

The CreekLine

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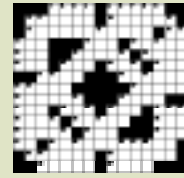
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Photo courtesy MetroCreative

High school facilities open to public

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

In an effort to promote community health and well-being this summer, the St. Johns County School District will again open its high school facilities to the public on select Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. Outdoor facilities at Allen D. Nease, Bartram Trail, Beachside, Creekside, Pedro Menendez, Ponte Vedra, St. Augustine and Toco Creek high schools will be open the following dates and times.

Wednesday, June 5, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Wednesday, June 12, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Wednesday, June 19, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Wednesday, June 26, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

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County's regional park plan to begin in 2024

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

On April 2, 2024, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners unanimously authorized the county administrator to move forward with an estimated \$123 million plan to construct five regional parks and community centers. The presented plan was modified to include the consideration of a full-service library in Nocatee, considering the vast needs of the community of 32,000 residents. The approved plan also includes library hubs in the central (Shearwater) community park and northwest (Greenbriar) park.

County Administrator Joy Andrews and her staff will assemble a financing team to present a financing package back to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration at a future meeting date.

New parks cont. on pg. 2



Photo courtesy St. Johns County
Rendering of proposed Northwest Community Park.

Girls on the Run season culminates in celebratory 5K

By Anne Soracco
mail@floridanewslines.com

Students from Julington Creek Elementary participated in the Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida's 5K on Saturday, May 4 at the University of North Florida. All the girls from the school's two teams have been participating in the program since February. Girls on the Run employs research-based lessons utilizing dynamic discussions and engaging running games to impart critical life skills. The season culminated in the celebratory 5K event that united families, friends, and community members in honoring the girls' growth and achievements throughout the season.

Girls on the Run cont. on pg. 2



Photo courtesy Anne Soracco
Girls on the Run team members from Julington Creek Elementary.



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Paid for by Roy Alaimo, Republican, for St. Johns County Commission.

New parks cont. from pg. 1

With this regional park plan combined with previous financial commitments to parks, St. Johns County will have a five-year investment of more than \$200 million into county-wide parks and recreation facilities to support an array of programs and services.

Construction of the five-park campus project is expected to begin in 2024 and be completed by the end of 2026.

Ryan Kane, director of parks and recreation, shared that this regional plan is guided by the county's master plan initiative from December 2022 to April 2023 that engaged the public and community partners to identify needs and locations of future parks in St. Johns County.

A summary of the five park campus projects includes:

Northeast Community Park (\$43 million): Fields for baseball, softball, and multipurpose uses, pickleball and sand volleyball courts, splash pad, picnic pavilions, and a community center with indoor space to support the Supervisor of Elections and a full-service Public Library branch.

Central Sportsplex (\$42 million): Five multipurpose fields with synthetic turf fields, three natural grass multipurpose fields, areas designated for tailgating, ticketing and food trucks, and grandstands with a press box.

Central Community Park (\$13 million): Indoor space for recreational programs and to support the Supervisor of Elections and St. Johns County Public Library System services, courts for pickleball and basketball, a recreational field, a splash pad, and two playgrounds.

Northwest Community Park (\$22.4

million): Fields for baseball and softball, courts for pickleball and sand volleyball, a community center with a designated area for library services, and picnic pavilions.

Davis Park Turf Fields (\$3 million): Conversion of softball fields to baseball and to turf fields, and additional parking amenities.

St. Johns County budget director Jesse Dunn said, "It is important to note that no property taxes will be used to pay the cost of construction of these parks. Instead we will look to use a combination of existing accumulated impact fees paid by developments and a debt issuance to fund a Commission-approved program. St. Johns County has solid credit ratings of Moody's Aaa and S&P AA+. We will service the debt using impact fees, tourism tax dollars, and recurring State remitted revenue."



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Girls on the Run cont. from pg. 1

Since its inception in 2004, Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida has positively impacted more than 34,000 girls. This spring season alone, the program boasted 72 teams, serving girls across multiple counties including Alachua, Bradford, Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Union, and

Volusia. Julington Creek Elementary's students have been participating in the Girls on the Run program for more than 17 years and this year had more than 35 girls participate. The program relies on volunteer coaches from the school and community, and has students participate from other area schools that don't have Girls on the Run Teams.

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Breed:

Mixed breed rescue dog

Favorite Activity:

Running zoomies in the backyard.

Favorite Treat:

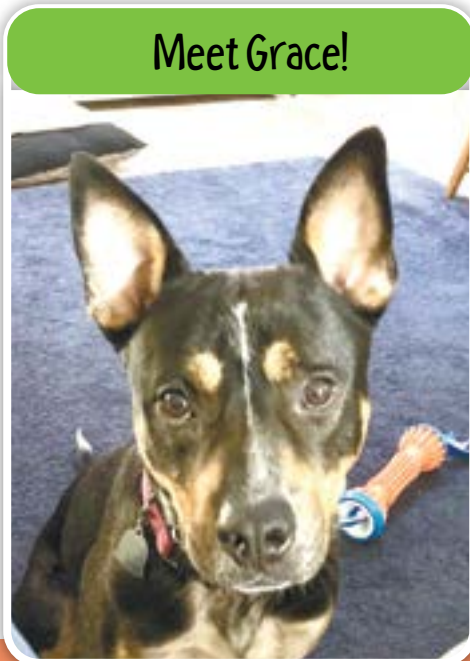
Ice cream

Favorite Friend:

Her human dad

How did your BFF get her name?

Because she is full of Grace.



Meet Grace!

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@floridanewline.com to enter your pet.

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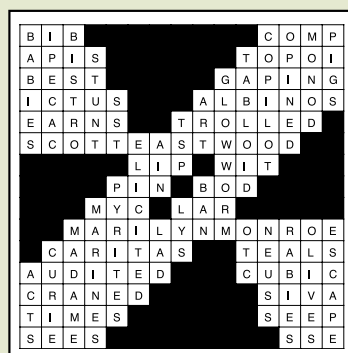
Commemorating the adoption of the flag of the United States on June 14, 1777 by resolution of the Second Continental Congress

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MYSTERY PHOTO

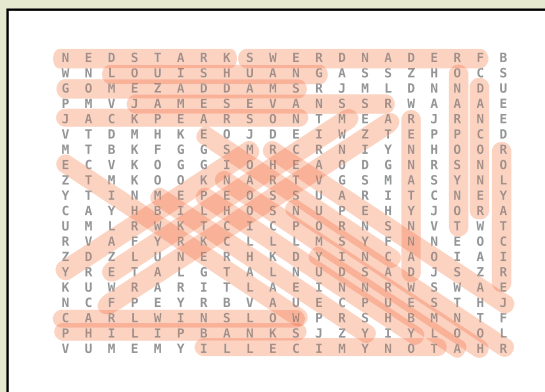
Can you guess where this is?
Submit your answer to: mail@floridanewline.com
Last month's Mystery Photo was Marywood Retreat Center on State Road 13.



Answers to our Puzzles PG 14



A. father B. mentor C. parent D. celebrate



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June

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: CommUnity Potluck will be held on June 2 at 11:30 a.m. at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road. Bring your favorite dish to share and enjoy food, conversation and fellowship. There is no cost. Call (904) 287-1505 or email UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com for more information.

2nd: Native American Flute Playshop at 12:30 p.m. on June 2 at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road. The cost is \$20 at the door. Call (904) 287-1505 or email UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com for more information.

2nd: The St. Augustine Film Society presents "Run Lola, Run" on June 2 at 7 p.m. at Temple Bet Yam, 2055 Wildwood Drive in St. Augustine. In this visually and conceptually stunning action film, a two-bit criminal leaves a bag of money on a subway. He calls his girlfriend Lola to help him

recover the money in the next 20 minutes and the film follows several different but similar paths to the ending based on small differences in the sequence of events. Email staugustinefilmsociety@gmail.com for more information.

4th: Happy Hookers crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on June 4 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.

4th: Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, June 4 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church's Loretto Road Campus in the Kids Space at 2501 Loretto Road. A hand quilting tutorial with guild member Jill Voetsch will be featured. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

5th: 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 June 5 from 11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday – Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

6th: Open Game Play at Council on Aging (COA) River House, 179 Marine Street in St. Augustine. Bring your deck of cards or board game (there are also games available at River House) and socialize over a friendly game of your choosing every Thursday beginning June 6 from 12:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday – Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

8th: The Friends of Alpine Park meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, June 8) at 11 a.m. at the Harris-Bennett Farmhouse in Alpine Groves

Park, 2060 State Road 13. 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.

8th: The Bartram Trail Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, June 8) from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. The topic for the meeting is "Evaluating sources and using Genealogy Proof Standard." Email ginglish@comcast.net for more information. Visit www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClubGroup to send a request to join the club.

8th: Teen Financial Literacy Workshop will be held at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on June 8 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. The subjects covered will include careers, spending, saving and investing, managing debt and protecting your assets. Instructors are from the Jacksonville Chapter of the Florida Institute of Public Accountants. Lunch is provided by our Friends of the Library. Registration required; call (904) 827-6960.

10th: The Northwest St. Johns County United for Progress Club will welcome Dan Van Tice of Equality Florida as guest speaker on Monday, June 10 at 6:30 p.m. Equality Florida advocates for the civil rights and protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender residents of Florida. For more information, visit www.nwstjohnsup.com or email nwsjcp@gmail.com.

15th: Second Saturday Adult Book Club will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library at 10 a.m. on June 15 to discuss "Mad Honey" by Jodi Picoult. Registration is required; email draasch@sjcfl.us.

17th: The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, June 17 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. Victoria Rondeau of "I Sew Desire

Quilts" will talk all about batting. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

20th: William Bartram Scenic Highway Group will meet on Thursday, June 20 beginning at 6:30 p.m. at Westminster Woods, Gathering Place Room. Join the discussion to keep NW St. Johns County Scenic and Historic and preserve the State Road 13 Scenic Highway. Virtual meeting access is available; contact alabat@comcast.net or call (904) 699-8475.

22nd: St. Johns Farmers Market will be held the fourth Saturday of each month (this month, June 22) from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Celebration Lutheran Church, 810 Roberts Road in St. Johns. The market includes fresh produce, food trucks and assorted vendors. Call the church at (904) 230-2496 for more information.

22nd: Dress a Girl Around the World at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will be held on Saturday, June 22 at 10 a.m. Learn to make dresses and shorts for girls around the world. You can pick up a kit to create at home, or turn in dresses you created to the Bartram Trail Branch. We also accept fabric and notion donations. Call the library at (904) 827-6960 for more information.

26th: US Navy Band Woodwind Quintet will perform at the Bartram Trail Library on June 26 from 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. This event is sponsored by the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library as part of the Adventure Begins at Your Library Summer Reading 2024 program. Contact Jbartley@sjcfl.us with any questions.



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Q&A with St. Johns County Clerk of Circuit Court and Comptroller Brandon Patty

Q. We heard you're being deployed by the Navy. Can you expand on why and how? Was it voluntary? When will you return?

A. Yes, in early December I was notified by the Navy that I was being involuntarily mobilized in support of overseas contingency operations. While I was eligible for worldwide assignment, the call was a surprise especially as I thought they were calling about an overdue travel voucher! Nonetheless, having my name called to serve overseas in uniform is an absolute honor and privilege. My orders began in late May and are scheduled to run through the end of the year.

Q. Have you notified the office? How was the response?

A. In early May, I called an all hands meeting and informed the team of my impending deployment and plans for moving forward. I wanted them to hear the official news from me first versus from others. It was definitely a shock to the office, though we have all quickly rallied around and are working through the challenge. I am really humbled at the support staff has extended and am very proud to work alongside such a dedicated group of public servants.

Q. How will this impact your office as clerk and comptroller?

A. Per Florida Statutes, I have requested

a leave of absence from the governor and have appointed a designee to fulfill my responsibilities. My senior leadership team is second to none, and they will continue managing their portfolios and divisions while our deputy clerks continue to excel and provide world-class customer service across our court and county functions. By and large for residents and stakeholders, our high-quality support will continue without fail.

Q. Any message you would like to provide to our readers?

A. Serving as your clerk and comptroller is the honor of a lifetime and, while I will be serving you in a different capacity, I want you to know that our office will continue operating at the highest levels. We will continue protecting taxpayer dollars, enhancing services across the board, and seeking opportunities to make your interactions with us easier than before. I cannot wait to rejoin the office upon my return and continue serving you in this important role. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me or our office with any questions or concerns. Thank you!

Q. What is the best way for residents to contact you?

A. Residents can call my office at (904) 819-3601. A lot of questions can be answered by visiting our website, www.stjohnsclerk.com.

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Peripheral Neuropathy Breakthrough!

*"My feet feel like they're on fire."
"Each step feels like I'm walking through mud."
"I live in constant fear that I'll fall."
"I can't sleep, my hands and feet tingle all night."*

What do all of these people have in common? They suffer from **peripheral neuropathy**. It's estimated that more than 20 million people in the United States have peripheral neuropathy. Unfortunately this figure may be significantly higher as the disease is often misdiagnosed because of its wide array of symptoms.

Dr. Jann Turpin of Riverplace Acupuncture Integrative Health in Jacksonville shares this belief. "I've been treating neuropathy, in all its various forms, for over one decade and so often my patients come to me because of the symptoms, not because of the diagnosis. They saw one of my newspaper ads, or read the testimonial of another patient, or spoke to another patient and said to themselves, 'hey, I feel the same thing'."

Lisa B. testified to this. "Pain doesn't wake me at night anymore and I can walk as much as I want to all day without pain. I'm going to start exercising on the treadmill, for the first time in years. These are things I couldn't do before seeing Dr. Jann and getting acupuncture!"

Those diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy often face a very grim reality; Western medicine declares that there is no solution while most alternative therapies carry large price tags and offer little to no resolve. Which is why Dr. Turpin and the staff at Riverplace Acupuncture pride themselves on being 'the last resort with the best results'.

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves and this damage is commonly caused by lack of blood flow in the hands and feet. This shortage results in a lack of nutrients; the nerves then begin to degenerate and die which causes pain ranging from discomfort to debilitating. Because neuropathy is a degenerative condition, once the nerves begin to deteriorate they will continue to do so until they are completely expired, leaving those suffering with severe balance issues. "In this case, the absence of pain is not necessarily a good thing," shares Dr. Turpin. "This usually means that your nerves are hanging by a thread."

So how exactly is Dr. Turpin able to reverse the effects of this degenerative disease? "Acupuncture has been used to increase blood flow for thousands of years which helps to get the necessary nutrients to the affected nerves. But the real magic happens when I integrate ATP Resonance BioTherapy™. This is tech that was originally developed by NASA to expedite recovering and healing."

"I just can't say enough about Dr. Jann," Lisa shared through tears of joy. "My husband and I moved here 3 years ago and he's gone to the beach almost every day. I always stayed home because of the pain and discomfort. Yesterday I walked on the beach with him! And next week we're starting ballroom dancing lessons. I am truly living life these days."

By seamlessly blending the ancient science of acupuncture with modern medical solutions, Dr. Turpin has achieved a 90% success rate in reversing the effects of neuropathy. She starts each patient with an initial consultation during

which a sensory exam is performed. "This not only aids in making a proper diagnosis but it helps to define just how much nerve damage has occurred," tells the doctor. "This is important because if a patient has suffered more than 95%, there is little that I can do to help them. I'm familiar with the medical miracle but I know my limits as a practitioner and the limits of my medicine."

When it comes to treating peripheral neuropathy, regardless of its origin, early detection greatly improves your chances of a full recovery.

If you or someone you love is suffering with chronic pain that presents as burning, tingling or 'pins and needles' or you've recently been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy, it's important to know that there are options. There is hope!

Call (904) 720 - 8887 to schedule an initial consultation or visit www.RiverplaceAcupuncture.com to read more incredible success stories.





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

Q: What is the latest on the River-Town K-8 school?

A: We are really pleased because we are making good progress on this school.

Tomorrow [May 16], weather permitting, walls will be raised which should get the community excited. I do receive a lot of questions about the zoning for this new school, which is slated to open in Fall 2025. It will not hold all of the K-8 students that are in RiverTown. Recall that the plan all along has been to build this school as a transitional K-8 school, until there are enough elementary students in RiverTown to build an elementary school. At that time, the K-8 school will become a middle school. Ultimately, we expect to have two elementary schools and one middle school in RiverTown.

Q: When will the zoning for this new school be determined?

A: The zoning discussion will likely begin in September of this year as we need to have it fully zoned by the end of November. There will be lots of opportunity for public input throughout the process.

Q: Do you have an update on the proposed Shearwater K-8 and Nocatee K-8, which are scheduled to open in Fall 2026?

A: Both of these construction contracts are out for bid, with the bid period scheduled to close on May 29.

Q: Do you have any thoughts on the end of this school year?

A: By the time you read this, school will be out for the summer. We had a wonderful school year and are so grateful for our parents and their support. We couldn't be more proud of our students. Our students have earned millions and millions of dollars in scholarships this year; our kids have excelled as always. Many have also excelled in our career academies and already have jobs lined up for after graduation. This year we have more students enlisting in the military and being accepted to military academies. We are quite proud of all of our students.

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

A: Superintendent Tim Forson has named Jessica McCool as the new principal at Cunningham Creek Elementary, to replace Katie O'Connell

who has moved on to be the principal of Trout Creek Academy. Many thanks to Bethany Mitidieri who served as interim principal. Jessica McCool has most recently served as assistant principal at Liberty Pines Academy.

We are pleased that we were able to hire 100 new teachers at our teacher recruitment fair in late April. We are looking good in all categories for next year, but still have a need for paraprofessionals for our special needs classes. Interested parties can visit our website (www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/jobs/) to apply.

Finally, if you know anyone who is moving to the area with new students for next year, please encourage them to go to our website (www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/families) as soon as possible and enroll their students, particularly any new kindergarteners, for next year.

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.

Rob Hardwick
St. Johns County Sheriff

- ✓ **Combat Veteran**
- ✓ **Dedicated Sheriff**
- ✓ **Husband & Father**

COMMUNITY LEADER

"I'm humbled to ask for your vote on August 20th so that I can continue to serve our community with integrity and honor."

- Sheriff Rob Hardwick
ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Paid for by Rob Hardwick, Republican, for St. Johns County Sheriff



with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Q: The Aug. 20 Primary Election is fast approaching. What is up next for the Elections Office?

A: The focus in June is Candidate Qualifying. Candidate qualifying will take place from noon, June 10, to noon, June 14. Under Florida Statute, qualifying papers began being accepted May 28, 2024.

Q: Have any offices qualified already?

A: Yes. The first qualifying period in 2024 was open from April 22 to April 26 for candidates for Judicial, State Attorney, Public Defender, U.S. Senator, and U.S. Representative offices to file with the Florida Division of Elections. These candidates do not file with the Supervisor of Elections. Information for these candidates can be found on the Florida Division of Elections website.

Q: What offices qualify with the St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Office during the June qualifying period?

A: The Elections Office will be qualifying candidates for all county offices, special districts, municipalities and community development districts.

The local offices scheduled for election include Sheriff, Tax Collector, Property Appraiser, Clerk of Courts, Supervisor of Elections, three County Commissioners, two School Board Members, and many more.

The Florida Division of Elections in Tallahassee will be qualifying candidates for State Senator, State Representative, and Multi-Special Districts.

Q: Can voters see which candidates are qualifying?

A: Yes. As local candidates file, their information is added into our system and posted on our website. This information

can be found by visiting www.votesjc.gov and selecting Candidate Information, then Candidate List and Reports.

Q: Where can voters see a complete list of the local offices up for election in 2024?

A: The list of local offices up for election in 2024 can be found on our website at www.votesjc.gov under Election Dates. Closer to the election, this page will also feature a link to a Primary Election information page that will have important dates, early voting locations, and information about voting in the Aug. 20 Primary Election.

Q: Are there any upcoming deadlines for the Aug. 20 Primary Election?

A: Yes, the last day to register to vote or change your party affiliation for the Aug. 20 Primary Election is July 22, 2024. To register to vote or update your information, visit www.votesjc.gov and hit the Register to Vote button on the home page.

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

A: Readers can email me at voakes@votesjc.gov or call me at (904) 823-2238. The Elections Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Our website, www.votesjc.gov also has a wealth of information.

Protect St. Johns

Henry Dean's Conservation Record

- Led the effort to protect and restore our 42 miles of beaches
- Initiated the re-establishment of our LAMP Committee
- Directly involved in conservation land negotiations and acquisitions around the entire state, totaling 1.25 million acres, including 60,000 acres in St. Johns: Guana River Preserve, Twelve Mile Swamp, Deep Creek, Moses Creek, and Matanzas State Forest
- Led the effort to restore 200,000 acres of the headwaters of the St. Johns River as part of the St. Johns River Upper Basin Restoration Project
- Directly involved in the acquisition of 700,000 acres of riverine floodplain along the entire St. Johns River and its major tributaries

HENRY DEAN
FOR COUNTY COMMISSION - DISTRICT 5

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with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Can you give a refresher on the recently passed laws concerning age requirements for golf cart operators?

A: Beginning last Oct. 1 and in effect today, a person operating a golf cart on a public road or street under the age of 18 must possess a valid driver's license or learner's permit. (In order to get a learner's permit, you must be at least 15 years old.) The idea is that the operator must have some "rules of the road" training. If the operator is 18 or older, they must possess a valid government issued identification or driver's license.

Q: Can a person with a learner's permit operate a golf cart without an adult?

A: Yes.

Q: What is your message to parents who allow underaged children to operate a golf cart if they are in an adjacent seat, or perhaps with the child on their lap?

A: This is against the law. The law says the person operating the golf cart must be at least 15 years old with a learner's permit or driver's license regardless of if there is a parent in the golf cart. We recommend that children be properly restrained for safety and so that the driver is not distracted.

Q: What is the fine for a golf cart operator who is determined to be

underage?

A: It would be a non-moving uniform traffic citation, and the fine is \$166.

Q: Where may golf carts be driven?

A: Let's talk about golf carts first, then low speed vehicles or LSVs. Golf carts do not have headlamps or a license plate and may not exceed 20 mph. They may be driven on certain roadways designated for golf carts with speed limits of 30 mph or less. This includes certain neighborhoods in Nocatee and Ponte Vedra Beach. They may be driven on a designated multi-use path, but not a bike path or sidewalk.

Low speed vehicles have headlamps, stop lights, windshields, seat belts and are registered; they have a license plate. Their speed can go up to 25 mph and they can only operate on public roads and streets with posted speeds of 35 mph or less. The operator must have a valid driver's license in their possession, as with a car.

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.

Guest Column

The Homeless Coalition of St Johns County - Time to Grow

By Debi Redding, Director

The Homeless Coalition of St. Johns County is a beacon of hope for families facing homelessness. The coalition provides a lifeline of support that includes low-income affordable permanent housing along with the much-needed wrap-around services to create resiliency and self-sufficiency. With a dedicated focus on empowering unhoused families to rebuild their lives, the coalition's comprehensive programs and services play a crucial role in breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Parents, with minor children living in the household, that are experiencing homelessness often face unique challenges that can make it difficult to secure stable housing and employment. The Homeless Coalition recognizes the specific needs of these populations and offers tailored assistance to address their individual circumstances and housing barriers. Case managers create a plan consisting of goal setting, life skills training, financial education, and childcare, to personally address each family's needs.

One of the key initiatives of the Homeless Coalition is its commitment to helping our families secure meaningful employment. Through

partnerships with local businesses and staffing agencies, the coalition coordinates job placement services, skills training programs, and resume-building workshops to help individuals find sustainable work. By empowering our families to become financially independent, the coalition aims to create a pathway to stability and success for these families. The Homeless Coalition recently began reporting timely rent payments to all three credit bureaus to increase credit scores and begin preparing families for home ownership.

In response to the ever-growing family homeless population, the Homeless Coalition has launched the 2024 Expansion Campaign to expand needed low-income affordable housing units and supportive services. The campaign aims to raise \$5.6 million to add 16 new cottages and an onsite Children's Education Center to further strengthen the foundation for families to flourish. These new facilities will not only provide much-needed housing for unhoused families, but will also develop a supportive community in which our children can thrive and build a future. To make this vision a reality, the Homeless Coalition is calling on

Guest column cont. on pg. 15

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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Business Briefs

SCORE reveals increased client engagement in FY2023 Impact Statement

SCORE Jacksonville, through the dedicated work of approximately 60 volunteers, increased free business mentoring and free or low-cost business education in 2023 by 44 percent over the prior fiscal year.

Key highlights for 2023 SCORE Jacksonville Impact:

- Total local service provided was 10,895, which is the combination of 2,598 total mentoring sessions and 8,297 in-person workshop attendance for which there was a 44 percent increase
- 65 percent of the 2023 clients were actively in business
- SCORE Jacksonville was recognized as District 491 Chapter of the Year
- Aaron Fontinel was recognized as the chapter's Volunteer of the Year for his leadership on administering The CEO Forum

Key statistics for 2023 SCORE Florida Impact:

- 3,092 new businesses started
- 15,269 total jobs created
- 48 percent of "in business" clients reported an increase in revenue

SCORE has 19 chapters in the state of Florida contributing to strengthening America's economy.

"I am quite proud of the ability to continuously deliver quality services to our clients because of an outstanding group of volunteers," said Jacksonville's SCORE Chapter chairperson Derrick Smith.

Visit www.score.org/jacksonville to learn more about SCORE Jacksonville programs and services.

St. Johns County moves forward with World Golf Village Plans

On April 16 the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners approved the \$5.5 million purchase of all World Golf Foundation, Inc. assets, including the Tour Production Building, parking and common space adding to county ownership of the Hall of Fame, IMAX Theater, and the grounds of the World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort Convention Center and Hotel. At a future Board of County Commissioners meeting, county staff will provide a summary of the citizen input acquired through various public engagement efforts since August 2023 along with a plan to move through a selection process of a partner for a development project.

World Golf Foundation, Inc. will lease back from the county the Tour Production Building until March 2025 to facilitate an efficient move of the production group to their new headquarters at TPC in Ponte Vedra. A ground lease includes an agreement with the foundation to continue operation of the IMAX Theater and the responsibility to maintain

the common space through the Property Owners Association until March 2025.

County Administrator Joy Andrews said, "While some may criticize the use of public funds to acquire the World Golf Foundation assets, it's crucial to recognize the broader context. With the decision made by the World Golf Foundation to move the World Golf Hall of Fame out of the World Golf Village and to relocate the PGA Tour Productions to PGA's headquarters in Ponte Vedra, the property was slated for unknown development, potentially outside of community interests. By seizing control through this acquisition, the community as a whole, gains the power to shape its future.

"This move allows us to invite the best private-public partnerships to enhance our residents' quality of life and unlock revenue opportunities. By maintaining control over the development process, we ensure that only what's best for our residents will be featured in the revitalized World Golf Village. Our goal is not just to meet expectations but to exceed them, creating a vibrant destination that our residents will be proud of. This investment represents a strategic opportunity to leverage public resources to positively shape the future of our community, ensuring that the World Golf

Village evolves in alignment with our community's vision and values."

The county plans to fund this purchase with \$2 million from American Rescue Plan Act Funds, \$2 million from 2019 Capital Improvement Fund, and \$1.55 million from Public Building Impact Fees.

The properties include:

- World Golf Hall of Fame: a 64,113 square-foot multi-purpose facility.
- World Golf Hall of Fame IMAX Theater: a 17,865 square-foot movie theater. The equipment (movie screen and audio/visual components) would remain in the building.
- PGA Tour Productions: a 32,329 square-foot Class-A office building.
- South Legacy Trail: 36.07 acres of various parking lots, rights-of-way areas, landscaping, and lakes.

In June 2023, the World Golf Foundation notified St. Johns County of its intention to move the World Golf Hall of Fame and the World Golf Hall of Fame IMAX theater out of the World Golf Village, and to relocate the PGA Tour Productions to a new building on the Global Home Campus.

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Briefs

Summer reading volunteer opportunities abound

If you are willing to spend a little time this summer helping others, there is an opportunity waiting for you! RSVP of St. Johns County is looking for community members to assist once a week in the summer reading program in the St. Johns County School District. Hours are flexible. If you are traveling this summer, you can help while you are in town.

“There are students who can greatly benefit from the help of those willing to give just a small amount of their time,” said Cheryl Freeman, RSVP director. “Assistance from community volunteers can make all the difference in helping these students succeed.”

Orientation will be provided, and background screening will be performed free of charge. Contact RSVP at (904) 547-3952 or Cheryl.Freeman@stjohns.k12.fl.us for more information.

Summer housing market expected to be fruitful for both buyers and sellers

More single-family homes are being listed in Northeast Florida, which may be a solid indication that this summer’s housing market will be fruitful for both buyers and sellers. Specifically, the six-county region registered 3,750 new single-family listings, a 54.3 percent increase from a year ago and a 4.8 percent hike from last month. Add to this inventory in Northeast Florida, which steadily rose to 6,490 homes — a 63.7 percent increase from April 2023 and a 9.9 percent hike from March 2024. Also closed sales fell 5.8 percent to 1,843, and pending sales decreased 26.7 percent to 1,465. All together this is evidence that buyers may now have a better selection to choose from than they have seen in a long time.

On the sellers’ side, prices are also continuing to rise, but the rate of increase is slowing. Single family homes on the First Coast inched up 2.7 percent to a median sales price of \$399,990. Northeast Florida’s Home Affordability Index continued to dip down to 64 in April. The Home Affordability Index measures housing affordability for the region. A higher number means greater affordability. This index measures affordability factors for all homebuyers making a 20% downpayment. An index of 100 is defined as the point where a median-income family has the exact amount of income needed to purchase a median-priced existing home. An index value over 100 means that the family has more than enough income, while a value below 100 means that a family doesn’t have enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan.

The median price per square foot for single-family homes in Northeast Florida was \$215, a 2.9 percent increase over March 2024, when the median price was \$209.

Mandatory changes in the selling process are on the horizon, and in a few short months prospective buyers will be asked to sign buyers’ sales agreements with their agents.

In St. Johns County, April 2024 median prices climbed 11.4 percent to

\$600,000 for single-family homes. The median days on the market rose 25.7 percent to 44. Month-to-month, closed sales dropped 4.9 percent to 485, pending sales dropped 20.9 percent to 409, and new listings increased .2 percent to 990. Active inventory climbed 5.3 percent to 2,010 homes, a 4.1-month supply. The Home Affordability Index fell 14.3 percent to 42, indicating that it is still very expensive to live in St. Johns County.

Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime welcomes Army veteran

The Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime will meet on June 8 at 11:15 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Featured speaker will be Army veteran Tonya Oxendine who will present “Words of a Woman Warrior.”

“Military members have a ‘can-do’ mentality,” Oxendine said. “Together, we faced challenges head-on, relying on hard work and determination to achieve our objectives.”

And this she did during her 30-year Army career, but she also endured traumatic challenges, including harassment, rejection, stereotypes and prejudice in a “man’s world.” She coped with her situation the same way so many other women, and men, have done — by bottling up her emotions. Oxendine finally sought help for her post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the severe depression and anxiety she was experiencing. The Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Talk program gave her the connection she needed. Now, she travels the world to help others heal and find peace by sharing her powerful story.

This will be an in-person discussion meeting and no zoom linkage will be offered. Contact floridasistersincrime@gmail.com for more information. Bring your coffee and bring a friend. The group welcomes misters and sisters to learn more about writing, promoting, and enjoying crime fiction.

April’s low rainfall highlights need for water conservation

April marks the third consecutive month of below-average rainfall for the St. Johns River Water Management District’s 18-county region. While frontal systems brought some rain, it primarily benefited the northern counties, leaving the southern counties drier. Overall, six counties experienced above-average rainfall, while 12 were below.

Despite the dry conditions, groundwater levels districtwide remain well above drought indicator levels, with most areas within the normal range. District staff continue to monitor rainfall and groundwater levels to ensure adequate supply for public demand.

While it is always critical to use our water wisely, the District strongly encourages the public to be mindful of their water usage during these dry months until summer rainfall patterns return. Below are simple tips for residents and businesses to help save water and money on their water bill.

Indoor:

Briefs cont. on pg. 13

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A history of Father's Day

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Each year, the third Sunday in June is a time to pay homage to fathers and the millions of other men who have stepped into the role of father. While it may seem as though Father's Day has been around forever, it didn't become a nationally recognized holiday in the United States until 1972, when President Richard Nixon signed Joint Resolution 187 into law.

Many thank Sonora Smart Dodd for making Father's Day happen. In 1909, while attending a Mother's Day sermon in church, Dodd felt fathers were equally deserving of praise. To honor

her own father, a Civil War veteran and widower who raised six children alone, Dodd petitioned for a Father's Day on June 5 (the anniversary of her father's death) in her native Spokane, Washington. The celebration was deferred to the third Sunday in June.

Another account says Grace Golden Clayton came up with the idea for a Father's Day in 1908 in Fairmont, West Virginia. Clayton was inspired to celebrate fathers after 361 local men perished in a deadly mine explosion. Clayton brought the idea up to the minister of her local church.

Historians say that Father's Day may

even be a much older idea. St. Joseph's Day, which was celebrated each year on March 19 in Catholic nations of Europe since the medieval era, and later elsewhere around the world, commemorates Joseph, the husband of Mary and father figure to Jesus. It was said that Joseph should be held up as the ideal example of fatherhood. The Coptic Orthodox Church celebrates St. Joseph's Day on July 20. In the Orthodox Christian Church, the second Sunday before the Nativity is celebrated as the Sunday of the Forefathers — celebrating all of Jesus' male ancestors, with an emphasis on Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish faith.

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JCE students attend STEM Expo



Photo courtesy Nicole Thompson

Lily Boulet, Jenna Dukette, and Elijah Galison represented Julington Creek Elementary School at the 2024 St. Johns County School District STEM Expo held at Picolata Crossing Elementary School on Wednesday, April 17. They collaborated and competed with other promising young scientists and engineers from other schools in the district to complete STEM challenges.

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Dive In! Middle school fishing club goes high-tech with underwater drone

By NewsLine Staff
 mail@floridanewsline.com

Forget your grandfather's cane pole! Sebastian Middle School's new fishing club is casting a net into the future by incorporating science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) into their watery pastime. The school's STEM coach, Frankie Portelos, and several eighth graders started the club that meets during lunch. It's a pilot program that looks to expand and incorporate the other grades next year.

This innovative club is using underwater drones to explore the depths, gather data, and gain a competitive edge as students observe how the fish react to the different lures — all while fostering a love for aquatic ecosystems.

Traditionally, fishing clubs focus on bait, tackle, and technique; however, this club is adding a whole new dimension by integrating STEM principles. There is a retention pond on campus that the club uses. There is a fence around the perimeter and the students and Sebastian's STEM coach stay on one side for safety. You never know what is lurking in Florida's waters.


Students learn about robotics and underwater camera systems as they operate their very own underwater drone. These drones navigate the hidden world beneath the waves, giving anglers a real-time view of fish location, habitat structure, and water conditions — crucial information for making informed decisions and minimizing wasted casts.

But the benefits extend far beyond catching the biggest bass. By analyzing the data collected by their drone, students are gaining valuable insights into the local marine environment. They can track fish populations, monitor water quality, and even map underwater terrain. This data can then be shared with local conservation groups, contributing to a better understanding of the delicate balance of the aquatic ecosystem.

Operating and maintaining these underwater drones requires a working knowledge of various STEM fields. Students delve into the principles of buoyancy, propulsion, and underwater communication as they pilot their drones. They first needed to overcome a large hurdle. How do we get the drone into the water over a fence safely? Many different attempts were made that could not safely and securely drop the drone into the water. Finally, they used another robotic mechanism that rolled on the ground and dropped the drone safely into the water. With these issues, the students also gain practical skills in troubleshooting, problem-solving, and critical thinking — all essential for success in any scientific endeavor.

This unique approach to fishing is not only educational but also fosters a sense of camaraderie and teamwork among club members. Students collaborate on everything from mission planning to data analysis, creating a strong sense of community around their shared passion for fishing and exploration.

Photos courtesy Frankie Portelos


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Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewline.com

Glenn Ivie

Glenn Ivie has been a painter all his life, but while a student at the University of Florida, he shied away from a degree in fine arts because of his perception of a “starving artist.” Instead, he earned a degree in advertising design and embarked on a career in commercial art. He spent 20 years working for the William Cook Agency in Jacksonville before deciding to make a go of it on his own in 2000. “Glenn Ivie Art and Design” kept him busy for another eight years, during which time he had the honor of producing a “pitch” book that was utilized during the bid to bring the Super Bowl to Jacksonville. He next developed a website that allowed users to convert their photos to paintings on canvas before deciding to retire just before COVID hit. “I missed the creativity after I retired, so I picked up the paint brushes again and started creating art,” Glenn said. Today he is a member of the St. Augustine Art Association and the First Coast Plein Air Artists group and his paintings are in acrylics and oils (rather than his original watercolors) with a more impressionistic technique. He and his wife Trish just celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary and live in St. Johns. They have three adult children and five grandchildren.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

A: Trish and I met in 10th grade English class at Robert E. Lee High School (now Riverside High School). We dated a bit and also dated other people. We reconnected in college at the University of Florida and by the end of college

Get to Know ...

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



Photo courtesy Glenn Ivie
Glenn Ivie.

knew we were the ones for each other. We married over Spring Break, on March 17. We have found over the years that it is hard to go out for an anniversary dinner to a restaurant without corned beef and green beer.

Q: Tell us about your online business, YourPhotoToPainting.com.

A: I had gotten pretty good at using Photoshop, so I came up with the idea for this website in 2010. People would upload their photos and I used a proprietary blend of Photoshop filters to create a digital painting that I would put on canvas for a fraction of what a painting would cost. This led to NBC Sports commissioning a painting of the former US Open champions at Pebble Beach. I shuttered the business in 2019 when Trish and I decided it was time to retire.

Q: What made you decide to “unretire” in the time of COVID?

A: Once I retired, I started fishing because I thought that’s what you were supposed to do when you retired. I also

found out that my St. Johns County Library Card could be used to download books to my Kindle, so I read a ton of books. But I quickly became bored and missed the creativity of painting. I started following various artists on Instagram and realized that painting didn’t have to always be so realistic. I decided to paint in a more impressionistic style and also changed from watercolors to acrylics and oils. I found that there is something magical about getting immersed in a painting — and not all paintings go the direction you originally thought.

Q: What is your favorite thing to paint?

A: Right now I am painting a lot of landscapes and local marshes. I’m fascinated by the shadows at sunrise and sunset. Trish is my scout to find locations. I have committed to painting three hours a day in the mornings and this has really given my spirit a whole new life.

Q: How did you come up with the idea for your blog, “Loving Perspectives?”

A: My new website had a blog platform that allows visitors to comment and get a conversation going, so I decided to start the blog. Everyone in life faces difficulties at one time or another and after 71 years of living, I feel I’ve accumulated a good perspective on life. I thought I could help by giving people encouraging words if they need it. I have a new blurb up every Friday.

[Author’s Note: Visit <https://glenniviefineart.com/> to view some of Glenn Ivie’s works and to read his “Loving Perspectives” blog.]

Facilities open cont. from pg. 1

p.m.

Wednesday, July 10, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Wednesday, July 17, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Wednesday, July 24, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Access to the tennis courts, track, and outdoor basketball courts will be allowed. Access will not be provided to the gymnasiums, stadium fields, batting cages, baseball fields or softball fields. The facilities will not be open to any organized practices, games or sport-sponsored, fee-based training and pets are not permitted. All campuses will be locked at 7 p.m. and all St. Johns County School Board Policies will apply.

Briefs cont. from pg. 10

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- Use the shortest washing cycle for lightly soiled clothes.
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Guest column cont. from pg. 6

the community to support the 2024 Expansion Campaign.

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Photo courtesy Debi Redding

61 Chapin Street, part of the campus of the Homeless Coalition.

Artist shares lessons on authentic voice and cultural pluralism at Bolles

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Syrian American artist Dima Kroma visited the Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus April 22 to speak with students taking Honors and AP art classes with Bolles fine arts teacher Tiffany Gonzalez. Kroma shared more about Islamic art and why she utilizes it in her works — noting her personal connection to the style and how the intricate geometric patterns symbolize interconnectedness and unity while reflecting the harmony of diverse experiences within the immigrant experience.

She showed examples of her works and broke down a handful of pieces, explaining her process and sharing each one's meaning. After her presentation, Kroma spent time mentoring two upper school students with whom she shares cultural connections. Bolles senior Tammy Yazgi '24 received feedback from Kroma on her pieces exploring the trauma of the Syrian War. In doing so, the two discovered that their families hail from the same city in Syria. Kroma also spent time with Nora Bouziane '25, who uses Arabic text with Islamic and Moroccan influences in her 3D art.

Kroma recently completed her Master's of Fine Arts at Jacksonville University, and her thesis show is now on display in the Florida State College of Jackson-

ville Baymeadows Gallery. She is currently the youth and family programs

manager at The Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens.



Photo courtesy The Bolles School

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Supporting each other: Womens Food Alliance makes the connection

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewline.com

When Leigh Cort worked in the hospitality industry in New York in the 1980s, she was inspired by an elite and small organization known as “Roundtable for Women in Food Service” that invited her to join.

“It was a very rare breed of entrepreneurial women. I learned about the fellowship of women in the hospitality industry who cared about each other because there were so few of us,” said Cort, who grew up in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

“We were there to support each other.”

That was the genesis for what was to come in Cort’s career as she founded Womens Food Alliance (WFA) 10 years ago in Northeast Florida after she made the move south with her husband in search of warmer weather. They first moved to St. Simons Island where Cort took a position as director of catering at The Ritz-Carlton in Amelia Island for five years before eventually moving to St. Johns County and opening Leigh Cort Publicity in 2000.

“It was in my heart and soul that I always counted on women,” said Cort, who recently expanded the organization to Coastal Georgia with 30 members in that region so far.

There are 170 total members currently in the WFA, and the organization plans eight to 10 programs and events a year, always holding the events at member businesses. This includes a pre-event hour of networking and business exchange.

According to the WFA mission statement, the organization “cultivates and advances networking, education and collaboration for women in the culinary and hospitality industry in the Northeast Florida and Coastal Georgia region.”

For Cort, there is one memory from her career in New York that really highlights the power of professional fellowship and



Photos courtesy Leigh Cort
Themed events are held monthly for WFA members. November 2023 was at Cuba Libre Havana Jax with member Silvia Pulido.

became the basis of the mission statement.

Cort’s first job as a party director in New York City’s Trump Tower included 1,500 guests honoring famed sculptor Erte. An hour before the party began, Cort realized that she had forgotten all about coat racks.

“It was winter in New York City, and I was panic stricken,” said Cort. “But I remembered that there was a woman who had just started a rental business of staff and then services. I called her, and she saved my life. She not only got me coat racks, but she got me staff because you can’t have coat racks without people taking tickets. I realized that my friends in New York were my backbone.”

That strength is now at the core of WFA, and Cort said she is most passionate about connecting women in a variety of different careers within the industry and lifting each other up.

“We are here to enjoy each other’s company and to learn what is going on in our industry,” she said. “The most exciting part for me is always watching our members thrive and shine.”

Member Kayshla Bentley of Mrs. Bentley’s Desserts said she joined the organization because of the warm welcome and support that she received from every woman in the alliance.

“Leigh’s energy and positivity were absolutely infectious. She is such a hard-working woman and is an absolute inspiration to me,” she said. “This organization has been very special to me in all aspects of my business. It has encouraged me to branch out of my comfort zone and learn to partner and support other women just like me. These women have all pushed me to be the best version of myself and has taken my business to a level I never thought it could be.”

Member Cindy Stavely, St. Augustine Pirate & Treasure Museum and Colonial Quarter executive director, said she has been a member for 10 years, including serving on the advisory council.

“My connection to the Womens Food Alliance is driven by shared values, support, and networking opportunities. These amazing women provide a platform for collaboration, mentorship, and resources, helping in various aspects of my hospitality driven position in the community,” said Stavely. “Aside from the extremely informative guest speakers we’ve had the privilege to hear, the long-standing friendships and shared experiences will be a wonderful part of my professional journey. So many fun, loving and inspiring moments throughout the years.”

[Author’s note: For more information about Womens Food Alliance, visit www.WomensFoodAlliance.com]

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Fishing

Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis
mail@floridanewline.com

Happy shrimp season! I hope all of you have been mending nets or getting new ones in the off season, because this month marks the beginning of a busy but very productive time in the river. We may not have a ton of shrimp in June, but the few that you do catch won't last long since the fish in the river might be more excited than we are to have them around. I did see fish chasing shrimp in May so they're definitely here; we'll just have to see how many.

The sheepshead bite in the river was great throughout May. Just about every piece of structure in the river was bound to have them on it. Clams were the preferred bait. The smaller shrimp this month should be great as well. Try either a fish finder rig or knocker rig with the smallest weight you need to hold it



Photo courtesy Jimmy Tomazinis
The fish dreams are made of.

in place. Hook size is also something to minimize. I use mostly size 2 to 4. They are finicky fish by nature, so don't give them any more reasons to be.

A good number of drum have also moved into the river, but most of them are undersized. Just more to look forward to later this fall as they grow into slot sized fish. Clam, shrimp, and crab are go-to baits for these bottom dwellers.

Stripers should also improve this month with live river shrimp at your disposal. Look for them on bridges and deeper docks. Like most fishing in the river, some tide movement helps a lot.

It has been a few months since I mentioned goals for this year and while there's still a lot of 2024 left, my goal of catching my first river tarpon in 20 years came to fruition last month. The moral of the story would be to not neglect talking to your fellow anglers around town. I'm not proposing giving spots away or anything, but mentioning catching or seeing something can go a long way towards having success yourself. For instance, I got word of a tarpon sighting at a local ramp and after three days of searching I jumped two tarpon and saw others. The following day, I caught one. I'm determined more than ever to catch more now, but I hope this gets you thinking about your own goals this year and lights a fire under you to get after them. Tight lines.

Operation Dry Water aims to educate boaters on dangers of impaired boating

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

As part of a nationwide effort to educate recreational boaters about the dangers of boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7, 7th District will join the annual Operation Dry Water campaign. The mission of Operation Dry Water is to reduce the number of alcohol and drug-related incidents and fatalities on the waters of the United States. This is particularly right here where we live, play and work.

Operation Dry Water weekend, July 4 – 6, marks a national effort dedicated to intensified recreational boater outreach, education, and coordinated enforcement against boating under the influence. Alcohol use continues to be the leading known contributing factor in recreational boater deaths and a leading contributor to boating incidents. All boaters are urged to prioritize safety by choosing to boat sober throughout the year. The use of both legal and illegal drugs impairs judgment and reaction time, posing significant risks while on the water.

“As individuals and families venture to our nation's waterways for recreation, safety remains paramount. Our focus

is to educate boaters on the risks of impaired operation while reinforcing essential safety practices, such as wearing life jackets and enrolling in boater education courses,” said Joe McCoy, Flotilla Commander.

During Operation Dry Water weekend, boating safety advocates, volunteers, and law enforcement personnel will collaborate to educate boaters on safe boating practices at marinas and on the water in every U.S. state and territory. Participating law enforcement agencies will also work to identify and remove dangerous and impaired operators. In 2023, law enforcement officers across the nation removed 717 impaired operators from our nation's waterways during Operation Dry Water weekend.

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7, 7th District emphasizes the importance of boating sober, wearing a life jacket, and being courteous to others on the water. The risk of serious injury is equal for both operators and passengers when alcohol is involved. Additionally, alcohol consumption by passengers poses a danger regardless of the operator's alcohol intake.

Visit mysafeboating.com or operationdrywater.org for more information.

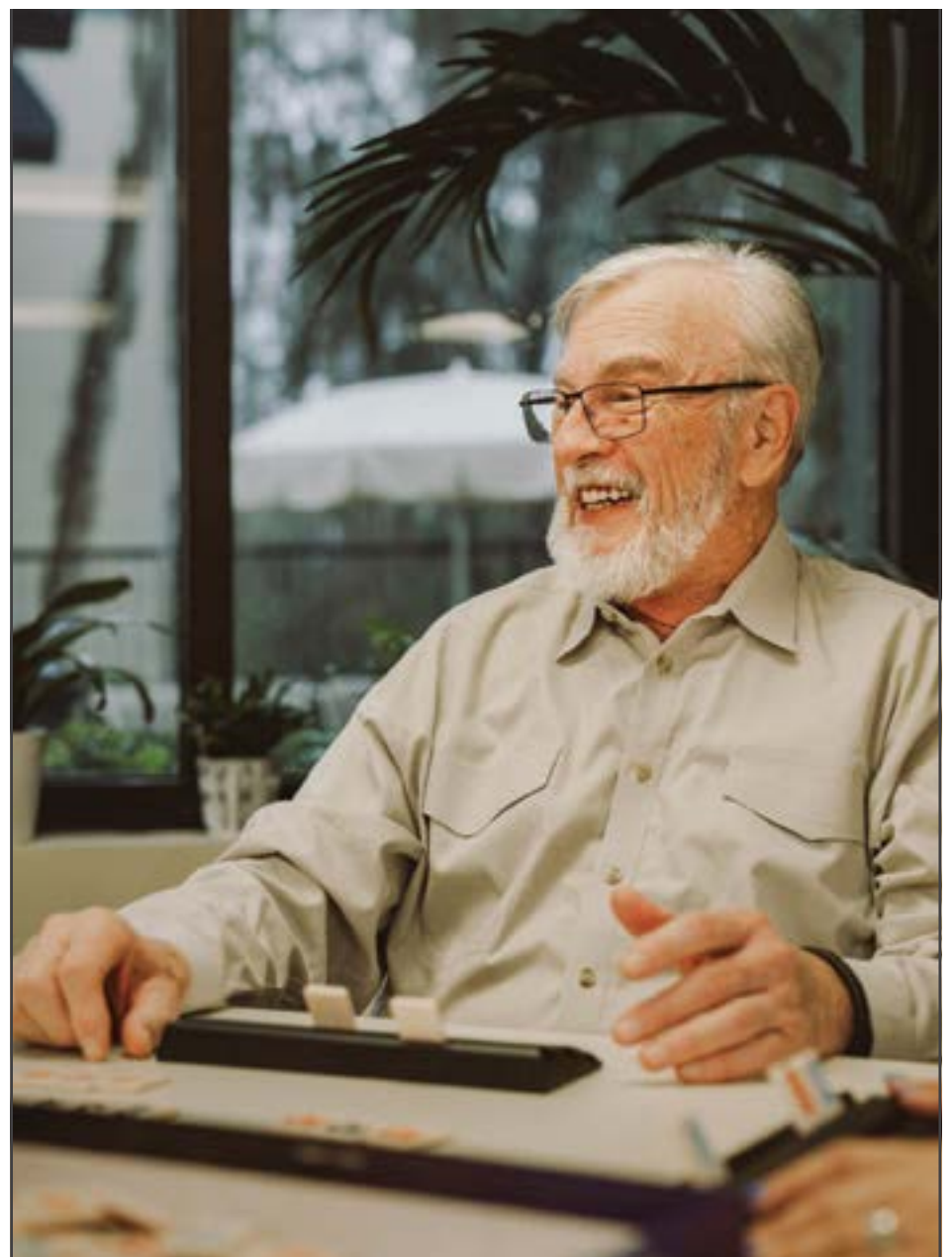



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Gardening

Hoping for rain, and the aftermath!

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale
mail@floridanewslines.com

Spring is historically our dry season, and this year has been no exception. I'm stingy with watering, because about 50 percent of Florida's precious drinking water is used in our landscapes, so up until the storm on May 10 my garden was looking a bit "crisp!" Nevertheless, it had been so long without appreciable rainfall, that I had been watering the precious shrubs which are the framework of my front yard as well as recently installed flowering perennials and potted plants. The small area of Bahia grass that looks quite decent with adequate water was parched, but with rain in the forecast I had let it fend for itself.

Now it's time for the clean-up after the storm. Some tall perennials have been blown sideways, the coral honeysuckle support is no longer vertical, and everywhere there are leaves and twigs of southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*). But we came off so lightly compared to people whose trees were downed by the wind. In our street, a huge hickory snapped and fell on a garage, and another neighbor's much-loved greenhouse was crushed by their favorite tree.

It had been a good week for watching wildlife. Fledgling bluebirds were learning to eat suet, fed by their parents. The cardinals' nest in the native coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)

had seen more action; I'm guessing the adults were feeding their young hatchlings. Hopefully the storm didn't destroy them.

One perennial that hasn't wilted in hot dry conditions is native petunia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*: <https://www.fnps.org/plant/ruellia-caroliniensis>). I've found that its roots go deep, which is why it's drought tolerant. The flowers are a delicate shade of pale mauve. Each one lasts only for a day, but there are plenty more to keep the show going from spring through autumn. Although it's less showy, it's a good replacement for its cousin, Mexican petunia (*Ruellia simplex*), which is an invasive plant and not recommended for Florida gardens (<https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu/assessments/ruellia-simplex/>). Some Mexican petunia cultivars are sterile (read the plant label!), but they spread freely as they are stoloniferous and should be kept in check. Beware if a neighbor offers to share with you. Neither of these is to be confused with the wide variety of bedding petunias, which are treated as annuals and are lovely in hanging baskets and pots and make a good groundcover.

The May/June edition of the Duval Extension newsletter, A New Leaf – Yard and Garden, is available here: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/duval/lawns-gardens-and-trees/new-leaf-newsletter/>. (If you'd



Photo courtesy Lesley Arrandale
Native petunia, *Ruellia caroliniensis*.

like to subscribe, contact the Extension Office at (904) 255-7450.) Along with advice on what ornamentals to plant that withstand the heat, there's an article on summer vegetable gardening. But if you don't plan to plant a garden till fall, how about solarizing the soil (<https://tinyurl.com/5x9dmdcj>)? Or maybe plant a cover crop (<https://tinyurl.com/6rrmmprr>)? Both techniques can benefit your garden. Solarizing helps kill weed seeds and pathogens. A cover crop dug into the soil will replenish nutrients. Also in the newsletter, Larry Figart's article on

how to use yard chemicals safely goes into detail about why we should always read and follow the instructions on the product's label. And he has a cautionary tale to tell, which is well worth reading. Following the label will not only ensure you get the best result from the product, but you will be protecting yourself, your family, your garden, and potentially our water supply.

Also in A New Leaf, Tonya Ashworth, our Horticultural Agent, offers advice about how to work safely in the garden in the heat of summer.

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Travel

Explore New Discoveries at Historic Jamestown

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewline.com

For decades, historians believed that the 1607 English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia, lay underwater in the James River. Jamestown is considered the first permanent English settlement in the Americas, although Floridians know that Spaniards settled St. Augustine in 1565.

In 1994, under the leadership of Dr. William Kelso, Jamestown Rediscovery, an archeological dig was launched in hopes of locating the assumed lost fort. Within three archeological seasons, Kelso and his team uncovered enough evidence to prove the remains of James Fort existed on dry land. Better yet, the search led them near the remains of the 17th-century church tower and to the graves of four founders.

This discovery became exciting news about America's birthplace and renewed interest in the Jamestown story. Today, visitors to the Historic Jamestown Settlement begin their experience at the state-of-the-art visitor center. I was immediately impressed with the museum's size, scope, and elaborate interactive displays. A 4-D film provides an overview of Jamestown's beginnings. Depending on your interest, you'll need



Costumed interpreters.

at least 30 minutes, while those wanting to learn more could spend several hours.

After you tour the museum, head outside to see the recreated Paspahegh town or Powhatan Indian Village. This area reflects the typical daily life of the Virginia tribe. Within the wooded clearing, see reed-covered houses dotted with cooking circles, dugout canoe, and a ceremonial circle. Learn about the culture of the Indigenous people from costumed interpreters. Personalities like Captain John Smith, John Rolfe, Powhatan, and Pocahontas lived here.

The Indian reserve leads down to the river's edge, where docked replicas of the ships, the Susan Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery await. Take the time to go aboard and imagine how the original 104 voyagers spent their cramped days and nights aboard the vessels.

Another walkway leads to the reconstructed triangular-shaped James Fort, which encloses multiple wooden buildings and offers more costumed interpreters. Life within the fort wasn't easy, but here, free, enslaved, and indentured people mixed during their struggles with early colonization.

To complete the tour, visitors must drive a short distance to Jamestowne Island, a National Park Historic landmark and site of exciting ongoing archeological digs. There, you'll find an outline of the original fort, a statue of John Smith near the shoreline, and likely working archeologists. The Archaearium Museum showcases relics from the 1607 – 1624 Virginia Company period.

You'll also see the site of the original 1608 church, named one of 2010's 10 most significant archaeological discoveries in the world by Archaeology Magazine. The church was where Chief Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas married John Rolfe on April 5, 1614.

A well-known episode involving Pocahontas occurred in 1607 when she reportedly intervened to save the life of Captain John Smith. According to Smith's account, when captured by Powhatan's forces, Pocahontas, then



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Aboard the Susan Constant.

around 10 years old, pleaded with her father to spare Smith's life. While historians debate the story, she is credited for providing diplomacy and understanding.

In 1619, the church was the site of an important and historic series of meetings: those of the first elected legislative body in America, the Virginia General Assembly. Unfortunately, the church burned during Bacon's Rebellion in 1676. Repairs were made, and the church continued to serve until approximately 1750. Today, the site includes the remains of the 17th-century

tower. While 10 feet of its height and the original nave were lost, preservation groups stepped in. They erected a new church for the settlement's 300th anniversary with glass panels to see the original foundations.

To learn more about colonial America, visit all three sites within Virginia's Historic Triangle: Jamestown, Yorktown, and Colonial Williamsburg. Online: Historic-Jamestowne.org or jyfmuseums.org

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By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

This year the summer solstice, which marks the official start of summer, falls on June 21. During this time of year, schedules become lax and meals often occur on-the-fly — and usually outdoors. When firing up the grill or packing picnic essentials, home chefs should consider which dishes they'll serve alongside the main course. Of course, no summertime meal would be complete without a tasty potato salad in the mix. This recipe for "Potato Salad with Bacon and Parsley" from Allie Lewis Clapp, Lygeia Grace and Candy Gianetti's "Real Simple: Easy, Delicious Home Cooking" (Time Home Entertainment) offers a tasty take on this classic dish.

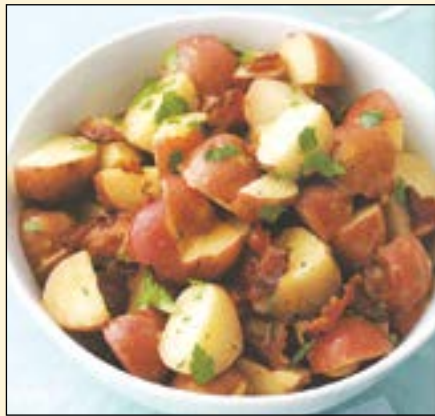


Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Potato Salad with Bacon and Parsley

Potato Salad with Bacon and Parsley

Serves 6

- 1 ½ pounds new potatoes, about 15
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 4 slices bacon
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 cup fresh, flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

Place the potatoes in a pot with 1 teaspoon salt and enough water to cover and simmer until tender, 15 to 18

minutes. Drain and run under cold water to cool. Cut into quarters.

Meanwhile, cook the bacon in a medium skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until crisp, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate. Let cool, then crumble.

In a large bowl, whisk together the oil, vinegar, mustard, ¾ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Add the potatoes, bacon and parsley and toss to combine.

Tip: The potatoes can be cooked and tossed with the dressing and parsley up to 1 day in advance; refrigerate, covered. Bring to room temperature and add the bacon just before serving.

Blackberries in Florida may become even more nutritious in the future

By Brad Buck, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS)
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Blackberries are already known for their health benefits, and someday, they might provide even more antioxidants than the ones you buy now, say University of Florida researchers. UF/IFAS researchers are trying to breed and grow blackberries, which ripen in April, May and June in the Sunshine State. In a new study, scientists found metabolites that may boost antioxidant contents and anti-inflammatory properties of the berries.

In the study, Yu Wang led a team that compared the metabolite profiles of six blackberry varieties. Among them, "Kiowa" showed the highest ability to protect cells from damage and fight inflammation.

"This work could provide a perspective on potential health benefits of consuming blackberries," said Wang, an associate professor of food science and human nutrition at the UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center. "This study deepens our understanding of the molecular mechanisms contributing to the health benefits of blackberries."

"Kiowa" grows well and produces large berries, but has many thorns. It does not grow commercially in Florida. Zhanao Deng, a UF/IFAS professor of

environmental horticulture, has been breeding and trying to grow blackberries at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center since 2015.

In the United States, the major blackberry producing states include Oregon, California, and Washington on the west coast, and Georgia, Texas, and North Carolina in the east and south.

They're an emerging crop in the Sunshine State. About 130 acres of the fruit are commercially produced in the Mayo area of North Florida and in Plant City and Parrish in the Tampa Bay region, Deng said. Blackberry cultivars on commercial farms include "Osage," "Ouachita," "Ponca," "Prime- Ark Freedom" and "Prime-Ark Traveler." Now, Deng envisions adding "Kiowa" to his toolkit as he breeds blackberries for Florida growers.

"Kiowa" was developed by James Moore and John Clark at the University of Arkansas in the 1990s," Deng said. "We grow them in blackberry field trials, but it's not grown commercially in Florida because it's thorny. Since it has the highest levels of antioxidants, we are using this cultivar as a parent in breeding to develop new thornless cultivars with high antioxidant contents as well as high yields and flavorful berries."

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