch Library
101 Library Blvd.
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

St. Augustine Beach City Hall
2200 A1A South
St. Augustine, FL 32080

Hastings Branch Library
6195 S. Main St.
Hastings, FL 32145

ELECTION DAY

- ★ Tuesday, August 23, 2022
- ★ Polls are open 7 AM – 7 PM
- ★ When voting on Election Day you **MUST** vote at the precinct of your legal residence.

KNOW WHERE TO VOTE BEFORE YOU GO

To locate your polling place visit www.votesjc.gov or call the Elections Office at 904-823-2238.

New adventures for local dance icon

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

A well known local dance studio owner is beginning a new chapter — Mark Spivak and his wife Alla have turned over their studios in Fruit Cove and Mandarin to new owners and are ready to see what next adventure awaits them. The Fruit Cove studio has become the second location for Heather Loveland Dance Academy and the Mandarin studio will become Jacksonville Fitness Academy.

“We just held our 42nd annual recital this summer,” Mark Spivak said. “It seems like it’s just been one day instead of 42 years.”

Mark and Alla Spivak first arrived in Jacksonville in 1979 as refugees from the former Soviet Union. Mark Spivak was an accomplished ballet dancer from Kiev who performed throughout the Soviet Union and abroad with the Ukrainian Concert Organization. Alla Spivak was a master rhythmic gymnast. Together they formed Mark Spivak Dance Institute and Dance Extension, first in Mandarin and then with additional locations in Fruit Cove.

“When I first arrived here from Kiev, I was approached to choreograph and dance for a company called the Ballet Guild,” Mark Spivak said. “Then Martha Jackson saw me perform and offered for me to take over her studio in the San Marco area. We moved the studio to Mandarin in 1982.”

At that original Mandarin studio, the Spivaks offered many artistic options,

including all forms of dance, gymnastics, art classes, and piano instruction, the latter partially so that their three children could take lessons conveniently at their parents’ studio.

Realizing that Jacksonville was growing southward, in 1989 the Spivaks opened their second location in the old Food Lion (now Neighborhood Walmart) center in NW St. Johns County. They ultimately built a location on Race Track Road and also bought an office complex on State Road 13 to house a studio when Mark Spivak realized his dream to own his property and not be subjected to landlords and lease demands. At the State Road 13 property, the Spivaks built a second building which now houses Tumbling Kids as well as All About Ballroom, a ballroom dance school and studio for which Mark Spivak remains a partner.

Over the years, Mark Spivak has taught character dance at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, served as president of the Florida Chapter of the Dance Masters of America and spent 10 years as director of the First Coast Nutcracker. For the past 31 years he has been founder and artistic director of Community Nutcracker, a completely philanthropic annual event which has donated more than \$800,000 to local charities and community organizations over the years.

The Spivaks are happy to be turning over the Fruit Cove studio to Heather Loveland.

“We have known Heather for years,” Mark Spivak said. “She was an instructor for us before she opened her own successful dance studio and we actually selected her to take over.”

Loveland said, “I am humbled and deeply honored to follow in the footsteps of Mark Spivak’s Institute. After 42 years of devotion to dance education by Mark and Alla, I’m proud to continue their tradition of excellence through Heather Loveland Dance Academy. I’m excited to combine our dance studios and share this meaningful mission together as one studio family where we all have a sense of belonging and community.”

So what’s next for the Spivaks? Alla Spivak assures that they are staying local and not becoming idle.

“We are open to new possibilities,” Mark Spivak said. “I know something will come up.”



Photo by Martie Thompson
Alla and Mark Spivak

Nutrition Check

By Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RDN and
Caroline Jury BS
mail@floridanewslines.com

When someone mentions eye health, what vegetables come to mind? For me, I always think of carrots; my mother would always say to eat carrots for better eyesight. Did you know that this is actually an old wives’ tale that dates back to World War II? To cover for their technology, the British intelligence started spreading rumors that the key to the Royal Air Force’s extraordinary night vision was due to eating lots of carrots. Learn more about the history: <https://tinyurl.com/485hkscn>.

In today’s world, we have a different dilemma with eye health; with the rapid growth of smartphones, computers, and iPads, there is also an increase in eye discomfort, blurred vision, eye strain, eye pain, and visual fatigue. In celebration of this month’s theme, Children’s Eye Health/Safety Month, let’s dig deeper into nutrients we can get from fruits and vegetables to support healthy eyes and vision.

1. Vitamin A: This nutrient is responsible for our eyes’ ability to see in low light level conditions. Food sources: carrots, tomatoes, leafy greens, red bell pepper, sweet potato, liver, and tuna.

Children’s Eye Health/Safety Month

2. Lutein and Zeaxanthin: These carotenoids help with anti-inflammatory and prevention of age-related macular disease. Food sources: leafy greens, pistachios, corn, peas, and eggs.

3. Quercetin: This flavonoid is an antioxidant that is a protective barrier for the external portion of the ocular surface. Food sources: citrus fruits, tea (black/green), berries, red onion, and red wine.

4. Vitamin C: This nutrient helps protect lenses from harmful UV light. Food sources: strawberries, kiwi, oranges, broccoli, Brussel sprouts and red bell peppers.

A quick recipe I would like to share with the nutrients listed above is the Eye-Health Smoothie: 2/3 cup spinach or kale, 1 cup water/low-fat dairy, 1 frozen sliced banana, 3 red bell pepper slices, and 5 frozen strawberries. Blend and enjoy!

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

Ahoy Mateys! I'm Captain Reducio, the newest buccaneer to the crew here at the St. Johns County Solid Waste Division. I've got a treasure chest full of fun facts about recycling, including the three Arrrrgghs, "Reduce, Reuse, & Recycle!"



To schedule a presentation with Captain Reducio, please contact his First Mate, Matthew "Peg Leg" Denny at 904.827.6980 or mdenny@sjcfl.us. Are you an advocate for recycling and interested in helping your neighbors gain a better understanding of recycling? Please contact us at solidwaste@sjcfl.us to learn more about the Recycling Resource Program. For more information regarding residential curbside services or the Solid Waste Division's outreach programs, please visit www.recyclestjohns.com!




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Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

Brian Bidwell

You may know Brian Bidwell as co-owner, along with his wife Joline, of the Julington Creek Wild Birds Unlimited Store as well as two other locations. But he hasn't always been "feeding the birds;" Bidwell got his start in electrical supply sales. Originally from Dayton, Ohio, he said his parents were always passionate about birds, so he comes to his birding hobby honestly. He and Joline have a nature preserve behind their house and there are lots of birds to watch, both coastal and backyard varieties. He said he has at least 25 bird feeders in his yard as he always tries out new merchandise so he knows what to suggest to his customers. Bidwell also enjoys playing the guitar and singing in his spare time; he once "opened for Brad Paisley" as he sang the National Anthem with other members of a barbershop quartet at a Fourth of July celebration at Metro Park that featured the country singer.

Q: How did you get started in your career in electrical supply sales?

A: As an 18-year-old going to school, I had a friend ask if I would like to make some extra money helping him with inventory of his electrical supply business. Of course I did. I was fascinated with all the conduits and wire ... everything needed to put electricity in a building. By the end of taking inventory, he offered me a job in sales.

Q: How did you end up in Florida?

A: I eventually realized that my passion was for lighting, so I went to

work for a large lighting manufacturer as a sales rep. Everyone needs lighting! I wanted to move to Florida since the construction industry was booming in the early 1980s and I had four or five job offers. It was very cold in January in Ohio, so Florida was looking pretty good. I thought it might be a temporary move, but even my mother said I wouldn't be coming back. She was right and I've lived in Florida longer than anywhere else.

Q: How did you meet your wife Joline?

A: We were set up on a blind date by a coworker of mine. We went to hear a friend's band play at the beach. We couldn't hear each other, so we went to the Sea Turtle so we could talk. We've been together ever since and married in 1997.

Q: How did you come to own three Wild Birds Unlimited Stores?

A: Joline worked as an office manager for 27 years for a small doctor's office in San Marco. When the practice



Photo courtesy Brian Bidwell
Brian Bidwell.

store since 2013. I continued working my job at the lighting company and helped Joline at the store on nights and weekends. By the time we bought the Julington Creek store in 2018, I knew it was time to work at the stores full time. We just opened our third location in World Golf Village.

Q: What is your biggest challenge and what is your favorite part of owning the stores?

A: The biggest challenge has been keeping the stores staffed, especially during this age of COVID. But this is what makes the Julington Creek store such a delight: we have great employees. We empower them to do as much as they can and they all have a passion for birds, which they impart to our customers.

My favorite part is when I can help someone just starting out in this bird feeding hobby. Each customer becomes a friend. We love the stories they share with us that we can share with others, so that gives everyone the best enjoyment of this hobby.

Q: What advice would you give to people new to the hobby?

A: If you're just starting out, be patient. It takes time for the birds to find your feeder. Also, make sure your seed is fresh.

Get to Know ...

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

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Fruit Cove native will be missed by many

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Christopher Thomas Richardson died July 1 in Lansing, Michigan in a train pedestrian accident. Son of Angi Richardson and loved by his Nona, Aunt Mimi, and Jim and Judy Wheelwright, Chris attended Julington Creek Elementary, Fruit Cove Middle School and Creekside High School. Even at an early age, he began receiving awards for his good character and citizenship. He was blessed with natural athletic ability. He excelled early on in soccer and was a wide receiver in seventh grade football, but his true love was basketball. He began playing school ball in eighth grade and led his Fruit Cove team to their first county championship.

At Creekside High School, he started 77 straight games in three years and led the team in scoring his sophomore, junior and senior years. His senior year, he led the team to 24 wins, the most in the history of the high school. They went on to win the district championship and went to the finals of the semi-state. He was a two-time Creekside MVP, two-time

defensive player of the year, two-time holiday tourney MVP, and was St. Johns County Player of the Year in 2016.

He went on to play college ball at Southern Virginia University where he played as a freshman starter, averaging approximately six points, three rebounds, two assists, and a steal a game. This was his last year playing school ball; he missed friends and family locally so he returned home where he finished his bachelor's degree in Sports Management at the University of North Florida. He then went on to work on his master's degree in Sports Management online at the University of Florida. He was in the process of finishing his last course, and on Aug. 5, will be awarded his master's degree posthumously.

While going to school, he began coaching. He was a first-time ever Creekside Freshman Team head coach, assistant coach at Creekside and later Bolles, youngest head coach at Fruit Cove Middle School, and served as a coach at Blue Chip and other developmental leagues.

Chris had a calm, fun-loving and kind personality. He was an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and was baptized at eight years of age. He held multiple offices in the priesthood. He was in Link Crew mentoring, helping teammates develop, a participant in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and a Quorum President for his youth group at church. He fed the hungry at a community kitchen for the homeless. He was most famous for his beautiful blue eyes; everyone loved his eyes, including Chris.



Photo courtesy Jim Wheelwright
 Chris Richardson pictured with friend Levi Gold.

Fishing

Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis
mail@floridanewline.com

June, July, and August typically mean hot, humid days with consistent afternoon thunderstorms for our area of the river — and June was brutally hot with just a bit of rain. This extension of a hot, dry period has really kept the salinity up from the Buckman Bridge south. Higher salinity makes our area a little more comfortable for fish such as spotted seatrout and unfortunately hardhead catfish, which have really been a pain for anyone soaking shrimp on the bottom lately.

One drawback is the increased salinity can really hamper the eel grass growth and even kill it if it gets too high. The eelgrass beds provide crucial habitat for juvenile fish and crustaceans in the river. We need some rain, just not too much.

So how's the fishing been? This has been one of the better starts to shrimp season that we've had in a number of years, both in size and numbers. An abundance of shrimp means easy bait catching and a lot of hungry fish around looking for a shrimp dinner.

One of the standouts have been the stripers. They are almost a given around bridge pilings or deeper docks when presented with shrimp right now. The water temperatures

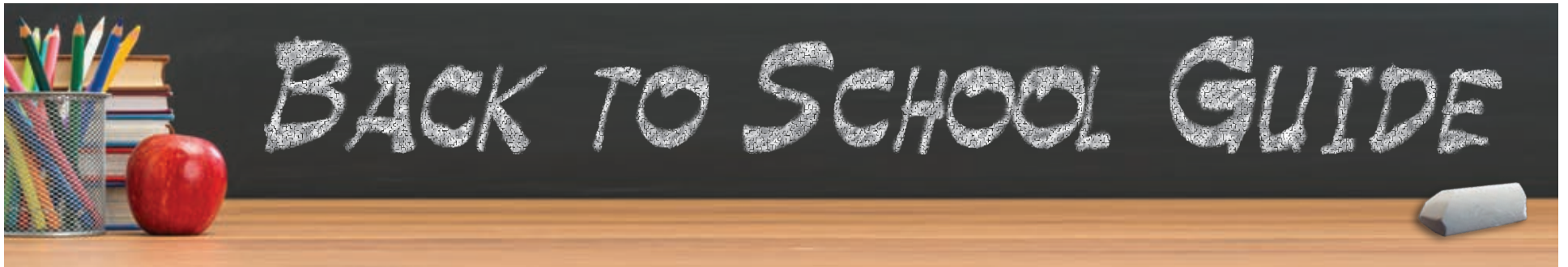
are in the upper 80s, so many of the fish seek the shade under docks or bridges as well as deeper water to stay cool. Currently redfish, flounder, and sheepshead can be found near the docks. Fish a bait on the bottom if specifically targeting these species, but a bait presented on or near the surface can coax a trout or bass into biting. Bass seem to have the highest affinity for the shrimp that are found in the river.

If you have never bass fished with live shrimp under a popping cork, I'd highly recommend it. The visual spectacle of watching a five pound bass chase a shrimp to the surface and almost jump out of the water trying to eat it is a sight to behold.

If surf fishing is more your thing then there's still a reason to take to the beach and brave the summer crowds. The late summer months give you one of the best chances to hook a tarpon from the sand. The pogy pods they feast on keep them within casting distance a lot of times. Fish where the bait pods are visible with a fresh dead pogy or live whiting and make sure your tackle is sufficient.

Until next time, stay hydrated and tight lines.

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A refresher course in school bus safety

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The dawn of a new school year is a time marked by change and fresh opportunities. For many children, school marks the first time they are away from their parents for an extended period of time. It also may be the first

time they ride in a vehicle other than their parents' cars.

Each school day, 25 million children ride a bus to school in the United States. A school bus is among the safest modes of transport and one of the most regulated vehicles on the road,

according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Riding a school bus can be a novel experience no matter a student's age or grade. Kindergarteners may be introduced to the school bus on their first day of school, while older students are no doubt familiar with life inside a school bus. But all students and families can benefit from a refresher course on school bus procedures to ensure this school year begins on safe footing.

- Be a smart pedestrian. Riding the school bus is very safe, but injuries can occur walking to and from the bus stop. Watch for cars backing out of driveways and always look both ways multiple times before crossing streets.
- Remember school bus laws. Most areas of the country, including Florida, have specific school bus laws that include stopping when red lights are flashing on the school bus. Cars must stop whether they're behind the school

bus, next to it or on the opposite side of the street facing the bus. Stopping allows passengers to enter or exit the bus safely.

- Stand away from the curb. The National Safety Council advises keeping six feet, or three giant steps, away from the curb while waiting for the bus. Young children should be carefully supervised.
- Be visible. Always cross in front of the bus, making eye contact with the driver so that he or she knows your intentions before crossing. If you drop something, do not bend down to pick it up. Tell the driver instead.
- Remain seated. Find a seat promptly and remain seated for the duration of the ride. Do not stand up and proceed down the center aisle until the bus has stopped.
- Minimize distractions. Always speak softly and behave so that you do not distract the driver.

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College test prep classes coming to library

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Friends of the Bartram Trail Library are sponsoring a series of ACT and SAT prep classes to be held at the Bartram Trail Public Library. The dates of these classes are Aug. 23, 30 and Sept. 6, 13, 20. Classes are one hour and 15 minutes each. Students may sign up for either or both series. The ACT classes will be from 5 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. and the SAT classes will be from 6:30 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.

Following a practice test completed at home, the fifth and final session will be a review session from 5 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. for English/Reading and from 6:30 p.m. – 7:45 p.m. for Math. Students should bring their calculators.

Each series of five sessions costs \$45, or \$90 to attend both.

The last day to register is Aug. 18, 2022. Registration information can be obtained at the Bartram Trail Branch Library or by contacting Phyllis Macy at macy17@yahoo.com.

The sessions will include two English/Reading and two Math. Fol-

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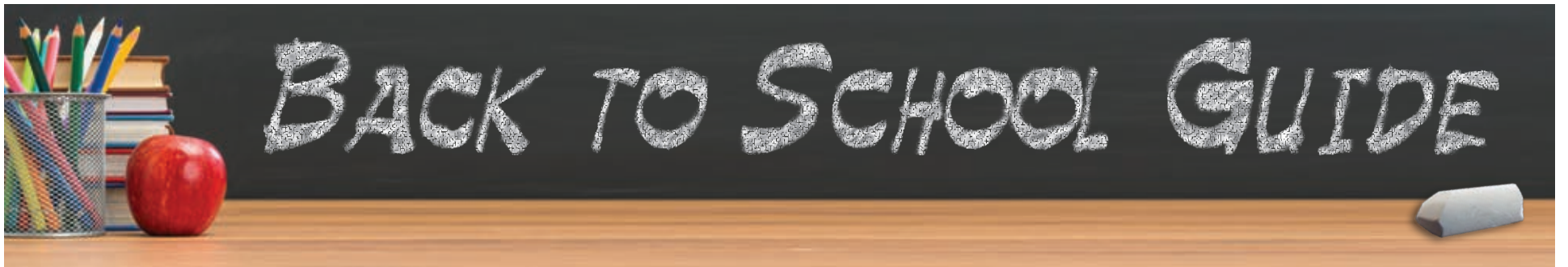
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Tryouts as life lessons

By Susan Rieger
mail@floridanewline.com

It is well known that tryouts can be tough on student athletes, but said difficulties can also serve as useful life lessons regarding preparation for circumstances such as college applications, auditions, or job interviews.

According to Jim Thompson, founder and CEO of Positive Coaching Alliance, “Disappointment is a great opportunity to reinforce positive character traits like determination and resilience.”

If our athletes can learn to reshape their disappointments into determination, Thompson says other positive attributes are likely to follow.

Some guidelines for the big day are:

Focus on effort. As our athletes prepare for the tryout season, reminding them that they cannot control the outcome is important. Instill in them that instead of focusing on what is out of their hands, focus on what they can control — their effort and attitude. Remind your athletes to “stay in their lanes” and focus on themselves, not the other students.

“I am” and “I will” statements can help kids manage the ups and down of not performing perfectly. “I am” or “I will” statements encourage positivity and focus rather than casting a shadow of doubt or self-deprecation. Using these statements to help shape your athlete’s self image in the face of disappointment will help them to move on and celebrate more triumphantly in the face of success.

Have fun! Making friends, learning new skills, and creating memories are all inclusive to the tryout process. Tryouts are meant to be engaging events for kids in which they display their skills and connect with their fellow athletes regardless of the outcome. Tryouts are not engineered to be stressful experiences. Remind your athlete to breathe, make new friends, and put their best foot forward.



Photo courtesy Susan Rieger
Difficulties with tryouts can serve as useful life lessons.

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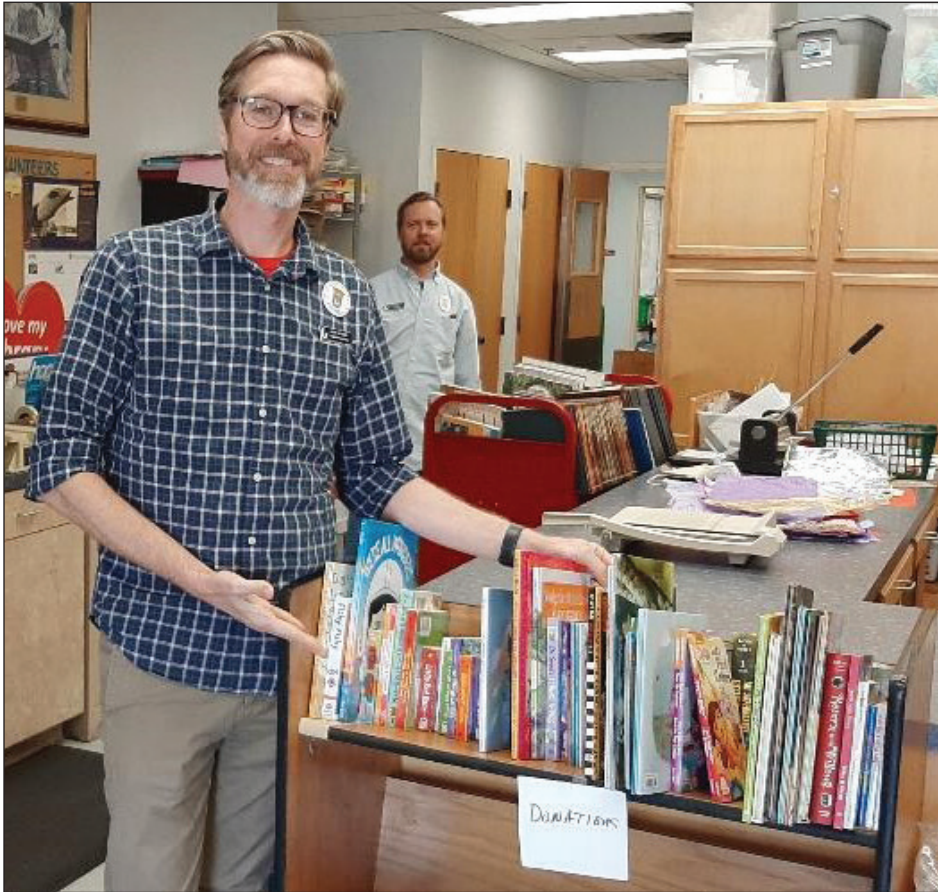


Photo courtesy Newcomers of North St. Johns
Andrew J. Calvert, Youth Services Librarian, St. Johns County Public Library System.

Newcomers group donates books to library

By Michele Oliver
mail@floridanewslines.com

Members of the Newcomers of North St. Johns generously donated more than 40 children's books to the St. Johns County Public Library System. Additionally, \$300 in cash donations were also collected for the library.

"We were thrilled to be able to collect such a wonderful variety of children's

books during our annual drive," said co-president Pat Lett. "Because of our members' generosity, kids in our area will be able to keep up their reading skills during the summer and beyond."

The books and in-kind donations were delivered to Andrew J. Calvert, Youth Services Librarian, after the club's April luncheon.

Pantry Raiders

A simple, flavorful salad to whip up in a snap

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

When preparing meals at home, cooks know that it helps to have a few simple, easily prepared dishes in their culinary repertoire. These are dishes that don't require too much planning and utilize certain staples that are present in everyone's pantry. Such is the case with this recipe for "Crunchy Cucumber Salad with Crushed Peanuts" from Ruta Kahate's "5 Spices, 50 Dishes" (Chronicle Books). Most of the ingredients for this flavorful salad are likely already in your kitchen, and it won't be long after you begin preparing the recipe that you'll be sitting down and enjoying a meal with family and friends.

Crunchy Cucumber Salad with Crushed Peanuts

Serves 4

2 English or other unwaxed cucumbers, chopped into 1/4-inch dice (about 3 cups)

1 medium green serrano chile, minced (seed first if you prefer)

1/2 cup peanuts, preferably raw (but toasted, unsalted ones will do)

2 tbsp. lemon juice, or more if needed

1 tsp. salt

1/2 to 3/4 tsp. sugar

1/8 tsp. cayenne

1 tbsp. canola oil

1/4 tsp. mustard seeds

Place the diced cucumbers in a medium bowl along with the chile. Using a coffee grinder or food processor, pulse the peanuts until they are reduced to a coarse powder. (You don't want big chunks of peanuts, nor do you want a fine powder; stop grinding somewhere in between!) Add the peanuts to the cucumbers along with the lemon juice, salt and sugar, and mix well. Taste and adjust the salt, sugar and lemon juice as needed. The salad should be slightly tart.



Make the tadka:
Place the cayenne in a little pile on top of the salad. Do not stir it in yet. Heat the oil in a small skillet or butter warmer over high heat. When it begins to smoke, add the mustard seeds, covering the pan with a lid or spatter screen. As soon as the seeds stop sputtering, pour the oil over the cayenne. Stir the dressing in and serve at room temperature or cold.

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Travel

Make Memories in Mid- Maine

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Maine coastline — Acadia National Park.

Visit Maine in the summer, and you'll wish to spend June through August in the New England state. Cool temperatures and low humidity create an ideal environment, not to mention the scenic beauty.

Maine's landscape runs from evergreen pine forests to tall craggy mountains and rocky coasts studded by lighthouses. The Atlantic provides pristine breeding grounds for lobsters, mussels, clams, and scallops. Wild blueberries thrive, especially in northern Maine.

The state's crowning jewel, Acadia National Park, ranks among the most beloved and visited of our 63 natural treasures. Hike from a sand beach to outcroppings on boulders battered by the sea and climb (or drive) to the summit of Cadillac Mountain, the tallest peak on the east coast. Kayak on serene Jordan Pond and bicycle along the historic carriage roads. I suggest two to three days, depending on your desired activities.

Acadia sits on Mount Desert Island in mid-Maine, along with Bar Harbor, a small town that's unfortunately been overrun with souvenir and tacky tee-shirt shops. Stay there for quick access to the park, or consider quieter respites in Southwest Harbor.

Drive fewer than two hours and arrive in a quintessential Maine village, Camden. White steepled churches, non-chain restaurants and shops, and art galleries dot the two-block main street overlooking Penobscot Bay. There, pleasure boats and windjammer schooners fill the docks.

I boarded the Lewis R French, a sailboat, for a three-night cruise. The French, the oldest known two-masted schooner in the United States, remains one of the few in active service. She



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
The Lewis R French.

operates much as she would have when she was built in 1871.

She carries 20 passengers in single, double, and bunk bed cabins. Each cabin included a sink, a window, reading lights, and a USB charger, but no toilet. Two heads (bathrooms) were located on the main deck. The cabins felt cramped, but I reminded myself I was aboard a historic sailing ship. I spent most of my daylight hours on deck. The sound of the waves and creaking of the wooden boat made it easy to imagine stepping back in time on a similar journey.

Once we set out into Penobscot Bay, the wind, weather, and tide dictated the destination. Captain Becky let Mother Nature determine the path as the French is pure sail and carries no inboard engine. A small boat in the rear uses a motor to help guide the schooner in and out of the busy Camden harbor.

The passengers help raise and lower the sail and anchor, but the rest of the time is spent watching the coastline, relaxing, and dining. Chef prepares fine meals on a wood-burning stove. One evening, we anchored near an uninhabited island and devoured a lobster bake prepared by the crew.

Camden's neighbor, Rockland, a mere 10 minutes away, features a lighthouse that rests almost a mile offshore. It's accessed by a massive granite breakwater path. When you walk out, you understand why this project took 18 years and a billion and a half pounds of granite to complete.

Rockland's other highlight sits downtown — the fabulous Farnsworth Art Museum, home to hundreds of artworks by Andrew, N.C., and Jamie Wyeth, among others. The Wyeth family summered in the area, and numerous paintings reflect the New England coast.

I flew in and out of Bangor, an ideal small airport with excellent access to Acadia — but I can't recommend much to see or do in Bangor. Other gateway options are Boston or Portland, Maine.

I'm not ready for a sailor's life, but I cherish the memories of my unforgettable windjammer adventure, hikes in Acadia National Park, and eating lots of lobster and blueberry pie.

Visit www.bylandersea.com to read more of local travel writer Debi Lander's stories and travel tips.



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