

The CreekLine

NOVEMBER 2023 Volume 23 Issue 11

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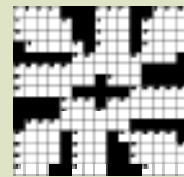
page 3
BFF Best Furry Friend



page 5
Q&A with
Beverly Slough



page 9
Get to Know ...
Al and Mildred Hagans



page 10
Puzzles



Photo courtesy Janice Charles

Al and Phyllis Abbatiello were presented the Garry Balogh Inspiring Excellence Award by Dean Stoddart, FDOT State Scenic Highway Coordinator, on Sept. 19.

Abbatiellos receive prestigious state-wide award

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

Longtime Fruit Cove residents Al and Phyllis Abbatiello were awarded the Garry Balogh Inspiring Excellence Award from the Florida Scenic Highway Program/ Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) at the Sept. 19 William Bartram Scenic and Historic Highway Group meeting. Surprise doesn't begin to describe the Abbatiellos' reaction to receiving this prestigious award.

"It knocked us over," Al Abbatiello said. "I was basically stunned."

Abbatiello said that Dean Stoddart, FDOT State Scenic Highway Coordinator, came to their meeting and the Abbatiellos were told he was just visiting; the Abbatiellos were completely unaware of Stoddart's true purpose until he started talking about the award about halfway through his general remarks.

"We were just so honored that he would attend our meeting," Phyllis

Abbatiello award cont. on pg. 2

Veteran's Day tradition "Field of Crosses" returns

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The first celebration using the term Veterans' Day occurred in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1947. Raymond Weeks, a WWII veteran, organized the "National Veterans' Day," which included a parade and other festivities, to honor all veterans. The event was held on Nov. 11, then designated Armistice Day.

This year, the Fallen Heroes Military Tribute will be held on Sunday, Nov. 12 at 1 p.m. at Faith Community Church, 3450 County Road 210W in St. Johns. A program will be presented featuring an Honor Guard, an invocation, the reading and ringing of the bell for each fallen Florida hero, special musical presentations, and featured guest speakers Capt. Larry Jackson, US Air Force (ret) representing Tunnel to Towers and CJ Smith, Senior Chief Petty Officer US Navy (ret) representing Canine Companions for Independence. Jim Steele, bugler from Bugles Across America, will reprise his tribute from previous years. Refreshments will be served following the ceremony.

The Memorial Field of Crosses honors Florida-born military service men and women who have given their lives in the line of duty in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. There are 351 four-foot crosses that bear the names, pictures, rank, branch of service, age, and date of death of those who perished. The eight larger crosses represent all others who died in



Photos courtesy Jackie Valyou

WWI, WWII, Vietnam Conflict, Korea, the Beirut Peace Mission, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. A special tribute was added in 2022 to honor the "Forgotten 13" brave Marines, Navy Corpsman, and Soldier who were killed in the terrorist attack while helping support the U.S. evacuation of Afghanistan in August of 2021.

"The community is encouraged to attend and make this tribute a family event to share the true meaning of Veterans Day and reflect upon those brave young men and women who sacrificed all so that we could enjoy the freedoms we have today," said Bruce Van Dam. "Let our children know that Freedom isn't free. These veterans were someone's son or daughter, husband or wife, and

father or mother. Share a moment of reflection before one of these white crosses so that the veteran's memory continues to live on and is not forgotten. They represent some of the best of their generation, many only in their early twenties. Say a silent prayer for the fallen as the soft gentle notes of the bugler's 'Taps' echoes across the field."

This tribute has been displayed in nine churches in the area since its inception in 2015. Due to the pandemic, there was a two-year hiatus from 2020 - 2021. With the assistance of local Boy Scouts of America Troops 718 and 474, the "Field of Crosses" tribute has returned to St Johns. The memorial was a vision of Helping Hands of St. Johns to honor local men and women who sacrificed their lives to protect our freedoms and liberties.

The Memorial Field of Crosses is free to the public and will be open daily from dawn to dusk for viewing beginning Nov. 5. Visitors are asked to be respectful and pay homage to these exceptional men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

If any community member would like to contribute or provide assistance in placing crosses or the American Flags for each cross, contact Bruce Van Dam at bb64fco@yahoo.com.



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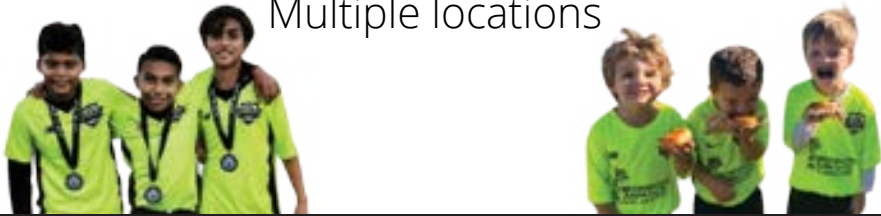
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Abbatiello award cont. from pg. 1

Abbatiello said. “We had no idea of the true reason for his visit.”

The award, established in 2015, is named for Garry Balogh — the past Florida Department of Transportation District Five Scenic Highway Coordinator. Each year a member of the byway community who best exemplifies Balogh’s passion for Florida’s scenic highway program is selected. Nominees are measured in numerous categories, including leadership skills, innovation, and dedication to excellence. This year, Al and Phyllis Abbatiello were jointly honored with the award after a secret nomination by William Bartram Scenic and Historic Highway Group (WB-SHH) Group Vice Chair Angie McFarland.

The Abbatiellos moved to NW St. Johns County in 1998 and were instrumental in helping to found the WBSHH in 1999, along with about 25 citizens including the late Mary Cornwell. Over the years, the group has been responsible for not only obtaining Scenic and Historic Highway status, but for protecting its interests in the area. The Abbatiellos headed up a team of volunteers that developed a local history curriculum available to St. Johns County educators and also assisted in the creation of local oral histories designed to document the stories of longtime residents of the area. Several years ago, the group received a national Scenic Byways grant to create a corridor master plan, which has served as a road map for the organization — striking a balance between growth and resource preservation.

Over the years, the number of members in the group had dwindled, so in November 2022, Al Abbatiello came up with the idea to send a mailer to all property owners on both sides of State Road 13.

“Of the 1,100 addresses we mailed to, with information about the WBSHH and an invitation to join, we netted 60 new members. We were very pleased with this result,” Al Abbatiello said.

Phyllis Abbatiello said they have been able to form committees and are presently looking forward to having elections in May 2024.

“Al and I have been doing this for so long that we really would like some new people to join us and step in,” she said.

The list of accomplishments of the WBSHH is long, but there are many current and future needs, according to Al Abbatiello.

“There is still much work to be done, including attending other local meetings like the Board of County Commissioners meetings and the St. Johns County Roundtable meetings on behalf of our group,” he said.

The Abbatiellos, while delighted to receive the Garry Balogh Inspiring Excellence Award, hope that mostly it will encourage others to participate in saving not only the Bartram Scenic Highway, but also NW St. Johns County as well.

“The Bartram Scenic Highway has a long history that needs to be preserved, as well as preserve the nature,” Phyllis Abbatiello said.



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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Sunny!



Breed:
Labrador Retriever

Favorite Activity:
Giving kisses/licks and napping with teddy bears

Favorite Treat:
Apples

Favorite Friend:
His two human sisters, Olivia and Hannah

How did your BFF get their name:
Our daughters asked for a dog for years and when we got her they said she made them as happy as the sunshine – so they named her Sunny.

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@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet.



Senior NewsLine in this issue! Pages 12 - 14

Table of Contents

- 4 What's Happening in St. Johns
- 6 Q&A with Vicky Oakes
- 7 Q&A with Sheriff Rob Hardwick
- 11 Jimmy's Fishing Report
- 16 Briefs

When you advertise, you encourage repeat business, create traffic, and attract new customers!

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MYSTERY PHOTO

Can you guess where this is?
Submit your answer to: mail@floridanewsline.com
Last month's Mystery Photo was the mural on the side of TD Bank on Race Track Road.

P	A	C	A		A	S	K	I	N	G						
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CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

A. turkey B. gathering C. holiday D. thankful

Answers to our Puzzles
PG 10

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NOTICE OF CERTIFICATION OF TAX ROLL

Pursuant to Sections 193.122 and 197.323, Florida Statutes, Notice is Hereby Given that the Tax Roll for St. Johns County was Certified to the St. Johns County Tax Collector on the 12th day of October, 2023, for the Collection of 2023 Taxes Pending Value Adjustment Board Changes.

EDDIE CREAMER
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For additional information, please visit our website at www.sjcpa.gov or contact us at (904) 827-5500

November

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 11:30 a.m. each day. Contact Program Coordinator Myra Fisher at (904) 209-3658 or mfisher@coasjc.org 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 Maple Street Biscuit Company, 1627 Race Track Road in St. Johns. Visit the group's Facebook page (Playing HOOKie) or email playinghookie2022@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: Open Card Play at Council on Aging (COA) River House, 179 Marine Street in St. Augustine. Bring your deck of cards and socialize over a friendly card game of your choosing every Thursday beginning Nov. 2 from 12:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

2nd - 5th: Disney's Beauty and the Beast will be presented by the Bartram Trail High School Theatre Department at 7 p.m. on Nov. 2, 3, and 4 as well as at 2 p.m. on Nov. 5 at the Bartram Trail High School (Auditorium), 7399 Longleaf Pine Pkwy. Tickets cost \$15 when purchased online or \$20 at the door. Visit <https://bit.ly/BTHSBATBTIX> for more information or to purchase tickets.

3rd: "How to Handle Your Kids on Legal Issues" a free lecture by Megan Wall, St. Johns County Legal Aid, will be presented at Council on Aging (COA) River House, 179 Marine Street in St. Augustine, on Friday, Nov. 3 from 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

6th: ESOL Learn to Read, with partners at Learn to Read St. Johns, will be held on Monday, Nov. 6. The beginner class is from 3:15 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. and the intermediate and/or conversation class is

from 4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Register at www.sjcpls.org. Walkins will be welcome as space allows. Call 904-827-6960 or email Donna at dbrasch@sjcfl.us for more information.

6th: The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable will meet on Monday, Nov. 6 at 10 a.m. at St. Augustine Waterworks building, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. The featured speaker will be Interim County Administrator Joy Andrews. Email info@sjcroundtable.org to register for the meeting or visit www.sjcroundtable.org for more information.

7th: Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, Nov. 7 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church in the Kids Space room on the County Dock Road side of the church at 2501 Loretto Road. Jenna Borcharding will present "Getting Ready for the Longarm." Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

7th: Happy Hookers crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on Nov. 7 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.

7th: ECO Cinema, featuring the film "100 Yards of Hope," will be held at St. Augustine Yacht Club on Nov. 7. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the film starts at 6:30 p.m. The event is free; food and drink will be available for purchase at the event. The film will be followed by a panel discussion. This event is a fundraiser for Force Blue, supporting coral restoration. Contact staugustinefilmsociety@gmail.com for more information.

8th: Widow to Widow, support group for widows by widows is held at Council on Aging (COA) River House, 179 Marine Street in St. Augustine on Wednesdays beginning Nov. 8 from 11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

9th: Garden Club of Switzerland will hold its monthly meeting on Nov. 9 at 10 a.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd. Master Gardener Shirley Barber's presentation "All America Selections Display Gardens," will explain the AAS organization and criteria for judging plant

selections. Barber has designed, propagated and maintained the AAS Demonstration spring and fall gardens at the UF Extension Gardens for years. Guests are welcome to attend. Visit www.switzerlandgc.org for more information.

11th: The Bartram Trail Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, Nov. 11) from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. The topic is a discussion on ancestral veterans and a review of Sons and Daughters of American Revolution societies. Email ginglish@comcast.net for more information. Visit www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClub-Group to send a request to join the club.

11th: Friends of Alpine Groves Park meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, Nov. 11) at 11 a.m. at the Harris-Bennett Farmhouse in Alpine Groves Park, 2060 State Road 13. Plans for the Winter Festival, which will include arts and crafts vendors, food trucks, games, a silent auction, and Santa and will be held at the park on Dec. 9, will be finalized. Docents will conduct tours of the historic farmhouse from 12 p.m. - 2 p.m. As always, the public is invited. Email friendsofalpinepark@gmail.com for more information.

12th: Sundays at Stetson's, a monthly folk music concert series featuring artists who reflect the values, spirit, and goals of author Stetson Kennedy, will be held at Belulahatchee Park in Fruit Cove from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 12. This event is sponsored by the Stetson Kennedy Foundation and St. Johns County Parks. Admission is free, but there is a suggested donation of \$10. Registration is required via email (skf.reservations@gmail.com).

13th: The Northwest St. Johns County United for Progress Club will meet on Monday, Nov. 13 at 6:30 p.m. Visit www.nwstjohnsup.com or email nwsjcp@gmail.com for more information or if you'd like to attend.

14th: Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club will host its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, Nov. 14 at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. Several charities will share who they serve and how they serve. Checks for \$32 should be made payable to BTNC and mailed to Brenda Jenkins, 2204

Fort Mellon Court, St. Augustine, FL 32092. Payment must be received by Nov. 7; be sure to indicate your entrée choice on the check memo. Visit www.facebook.com/BTNC1 for food choices and updated information.

14th: Newcomers of North St. Johns will host a luncheon featuring Bingo and the group's annual Food Drive on Tuesday, Nov. 14 beginning at 10:30 a.m. at Al Dente's Ristorante Italiano, 90 Shops Blvd., Unit 60. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members. All reservations must be received by Nov. 7. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information.

16th: William Bartram Scenic Highway Corridor Management Group will meet at Westminster Woods, Gathering Place Room on Thursday, Nov. 19 at 6:30 p.m. and via virtual link. At this meeting, members will decide the meeting location for 2024. Contact alabbat@comcast.net for the meeting link. Note this is a new location for our meetings through the remainder of 2023.

17th: Adult Craft: Fa La La Lap Blanket at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will be held on Friday, Nov. 17 at 10 a.m. Make a cozy tied lap blanket for the season. Spaces are limited. Register at www.sjcpls.org or dbrasch@sjcfl.us or call the library at (904) 827-6960.

20th: The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, Nov. 20 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. Sunnie Malesky will talk about and show the "Family of Log Cabin Quilts." Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

23rd: 8th annual Nocatee PEC Turkey Trot will be held on Thursday, Nov. 23 at Nocatee Event Field, 245 Nocatee Center Way. Registration begins at 6:30 a.m., followed by a Kids Fun Run at 7:45 a.m. and the 5K Run at 8 a.m. Proceeds will benefit local St. Johns charities through St. Johns CARES. Each finisher will receive a t-shirt and medal and prizes will be awarded to age group winners. The race is rain or shine; visit <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/PonteVedra/PsychEdConnectionsTurkeyTrot> for more information.

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

Q: Can you shed any light on the changes to the recommended rezoning for new schools K-8 OO and K-8 NN?

A: As a result of public input, we took another look at the rezoning and new plans were developed. These plans have been advertised as required by law, 30 days prior to the November School Board meeting at which we will vote.

The biggest change was the rezoning of Silverleaf. The northernmost part of Silverleaf is now proposed to attend Liberty Pines Academy and another northern section is now proposed to attend K-8 NN. These students would be coming from Wards Creek and Pacetti Bay Middle School. Concurrent to this proposal, we announced two more new schools are planned to open in fall 2026 (these are in addition to the two new schools in 2024 and the one new school in 2025). One of these 2026 schools will be built in Silverleaf and ultimately the northernmost students will come back to their own school at that time. The second 2026 school will be built in Nocatee. Another result of this change will be that Palencia/Las Calinas/Kensington students will not be rezoned to Sebastian Middle School.

I hope that community members will now understand the value of talking to us, as these changes came about as a result of their concerns and suggestions.

Q: Do you have an update on this year's teachers' contract?

A: I am very pleased that at the October board meeting we approved the contract with our instructional staff. I'm very grateful to have this contract in place, which was ratified by 95 percent of St. Johns Education Associa-

tion (SJEA) members and a 5 – 0 vote of the school board. I'm very pleased with the collaborative bargaining this year which has been a hallmark of our relationship with SJEA over the years. One highlight was that we were able to give some extra money to our more experienced teachers.

Q: Can you go over any highlights from the St. Johns Legislative Delegation priorities?

A: One big topic is PECO (Public Education Capital Outlay), a state funding program that requires that schools be at 150 percent capacity before a new school can be built. Sen. Travis Hutson assured me that he's working on this, but as I pointed out to him, this is just one piece of the puzzle ... the other piece is having funds available to build.

We also requested a return to the pre-recession ability of high growth school districts to levy up to 2 mills to help meet the demands of growth. Since approximately 2009, this was reduced to a maximum millage of 1.5 mills and has never gone back up. Speaker Paul Renner acknowledged this need of a high growth district and said he would look for a mechanism to help.

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

A: The St. Johns County School District was a partner with the recent Sing Out Loud Festival in St. Augustine. Our portion of the proceeds from this event was \$70,000 and we've allocated these funds to new band instruments districtwide.

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.

unity
Church for Creative Living in St. Johns

Please join us for

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Sunday, November 26th
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10:30 AM Service
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DEADLINE NOV. 15

Linda Gay
Linda@FloridaNewsLine.com
904.607.5062



with State Attorney, 7th Judicial Circuit, R.J. Larizza

Q: Does your office prosecute animal cruelty cases?

A: Yes. We recently submitted our annual legislative budget request and in it we included a funding request for a dedicated animal cruelty unit. We have a robust animal cruelty representation already as one of our prosecutors is on the Florida Bar Animal Cruelty section. He's our expert for any animal cruelty cases in our four counties to train and coach prosecutors handling these types of cases. More funding from the legislature would allow for us to hire more prosecutors and having a dedicated unit would enhance our efforts.

Q: Why is this important?

A: Animals deserve to be treated with love and respect and animal cruelty is bad enough on its own, but when you consider that animal cruelty is a strong indicator of other crimes against humans, strong prosecution of these cases is necessary. If we can prevent other crimes against children or spouses, it makes our community safer.

Q: What is the correlation between animal cruelty and violent crimes against humans?

A: Statistics show a strong correlation between those who are intentionally cruel to animals and those who commit violent crimes against people. Surveys have shown that 71 percent of domestic violence victims said their abusers also targeted pets. In another study, pet abuse had occurred in 88 percent of families under supervision for abuse of the children. If a person is prone to senseless violence against animals, it's a logical progression that they may also abuse people.

Q: What other kinds of animal cruelty need to be considered?

A: People who are animal hoarders display another form of animal cruelty. These are the people who just have too many pets to care for. The animals are victimized, but this is often also a sign that the hoarder has a mental health condition and intervention is necessary. Also, there is organized animal cruelty such as dog fighting and cock fighting. These abusers train the animals to be aggressive and violent. Sometimes due to the heightened aggression at these events of not only the animals but also the people, homicides and other violent events occur.

I believe that a strong policy of prosecuting animal cruelty cases may also prevent other crimes and that is why we are requesting this additional funding.

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with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Q: As we approach the end of 2023, what is the Elections Office doing to prepare for the 2024 elections?

A: The first election of 2024 is only four months away — the Presidential Preference Primary Election on March 19, 2024. The Elections Office has been hard at work recruiting poll workers, securing polling locations, organizing and replenishing materials, conducting voter outreach and voter education, and more.

Q: Are you still looking for poll workers for the 2024 elections?

A: We currently have a full roster of poll workers for the 2024 elections. We recruited all year to replace any retiring poll workers and will be completing our final Poll Worker Orientation classes in November. Poll Worker Orientation is a mandatory introductory class where interested St. Johns County voters can learn more about the role and responsibilities of a poll worker before beginning formal Poll Worker Training. Any St. Johns County registered voters interested in becoming a poll worker can still apply. This does not mean that you will train or be assigned, but you will be added to our pool of interested, available poll workers. To apply, visit www.votesjc.gov or call the Elections Office at 904-823-2238.

Q: Will the polling places be the same as the 2022 elections?

A: Our Poll Worker and Operations departments have been hard at work this year securing convenient and safe polling places for the 2024 elections. We reached out to our existing polling places in January to confirm availability for 2024. Out of our 41 polling locations, three facilities are no longer available — Celebration Lutheran Church (Pct. 107), Faith Community Church

(Pct. 108/201), and Palm Valley Baptist Church (Pct. 403). It has been a priority of the Elections Office to replace these lost locations and find new locations while considering the growth of the county. Due to growth, we have also added two new polling places. We plan to release our finalized 2024 Polling Place list by early January.

Q: What should voters be doing to prepare for the Presidential Preference Primary Election?

A: It's never too early to be election ready. We recommend not waiting until you're at the polling place on Election Day to find out if your information is up to date. Visit www.votesjc.gov and click the "My Voter Status" link to verify that your name, address, and party affiliation are correct. The deadline to register to vote and to change your party affiliation for the Presidential Preference Primary Election is Feb. 20, 2024.

Q: When will we know the presidential candidates that will appear on the ballot in March?

November 30 is the last day for political parties to submit a list of presidential candidates for the Presidential Preference Primary ballot to the Secretary of State. On Dec. 19, the Secretary of State will certify the names of the presidential candidates for political party nomination to the Supervisors of Elections to be printed on the 2024 Presidential Preference Primary Election ballot.

Q: Do you have any other reminders for voters?

A: Due to law changes, all vote-by-mail requests expired after the November 2022 General Election. If you are planning to vote-by-mail for the 2024 elections, visit www.votesjc.gov to request a ballot, or call the Elections Office at (904) 823-2238.

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with St. Johns County Sheriff
Rob Hardwick

Q: Now that the new golf cart law has become effective, what would you like St. Johns County citizens to know?

A: The state law is now in effect, as of Oct. 1, 2023. This new law prohibits anyone under the age of 18 from operating a golf cart unless they possess a valid Florida learner's permit or valid driver's license. Having a learner's permit requires at least some knowledge of rules of the road, which we are hoping will make drivers and riders safer.

Q: What are deputies with SJSO doing to enforce this new law?

A: As of yet, we have not issued any citations, but rather we are trying to educate community members about why this new law is important to keep our kids safe. We have a golf cart flier PSA that we have posted to our social media accounts and we have deputies that drive golf carts in some communities so they can stop and educate

people. We are just trying to get the message out. This law is not meant to be punitive.

Q: As background, how did this new law come about?

A: We became aware of an increase in golf cart related incidents involving juveniles (previously, one could operate a golf cart at age 14 on certain roadways with no training on rules of the road). We did some national research and found that there were approximately 13,000 golf cart related accidents that required an emergency room visit (between 2007 – 2017, according to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System of the US Consumer Product Safety Commission). Furthermore, the data showed that 40 percent of these involved children under the age of 16 and half involved children falling out of a moving golf cart.

We wanted to address this problem
Sheriff Rob Hardwick cont. on pg. 9

Groundbreaking ceremony heralds start of Mill Creek Park construction

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

St. Johns County held a groundbreaking ceremony on Oct. 4 to celebrate the start of the construction of Mill Creek Park, located at 4881 State Road 16. This project will feature a multipurpose field, two baseball fields, two softball fields, four batting cages, restrooms, and a concession stand. The project will cost \$12 million, funded by Parks Impact Fees through new developments.

The ceremony began with remarks from Parks and Recreation Director Ryan Kane.

"This is the first step in the county really making a big commitment toward Parks and Recreation and the future generations of St. Johns County," Kane said.

"Today is a celebration of yet another effort by St. Johns County to improve and elevate the quality of life in this community," District 2 Commissioner Sarah Arnold said. "As we continue to address the infrastructure needs of this growing county with roads, we are also addressing the needs for recreation."



Photo courtesy St. Johns County
A ceremonial dirt toss was held at the groundbreaking ceremony for Mill Creek Park on Oct. 4.

A ceremonial dirt toss was conducted, which included Board Chairman Christian Whitehurst, Commissioner Arnold, District 3 Commissioner Roy Alaimo, Interim County Administrator Joy Andrews, Assistant County Administrator Sarah Taylor, Interim Assistant County Administrator Colin Groff, Public Works Director Greg Caldwell, and Director Kane.

Construction is anticipated to finish in the fall of 2024, and the park will be open to the public in the winter of 2024.

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Local equestrians selected to ride for Team USA at Mounted Games Championships

By Jennifer Yudow
mail@floridanewline.com

Two local 23-year-old women, Catherine “Cat” Yudow, owner of CY Equestrian, LLC, and Alexia “Lexi” Ray, a senior at Flagler College, have been selected to compete for Team USA



Squirt and Lexi Ray.

at the Mounted Games Nations Team Championships in Cape Town, South Africa in December 2023.

Teamwork, speed, agility, athleticism, strategy, and skill are all essential to success in equestrian mounted games, which are fast paced relay races on horses. Several teams compete at a time in a wide variety of games including Bang a Balloon, Litter Lifters, Flag Fliers, Sword Lancers, and Pony Pairs. Each team has four players riding, where both speed and accuracy are critical. Mistakes can cost valuable time in a competition because riders must stop and make corrections before continuing the race. Additionally, teams can be eliminated if mistakes are not corrected.

Yudow and Ray both started



Photos courtesy Jennifer Yudow Dakota and Cat Yudow.

mounted games with the United States Pony Club at young ages. In July 2023, their team, Quick Silver, won first place at Pony Club National Championships in Tryon, North Carolina.

In 2017, they joined the United States Mounted Games Association (USMGA) when their longtime coach, Pam Johnson, started a group in Florida. This gave them more opportunities to compete in Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Georgia. Over the past few years, they have continued to improve their riding skills and develop strategies to speed up

their game play.

Although they can't take their beloved games ponies Dakota and Squirt with them, Yudow and Ray are excited to represent the USMGA and Team USA in South Africa competing against several other teams from around the world.

[Author's Note: The cost of the entry for the competition, horse rental, travel, and accommodations is quite costly. For those interested, donations may be made to USMGA, a 501(c)3 - EIN# 32-0043189, via PayPal to @usmga1042@gmail.com (SOUTH AFRICA TEAM).

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Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

Al and Mildred Hagans

Al and Mildred Hagans first met while they were elementary school children and Al's family moved into a property in Jacksonville that Mildred's great aunt and great uncle owned. "Her family was our landlord," Al said. They both graduated from Eugene Butler High School and then attended Florida Junior College (now known as Florida State College at Jacksonville.) The couple married in 1970 and are celebrating 53 years of marriage this year. Al served in both the Navy and the Army; first as an enlisted member in the Navy and then as an officer in the Army. They eventually were both members of the first graduating class of the University of North Florida in 1974 (Al has a degree in language and literature and Mildred's degree is in business). They have three children: Kenton, who lives in Colorado; Tracy, who lives on the Westside of Jacksonville, and Jennifer, who lives in Virginia. Al and Mildred also have nine grandchildren.



Photo courtesy Mildred Hagans
Al and Mildred Hagans

when we moved back to Jacksonville. I was able to transfer with IBM and also worked at CSX and finally the UF School of Medicine. We both retired in 2016.

Q: What do you like about living in St. Johns?

Mildred: When we first moved back to Jacksonville, we lived in Mandarin, but we felt we had outgrown that house. We've lived in St. Johns for 11 years. We think it's a nice area and we've always enjoyed living in suburban areas.

Q: What are your hobbies?

Mildred: We bought a mid-sized RV and love to travel. We did a long tour of the Midwest, through 18 states, on our way to Colorado to see our son. Now we do shorter trips and realize that even though we both grew up in Florida, we've taken it for granted. There's plenty to explore here. I also love to read and run the Gate River Run about every other year.

Al: I like to do yard work. I take a lot of pride in our yard. I also consider myself a jack-of-all-trades, so I like to fix things.

Q: What would you say is your secret to a long marriage?

Al: Well, we've been married a long time, so I'd say we genuinely like each other.

Mildred: I think common interests and the same value system is important. And yes, we've gone to bed angry sometimes, but by the next morning we've usually forgotten what it was we were angry about.

in the service?

Mildred: First he was enlisted in the Navy and we lived in Portsmouth, Virginia. When we decided to come back to Jacksonville to finish our college education at UNF, Al joined ROTC in a joint program with the University of Florida. He graduated as an officer in the Army and was stationed in Fort Stewart, Georgia.

Q: What were your careers after Al left the Army?

Al: I left the Army as a First Lieutenant and we moved to Michigan, where I was in executive management at General Motors. Mildred worked at IBM. While there, I obtained my law degree from Cooley Law School. Once we returned to Jacksonville, I served as a public defender and then practiced family law.

Mildred: We spent seven years in Michigan and then decided the winter weather was too rough, so that's

Sheriff Rob Hardwick cont. from pg. 7

not just locally, but statewide, so we reached out to our bill sponsors, Rep. Cyndi Stevenson and Sen. Erin Grall. We met with nearly all legislators last spring and all cabinet members as we advocated for passage of this bill.

Q: Besides the safety component, are there any other advantages to the new law?

A: Now that this is a statewide requirement, some cities and counties had to amend their ordinances to reflect the new law. St. Johns County didn't have one to amend. With this cohesive law, the statewide tracking mechanism is more uniform and will be able to provide hard, factual data. Golf carts have very few safety features, so in absence of that, we felt we had to step up and are hopeful that this new law will keep our kids safer.

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.

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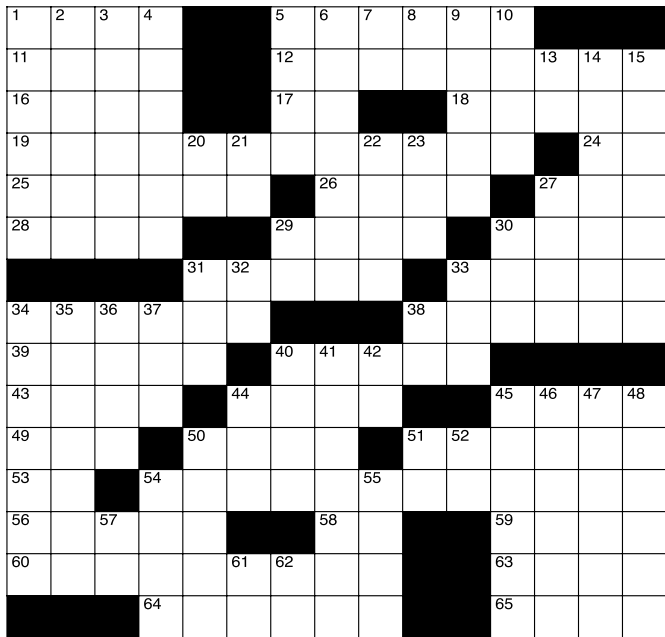
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. Nocturnal S. American rodent
5. Requesting
11. Give temporarily
12. Happiness
16. Military branch
17. ___, denotes past
18. Middle Eastern city
19. Air hostesses
24. Partner to Pa
25. Percussion instrument
26. Popular computers
27. Decrease light
28. Valley in the Osh Region
29. "To ___ his own"
30. Absence of difficulty
31. Notice announcing intended marriage read out in church
33. Trims by cutting
34. Impact
38. Military member
39. A French river
40. Member of prehistoric people in Mexico
43. Messenger ribonucleic acid
44. Musician Clapton
45. Greek sophist
49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
50. Narrow valley
51. A way to disentangle
53. Indicates not an issue (abbr.)
54. Recommending
56. Genus of legumes
58. Friend to Larry and Curly
59. Off-Broadway theater award
60. Fencers
63. Small Eurasian deer
64. Denoting passerine birds
65. Separate by category

CLUES DOWN

1. Colorless fluid part of blood
2. Of a main artery
3. Photographic equipment
4. Confirms a point
5. Developed over time
6. Not the leader
7. ___ Lang (country singer)
8. Adults need one
9. Nests of pheasants
10. Antelopes
13. One quintillion bytes (abbr.)
14. Japanese three-stringed lute
15. Type of cat
20. Cools your home
21. The ancient Egyptian sun god
22. Pouches
23. Trigraph
27. Form of Persian spoken in Afghanistan
29. ___ route
30. Body part
31. Bridge building degree
32. Indicates position
33. Political action committee
34. Tasty snack
35. Part of a quadruped
36. Locate
37. Pitching statistic
38. Of I
40. City in Utah
41. Football players in the trenches
42. Hammer is one
44. A "nightmarish" street
45. Performers
46. Slang for cut or scrape
47. More breathable
48. Most slick
50. Provokes
51. Home to college's Flyers
52. Sodium
54. Large fish of mackerel family
55. Zero
57. ___ and behold
61. The Palmetto State
62. Popular Tom Cruise movie franchise (abbr.)

TURKEY DAY WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- APPLE PIE
- BISCUITS
- BRINE
- CASSEROLE
- CIDER
- CORNBREAD
- CORNUCOPIA
- DINNER
- ENTERTAIN
- FAMILY
- FRIENDS
- FULL
- GRACIOUS
- GRATITUDE
- GRAVY
- GREEN BEANS
- HOLIDAY
- MEAL
- OVEN
- SOUP
- STUFFING
- THANKSGIVING
- TURKEY
- YAMS



Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to Thanksgiving.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 26 = H)

- A. 6 20 11 1 24 25**
Clue: *Gobble gobble*
- B. 12 3 6 26 24 11 19 17 11**
Clue: *Coming together*
- C. 26 5 23 19 4 3 25**
Clue: *Special event*
- D. 6 26 3 17 1 2 20 23**
Clue: *Showing gratitude*

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Freedom Crossing's "World Changers" rock the school!

By Lauren O'Shell
mail@floridanewline.com

On Sept. 29, Freedom Crossing Academy students participated in the international initiative, "Rock Your School Day" for the sixth year in a row. "Rock Your School Day" challenges schools to create highly engaging lessons and outside-the-box learning experiences for students based around a fun theme. Freedom Crossing Falcons adopted the theme "World Changers" to guide their day of engagement.



Photos courtesy Lauren O'Shell

Kindergarten through second grade students collected goods for the local food pantry, Pie in the Sky.

supplies, coins and their time to make these special service-learning projects come alive in the hallways of Freedom Crossing.

Through these "World Changing" projects, FCA students donated 10 boxes to Pie in the Sky food pantry, eight boxes filled with military care packages and raised \$165.93, which purchased one goat and two flocks of chicks for a community in need.

On "Rock Your School Day", students celebrated the theme of "World Changers" by creating poems, drawings, songs, skits and crafts to inspire others that they can take charge and change the world. Music and creativity filled the hallways as students engaged in lessons about giving back to local, national and worldly causes.

Service-learning projects filled the classrooms during the days leading up to "Rock Your School Day." Kindergarten through second grade students collected goods for the local food pantry, Pie in the Sky, and partnered with Two Men and a Truck moving company to transport the donated items to the food pantry which serves our local senior population. Third through fifth grade students collected care package items for deployed military soldiers, and middle school students led a coin drive through Heifer International, a non-profit organization that donates animals to rural farming communities in developing countries. Students made handmade cards to add to the food pantry and military deliveries. Families generously donated food,

Fishing | **Jimmy's Fishing Report**
By Jimmy Tomazinis
mail@floridanewline.com

In contrast with what we experienced last year, we actually got some seasonal weather in October, which cooled the water down nicely. Without any unforeseen weather — and we can never count that out anymore — we're on our way towards our winter patterns through November.

Shrimp will be around, but there will be fewer and fewer. You can still continue to catch them for bait or food throughout the month, and for the most part, the same fish will still be around except flounder and sheepshead. They seem to travel towards the inlet as it gets colder. Stripers, redfish, and black drum will still be happy to have a shrimp. Look for them around bridges, deeper docks, and shell bars.

It's also a great time to take some of those smaller river shrimp you may have kept and frozen earlier in the year to the beach to try for pompano and whiting. As long as water temperatures stay between 65 and 75 degrees, both will still be around in good numbers; if it

gets below 65 you're going to get more whiting, which I prefer over pompano anyway, not to start an uproar or anything. Remember to look for the right conditions first.

I was hoping to hold off until next month, but during the intense heat of the summer I could not help from daydreaming about wearing a jacket and enjoying a cold day of speck fishing, so I'm going to let the cat out of the bag. They don't mind the cooler water and are actually reveling in it. At least in my mind they are. I'm still hoping to wait until the end of December to start my own pursuits, but I know a few purists are already at it.

If nothing else, it's a great time to get out on the water and see the leaves change. Our wetlands and swamps bordering the river and creeks have high densities of deciduous trees which allows us to peep the best we get in these parts. Bring a rod while you're at it and make the most of our seasonal weather. Tight lines.

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Senior NewsLine

Statewide program provides free, unbiased insurance counseling for Medicare beneficiaries

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

ElderSource is reminding residents that the agency's Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE) program has

specifically trained counselors to help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to understand their health care options so they can make the best decisions for

their individual needs during the Open Enrollment period. During open enrollment, beneficiaries can change their Medicare Prescription Drug or Medicare Advantage plan to affect things like cost, coverage, drug formularies, in-network providers, and pharmacies.

eficiaries, their families, and caregivers.

SHINE also educates beneficiaries to protect, detect, and report potential errors, fraud, and abuse with their Medicare coverage. SHINE strongly encourages beneficiaries to be on the lookout for their Annual Notice of Change (ANOC), which they should receive from their plan no later than Sept. 30, 2023. Reviewing their benefits and evaluating their health care options each year is vitally important for beneficiaries. Acting quickly can assure a smooth transition into the 2024 benefit year.

"Medicare can be a daunting subject for most people and the Open Enrollment Period only runs from Oct. 15, 2023, through Dec. 7, 2023, but you don't have to go it alone. During this time, lean on our experts for advice and utilize a local, valuable resource by connecting with the SHINE program," said Linda Levin, ElderSource CEO.

To receive help from SHINE, individuals may call to schedule appointments at designated SHINE counseling sites, attend enrollment events in their local communities, or arrange to speak with a trained SHINE counselor at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337). Visit www.floridashine.org for a listing of SHINE counseling sites and enrollment events.

SHINE is a program of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and is operated locally through ElderSource, the Area Agency on Aging and Aging and Disability Resource Center for Northeast Florida. The SHINE mission is to provide free and unbiased information about Medicare and Medicaid for ben-



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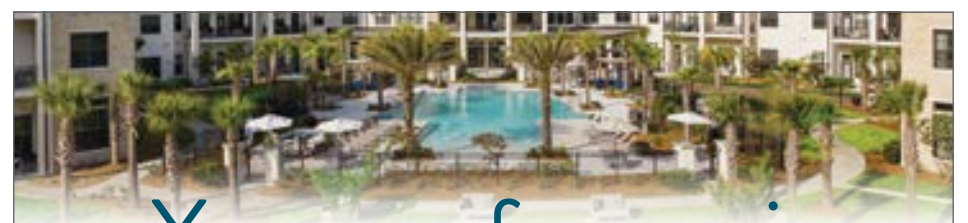
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Senior NewsLine

How caregivers can alleviate stress

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Serving as a caregiver for a friend or loved one can be both rewarding and taxing at the same time. The senior housing authority A Place for Mom indicates that 41 million Americans offer unpaid caregiving services, and that number is expected to increase as the aging population grows in the coming decades. Formal caregivers are paid care providers in a home or care setting; however, an informal caregiver is an unpaid individual that assists others with activities of daily living as well as medical tasks.

Whether one is a formal or informal caregiver, researchers have long known that caregiving can adversely affect a

caregiver's mental and physical health. The AARP Public Policy Institute says 17 percent of caregivers feel their health in general has gotten worse due to caregiving responsibilities. The National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP also indicate older caregivers caring for persons age 65 and older report a higher degree of physical strain.

The fatigue that arises from caring for another individual is often referred to as caregiver burnout. Since caregiving takes place over several years, the impact can escalate over time. Caregiver stress is directly related to burnout. One of the first steps to take is recognizing the signs of caregiver burnout so that action can be taken to improve the situation.

The Mayo Clinic says signs of caregiver stress include:

- worrying all the time
- feeling tired often
- changes in sleep
- gaining or losing weight
- becoming easily irked or angry
- losing interest in activities once enjoyed
- feeling sad or depressed
- experiencing frequent headaches, pains or other health problems
- misusing drugs or alcohol, including

Caregivers cont. on pg. 13



Photo courtesy MetroCreative

Caregivers may feel burdened by stress. There are options available to manage it.

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This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)) through USAging as part of a financial assistance award to USAging totaling \$74,999,635 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official view of, nor an endorsement, by USAging, ACL/ HHS or the U.S. Government.



Senior NewsLine

Caregivers cont. from pg. 12

prescriptions

- missing your own medical appointments or other appointments

Caregivers need to put themselves first at times in order to help avoid health complications that can come from the stress and demand of caregiving. Make use of these caregiver stress management tips, courtesy of the Mayo Clinic

and Penn Medicine.

- Ask for help. Figure out ways that others can help out and then be sure to let them know and accept anything that is provided.
- Do the best you can. Every caregiver feels they are not doing enough at some point in time. Do whatever you can manage and know that it is adequate.
- Set small goals. Categorize responsibili-

ties into smaller, more manageable tasks. Make lists of what is most important and tackle those goals, moving on as needed.

- Reach out to a support group. There are support groups for many different types of needs, including caregiver support. People who are experiencing the same highs and lows as you can offer advice or just be there to listen.
- Find ways to rest and sleep. Many caregivers are sleep deprived. If sleeping

has become an issue, discuss potential remedies with your own doctor.

- Look into respite care help. Taking a break from caregiving can do wonders. Certain adult care centers and skilled nursing homes offer temporary respite care services for informal caregivers. A loved one can be dropped off for a night or two, giving you a rest. This also is an option if you want to go on vacation.

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Creekside teens settling in as Rotary Exchange students in Europe

By Rotarian Al Kalter
mail@floridanewslines.com

Owen Scruggs hasn't attended a single Creekside Knights football game this fall. Allie Grabowski did not celebrate with her friends at the Homecoming dance. Instead, both were thousands of miles away, spending this year discovering European cultures, immersing themselves with new families and friends, and learning a lot about themselves as Rotary exchange students.

This year, Grabowski is living in Växjö, Sweden, hosted by the local Rotary Club in an area between Stockholm and Copenhagen. She said, "People's views of exchange mostly consist of the big moments such as the holidays, trips, the milestone when the language starts to click, your first and last day. What most people don't see or simply can't understand to a certain level are the little everyday things that truly make or break an exchange. I don't think I will ever forget the time spent sitting on the bus waiting for my stop, laughing so hard I can't breathe with my friends from school, and going on walks with my host family in Sweden's lush forests."

Scruggs's home for this year is the small city of Hengelo, in the eastern part of the Netherlands. He reflects on his first few months, "It is really nice having an idyllic school life where I never have to

worry about tests or grades (because I already graduated in America); however, that doesn't mean being separated from everything you previously knew is easy. It is very difficult, but also very satisfying to look back and see the changes and adaptations I've made. For example, I'm much more active and take far more initiatives in conversations than before. I've also taken on the Dutch standard of being very direct in conversation, which is kind of funny to think of."

Grabowski and Scruggs are sponsored by the Bartram Trail – Julington Creek Rotary Club, and are part of a group of eight northeast Florida high school students who are experiencing this year as Rotary exchange students in foreign countries. This opportunity is available for all local teenagers with a sense of adventure and a desire to discover the world and help bring it closer together. Similarly, Rotary brings in foreign students to spend a year in local schools with local families. Visit www.rye6970.org for more information about this amazing program.

The Rotary Club of Bartram Trail – Julington Creek meets every Thursday morning, from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., at Westminster Woods on Julington Creek. Guests and prospective members are always welcome. Visit www.bartram-trailrotary.org for more information.



Photo courtesy Al Kalter

Owen Scruggs was warmly greeted by members of his host Rotary Club and his host family when he arrived in the Netherlands this summer.

Card group Jokers Wild meets weekly



Photo courtesy Terry Brickhouse

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

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Briefs

Library to hold book sale

The Friends of the Bartram Trail Library Holiday Sale will begin Nov. 18 and will continue into the New Year. The event will feature thousands of giftable quality books, puzzles, and games for sale. In addition to the Holiday Sale, the Friends of the Library will have a bargain sale in the Bartram Room during library hours from Nov. 29 – Dec. 2. Paid members of Friends of the Library can access the sale on Tuesday, Nov. 28 from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and they can also fill a brown paper bag for \$5 on Saturday.

Memberships are valid for a full calendar year. Any membership purchased on or after Oct. 1, 2023 will be valid through Dec. 31, 2024. Current members can begin renewing for next year anytime. Visit the branch to pick up an application. Contact info@bartram-trailfol.org with any questions.

Annual Giving Tree to benefit 40 local non-profits

The St. Johns CARES 17th annual Giving Tree initiative will take place from Nov. 1 to Dec. 8. The wishes of clients from 40 non-profit organizations in St. Johns County serving Elderly, Veterans, Homeless, Abused, Children and Animals are printed onto holiday wish tags. The wish tags and posters are displayed in participating businesses, schools and organizations throughout the county. The donations placed in the collection boxes are then sorted and provided to the non-profit organizations for the

holidays. Monetary donations are used to purchase wish items that were not donated. Visit www.stjohnscares.org for more information.

Salute veterans and clean up the roadway

Victory Lutheran Church is sponsoring a “Salute to Veterans” coinciding with its quarterly St. Johns Adopt-A-Road litter removal on Saturday, Nov. 11 beginning at 9 a.m. Community members are encouraged to drop off or make “Thank You” cards for the veterans residing at the Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans’ Nursing Home.

This litter removal will begin in the parking lot of the Silverleaf Commons shopping mall located at 70 Silver Forest Drive from 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. with litter pickup (ages eight and older) along a one-mile stretch of St. Johns Parkway. Attendees are asked to wear a brightly colored shirt. From 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., children’s activities will be held at the parent-supervised card-making and bike/stroller parade decorating station. Call Victory Lutheran Church at (904) 642-8900 for more information.

Bartram Trail Newcomers’ and Women’s Club to celebrate Thanksgiving

The Bartram Trail Newcomers’ and Women’s Club will hold its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, Nov. 14 at 11 a.m. at St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. The November luncheon theme is Thanksgiving and the group will thank several charities

for their service to the community and ask them to share about who they serve, how they serve and what can be done to show gratitude and thankfulness in accomplishing their mission.

Checks for \$32 should be made payable to BTNC and mailed to Brenda Jenkins, 2204 Fort Mellon Court, St Augustine, FL 32092. Payment must be received no later than Nov. 7; be sure to indicate entrée choice on the check memo. Email Linda Beard at bartramtnc@gmail.com for club information or questions. Visit www.facebook.com/BTNC1 to see meeting pictures and download a membership form.

Newcomers of North St. Johns announces Bingo luncheon

Newcomers of North Saint Johns will host its November luncheon on Tuesday, Nov. 14 at Al Dente’s Ristorante Italiano, 90 Shops Blvd., Unit 60 beginning at 10:30 a.m. The event features a delicious lunch and Bingo games with prizes. Members are also encouraged to support the local food pantry with the group’s annual Food Drive. Canned beans and vegetables; dry rice (up to three-pound bags) and other unopened, non-perishable food items are welcomed. No glass, please. Monetary donations are accepted with cash or checks.

The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests. All reservations must be received by Nov. 7. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information.

2024 Legislative Priorities presented at annual Legislative Delegation meeting

The annual St. Johns County Legislative Delegation meeting took place on Friday, Oct. 13. Vice Chair Sarah Arnold of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners welcomed the Delegation and presented the County’s 2024 legislative priorities. The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) unanimously approved the 2024 Legislative Action Plan at the Sept. 19 BOCC regular meeting.

At the Oct. 13 meeting, the St. Johns County Legislative Delegation, which includes Sen. Travis Hutson, Rep. Cyndi Stevenson, Speaker Paul Renner, and Rep. Bobby Payne, were able to hear public testimony on legislative issues, appropriations, and local bills.

The 2024 Legislative Action Plan requests more than \$69 million in state appropriations for the following local projects:

- State Road 16: To alleviate traffic congestion and improve safety.
- County Road 2209: To complete the central segment of this critical road corridor.
- Central Public Safety Station: To provide additional emergency response capacity.
- Regional Fire Training Facility: To address the emergency responder workforce shortage.



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