

# The CreekLine

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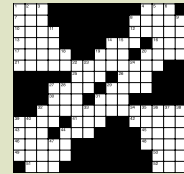
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Photo courtesy Cristina Echeverry

Troop 1414 members with their Silver Award project, a kindness rock garden at Ronald McDonald House.

## Girl Scout Cadette Troop earns silver award

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

In July, Girl Scouts Harper Cap, Johannah Cap, Cameron Dixon, Silvia Echeverry and McKenzie Parsons, members of Cadette Troop 1414, celebrated the achievement of the Silver Award, given by the Girl Scouts of Gateway Council. The Silver Award is the highest honor a Girl Scout Cadette can earn and involves completing a significant community service project that demonstrates leadership skills and a commitment to making a difference.

Troop 1414 members chose to install a kindness rock garden for the residents of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville and their visiting families. Troop members passionately worked hard all

Girl Scouts cont. on pg. 2

## It's almost time for Back to School!

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

The minivans, bikers, walkers and school buses will be back soon — the first day of school in St. Johns County is Monday, Aug. 12. This year, two new schools will welcome students for the first time: Lakeside Academy, located within the Beacon Lakes portion of the Twin Creeks development, and Trout Creek Academy in the Shearwater neighborhood. These two schools, necessary to combat overcrowding in the northern part of the county, bring the total number of traditional K-12 schools in the district to 42.

“We’re looking forward to welcoming these two new schools,” St. Johns County School Board Member for District 1 Bev Slough said. “Principals are excited as are the families to start new traditions.”

According to the St. Johns County School District, the student count of traditional K-12 schools in the district as of May 2024 was a little more than 50,000 students, a 2.7 percent increase over the previous year. St. Johns County continues to be one of the fastest growing school districts in the state; Slough said the district expects to have 52,000 students this year.

“It’s always a challenge to open two new schools at the same time,” Slough said. “But it’s something we’ve done successfully before. The principals of both Lakeside Academy and Trout Creek Academy have their schools fully staffed and prepared to welcome students on the first day. As always we are happy to welcome new families to St. Johns County.”



Photo courtesy Shelley Howard

School buses will soon be back on St. Johns County roads.

This year’s district-wide Orientation Day is Aug. 9. Each school will set its own schedule, which might even be on a different day. Parents are advised to check with their student’s school for its specific activities.

Also of note is the Florida Back to School state sales tax holiday, which continues through Aug. 11. Consumers can purchase qualifying back-to-school supplies exempt from tax during this time. Visit <https://floridarevenue.com/backtoschool> for more information, including a list of items that may be purchased with no Florida sales tax.

There is still time to register your child for school, if you have not already done

so, and the district recommends that parents do this as soon as possible. Parents may access information regarding registration requirements and their child’s attendance zone by visiting the school district website at [www.stjohns.k12.fl.us](http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us) and clicking on the “Families” tab. Additional information on registration and school attendance zones may be obtained from the Student Services Office at (904) 547-7797.

**The St. Johns County School District’s first day of school is Monday, Aug. 12.**

**Primary Election Guide  
In this issue!  
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# BACK TO SCHOOL GUIDE

Contact Linda Gay  
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Girl Scouts cont. from pg. 1



Photo courtesy Cristina Echeverry

Troop 1414 members with their Bronze Award project, a children's library for Ronald McDonald House residents.

academic year fundraising, planning, developing and implementing their project.

The purpose of the garden is to provide a sense of peace, belonging and motivation while going through medical treatments for their critical illness. Those who see the rock garden are encouraged to add a kindness rock or take one if they need it.

The previous year, this troop earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award, which is the highest award a Girl Scout Junior can obtain. Their first project was starting a children's library for the Ronald McDon-

ald residents, which has already grown since its installment. The library books included handwritten inspirational messages by troop members inside the front covers.

"Now that Girl Scout members have completed both the Bronze and Silver Awards, they have more time this year to focus on participating in various community service projects," said Cadette Troop 1414 Leader Cristina Echeverry. "This is a huge accomplishment as they achieved both awards consecutively and are just entering seventh grade."



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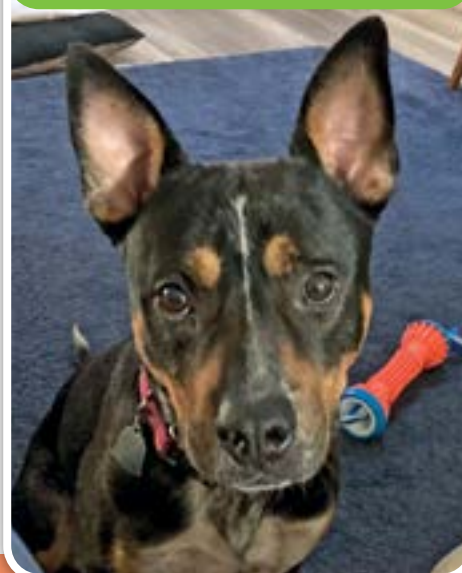
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## BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Grace!



**Breed:**

Rescue dog, mixed breed

**Favorite Activity:**

Running zoomies in the backyard.

**Favorite Treat:**

Ice cream

**Favorite Friend:**

Her human dad

**How did your BFF get her name?**

She was named because she is full of 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.

### Primary Election Guide

in this issue!

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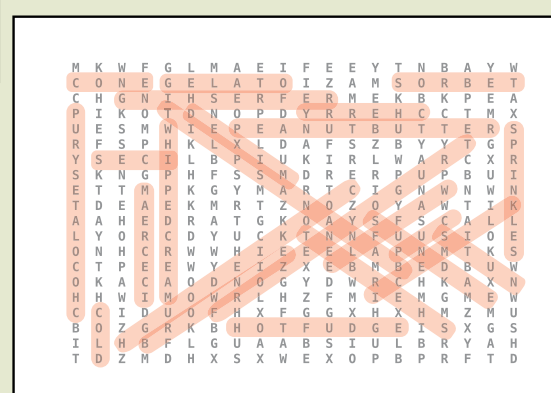


Answers  
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Puzzles  
PG 20

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# August

## Community Calendar What's Happening in St. Johns

**Trout Creek Senior** Center offers activities for seniors on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 6795 Collier Road in Orangedale. Cards, crafts and games start each day at 9 a.m. with trivia, nutrition/exercise, Bunco and Bingo among the additional activities before lunch at 11:30 a.m. each day. Contact Program Coordinator Myra Fisher at (904) 209-3658 or [mfisher@coasjc.org](mailto: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](mailto: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: First Friday** Adult Book Club will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library at 10 a.m. on Aug. 2 to discuss "The Maze" by Nelson DeMille. Registration is required; email [draasch@sjcfl.us](mailto:draasch@sjcfl.us).

**6th: Happy Hookers** crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on Aug. 6 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](http://www.sjcpls.org) or call (904) 827-6960.

**6th: Honeybee Quilters** Guild will meet on Tuesday, Aug. 6 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church's Mandarin Road Campus in the Woody Room at 11844 Mandarin Road. It's the guild's birthday party! Come and enjoy the fun and games. New members/guests welcome. Visit [honeybeequilters.org](http://honeybeequilters.org) for more information.

**7th: 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 Aug. 7 from 11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**7th: Empowering Conversations** will be held on Aug. 7 from 7 p.m. - 8 p.m. at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road. Join Rev. Yvonne McAndrew for an hour of insight and connection. Call (904) 287-1505 or email [UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com](mailto:UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com) for more information.

**7th: Free Tech Help** with David will be held on Wednesday, Aug. 7 from 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. Drop in for tech assistance with Android, Apple, and reader devices; no RSVPs required. Bring your device fully charged and know your passwords. Visit [sjcpls.org/branches/bartram-trail-branch/](http://sjcpls.org/branches/bartram-trail-branch/) for more information.

**8th: 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 Aug. 8 from 12:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**10th: The Bartram Trail** Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, Aug. 10) from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. The topic for the meeting is "Discussion of members' military ancestors." Email [ginglish@comcast.net](mailto:ginglish@comcast.net) for more information. Visit [www.facebook.com/groups/BT-GenClubGroup](http://www.facebook.com/groups/BT-GenClubGroup) to send a request to join the club.

**12th: The Northwest St. Johns** County United for Progress Club will welcome Lily "Bee" Bristow, School Board Candidate, District 5 as guest speaker on Aug. 12 at 6:30 p.m. Visit [www.nwstjohnsu-p.com](http://www.nwstjohnsu-p.com) or email [nwsjcp@gmail.com](mailto:nwsjcp@gmail.com) for more information.

**19th: The All Star Quilters Guild** will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, Aug. 19 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. In lieu of a program, the guild will have a Quilt Sale by individual quilters - supplies, homemade objects, and more. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit [www.allstarquilters.org](http://www.allstarquilters.org) for more information.

**21st: Self-Awareness** five-week class, will be held on Wednesdays from 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. beginning Aug. 21 at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road. Join Rev Fayann Schmidt and Licensed Unity Teacher Bill Wuerfel for this interactive class and learn how to

integrate spiritual principles to maintain balance and honor all facets of your being. Cost: \$120. Call (904) 287-1505 or email [UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com](mailto:UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com) for more information.

**24th: Common Sense** Parenting with Nick Andrews will be held on Saturday, Aug. 24 from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. All supplies are provided by the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library. Space is limited; register online at [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org).

**24th: Dress a Girl Around** the World at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will be held on Saturday, Aug. 24 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.

**30th: "Is Probate a Dirty Word?"** 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, Aug. 30 from 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**31st: St. Johns Farmers** Market will be held the fourth Saturday of each month (this month, Aug. 31) 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.



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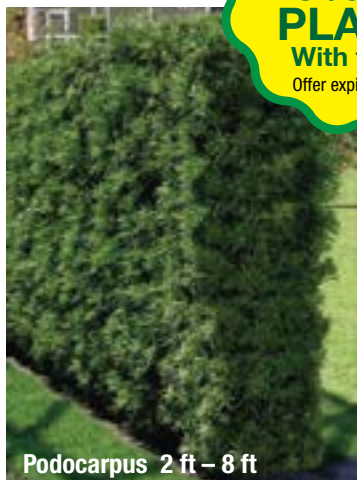
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Reverend Yvonne McAndrew



**with St. Johns County Property Appraiser  
Eddie Creamer**

**Q: What is coming up on the calendar of the Property Appraiser's Office?**

A: It is almost time for TRIM (Truth in Millage) notices to be sent out to property owners. It's important to keep in mind that over the past eight years, property values in St. Johns County have increased more than 170 percent, which translates to higher taxes even without a tax increase.

**Q: What can you tell us about TRIM notices?**

A: TRIM is the most important document a property owner will get in St. Johns County. They will be mailed by our office on Aug. 16 and are also available online ([www.sjcpa.us](http://www.sjcpa.us)) as of that date. Within the mailing, property owners will receive a copy of the State of Florida Taxpayer's Bill of Rights and a list of exemptions in addition to the TRIM notice. The TRIM notice also contains the date and time of the budget hearing for each of the taxing authorities, so property owners can attend to learn more.

**Q: What will the TRIM notice contain?**

A: The TRIM notice shows the market value, the assessed value and the taxable value of your property for 2023 and proposed for 2024. It will also show

any exemptions for the property. Make sure you check your TRIM notice for accuracy as to values and exemptions. The taxes are listed by taxable authority and will show what the taxes would be if the county made no changes to the budget. This is called the "rollback rate," essentially what your taxes would be this year to allow the county to collect the same amount of money as last year. TRIM will also show the proposed taxes if the proposed budget is passed; this is what would be on the tax bill.

**Q: What should property owners do if they disagree with the value assessed by your office?**

A: When the TRIM notice is mailed, a 25-day clock starts. If the taxpayer has any discrepancy with the Property Appraiser's Office, they should contact us to discuss. If we can't come to agreement, the taxpayer can file an appeal with the Value Adjustment Board. It is very important to do this within the 25-day window, because if not, a taxpayer will lose his or her right to appeal.

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

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

## St. Johns County discusses Fiscal Year 2025 Budget and millage rates

By NewsLine Staff  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto:mail@floridanewslines.com)

On July 16, 2024, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners approved two motions about the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget (FY 2025 Budget). The first motion approved the proposed flat millage rates. The BOCC passed the second motion to authorize the completion and execution of the FY 2025 Budget with approved proposed millage rates and establish Sept. 3, 2024, at 5:01 p.m. as the First Public Hearing for adopting the FY 2025 Budget.

The recommended FY 2025 Budget is \$1.2 billion. This includes the General Fund for essential county services and programs, the Capital Improvements Fund for major construction projects like roads and parks, and other funds designated for specific uses.

"Today, I am honored to present to you the 2025 budget recommendation for St. Johns County," County Administrator Joy Andrews said. "This budget reflects our commitment to fulfilling the promises we made to our residents, staff, and partners while positioning our county for continued success. The leadership and vision of our Board of County Commissioners have guided us in focusing on these key priorities: infrastructure, managing growth, open governance and transparency, conservation, and financial stewardship."

Andrews shared significant achieve-

ments in 2024, which included the County Road 210 widening (Cimarron to Greenbrier, and east of Interstate 95), \$9.6 million State allocation for the Airport Authority, an ongoing robust, publicly informed process for Comprehensive Plan 2050, a draft five-year Strategic Plan, increased Land Acquisition Management Plan funding from \$500,000 to \$2 million for conservation, and a bonding program for public safety, parks, and libraries.

"This budget recommendation maintains our focus on essential services and introduces strategic investments that will benefit our community for years to come, primarily in roads, water, parks, libraries, public safety, and in our staff," Andrews said. "These long-term investments are proposed based on your methodical deliberation over the past few months and the bold decisions you are making to move us forward."

The proposed millage rates include no increase from last year. The County plans to use the revenue generated from taxable value growth for FY 2025 over FY 2024 to help pay for additional expenses and new programs. Andrews emphasized that her budget recommendation represents a goal of a healthier reserve fund by adding 15 percent to be adequately prepared for an active hurricane season.

The 13.2 percent increase in taxable

**Fiscal Year 2025** cont. on pg. 17

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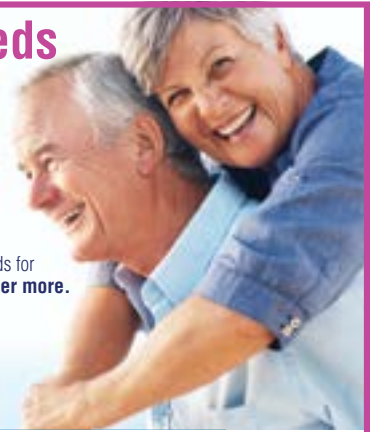
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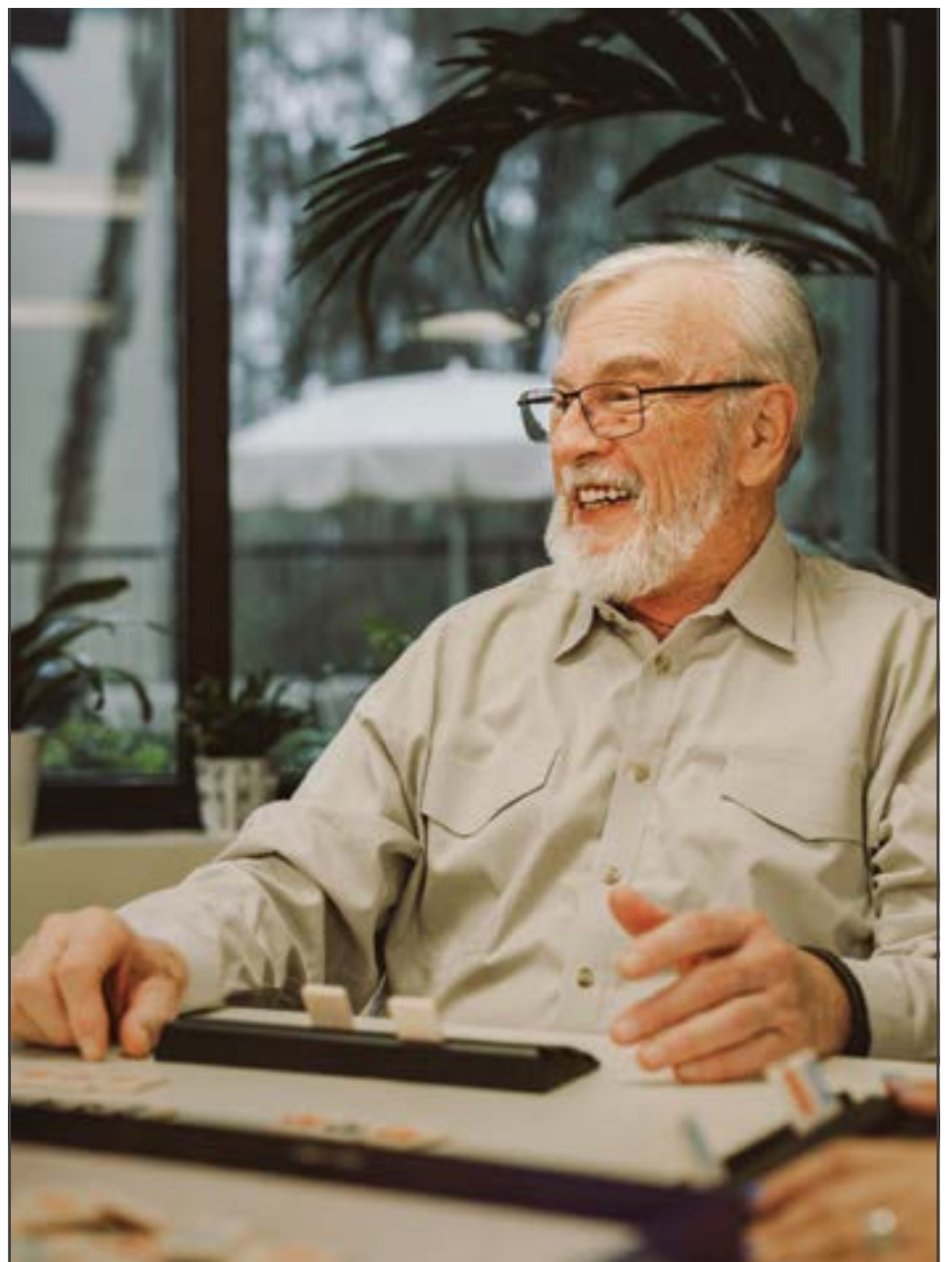
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**with St. Johns County School Board Member, Beverly Slough, District 1**

**Q: What can you tell us about the newly released state test results?**

A: We are most pleased to have just received the second year of FAST results. St. Johns County was first in the state in all areas measured in reading — third through 10th grade. We did very well in math as well, first and second place in all grades, and much above the state average. For science, we were first for fifth grade and second for eighth grade. For the 21 elements that are measured, we scored first in the state in 16 of them, which matches our results from last year.

Not only did our students score highly, but the gap between first and second in the state continues to widen. Our students continue to excel and we are so proud of them as well as our excellent teachers who have done a superior job teaching our students the Florida standards.

**Q: How did the students fare in End of Course exams?**

A: For Civics, we were first in the state with a 97 percent pass rate and for Algebra I our students were first in the state with a 100 percent pass rate. We were second in the state in Geometry and first in the state in both Biology and US History.

**Q: Do we have school grades yet?**

A: No, because there are other elements such as graduation rates and performance of the lowest quartiles that have not been calculated yet. We expect school grades probably in September.

**Q: With the beginning of the new school year in a few days, is it too late for parents to register their students?**

A: No, not at all. We recommend

that parents do this as soon as possible. Parents may access information regarding registration requirements and their child's attendance zone by visiting the school district website at [www.stjohns.k12.fl.us](http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us) and clicking on the "Families" tab.

**Q: What else do you have to share with District 1?**

A: I have an interesting story from Durbin Creek Elementary. This school now has about 10 percent of its student population who are speakers of languages — Ukrainian, Russian, Chinese, Portuguese, French, Spanish — other than English. We issue non-English speaking students in our district an iPad with a translator downloaded on it so that the child can learn their teacher's lesson with the rest of their class. The district just bought Durbin Creek Elementary 75 more of these iPads. These students

are learning English very quickly due to English immersion. Staff at DCE have been proactive in engaging these students and their parents in inventive ways. For instance, they are planning after school clubs as a way for non-English speaking students to engage with one another and they are planning cross-cultural activities for the fall.

This increase in non-English speaking students is the case more and more in all of our schools. We are always seeking ways to integrate them and teach them our language so they can attain their highest level of learning along with their peers.

**Q: How can our readers contact you?**

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



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

**Q: With the new school year starting soon, do you have anything to share from your office?**

A: We are unveiling an initiative in partnership with all four of the school districts in our circuit to try to educate and empower kids. We were seeing a lot of kids resorting to gun violence, sometimes bringing weapons to schools. We felt the State Attorney's Office's presence in our schools was lacking and we wanted to reach the kids to help promote their success and keep them safe before laws were broken. So we met with all four local school superintendents, including Tim Forson in St. Johns County, to discuss all manner of things, like substance abuse, vaping, and violence to include bullying. We began working to come up with a curriculum to educate and empower students.

**Q: What would this curriculum look like?**

A: In middle school, accountability and education are most important for this age group moving from childhood to young

adulthood. In high school, we plan to create opportunities to learn the positive things about our office and what it does — likely in the form of internships or externships as well as visits to our office or the courtroom, where students can meet judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement so they can understand how our justice system works.

Our staff could also potentially go into the schools for assemblies or communicate with large groups of students via Zoom.

**Q: What caused you to come up with this initiative?**

A: I got so tired of prosecuting kids. I wanted the State Attorney's Office to work on prevention of crime from the front end. I'm very optimistic and excited about this initiative. It's quite an accomplishment and speaks to the commitment of all four superintendents in our circuit to make this happen. We have a press conference scheduled for Aug. 6 where we will roll out all the details.

# Primary Election Guide

## Meet your local candidates

By Martie Thompson  
 editor@floridanewslines.com

In advance of the Primary Election to be held on Tuesday, Aug. 20, The CreekLine invited each of the candidates that will appear on northern St. Johns County voters' ballots for State Senate District 7, Florida House District 18, County Commission Districts 1, 3, and 5, St. Johns County Sheriff, and St. Johns County Clerk of Court to submit a statement for this Primary Election section.

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

### State Senate, District 7

#### Gerald James (R)

I am a citizen patriot running to legislate for the people of my district, not for big insurance, big development, or trial attorneys. I have not taken one dime from any of their PACs or lobbyists. My campaign has been funded by small donations of citizens like yourselves and I am fueled by ordinary people who love this country. Folks, an insurance storm is brewing in Florida and we must fix this crisis. We have never been the gold standard for election and hoards of illegals can find their way onto the voter rolls. We must take the lead nationwide in voter election reform and security. These problems are not insurmountable but we need leaders with courage and determination to pass appropriate and permanent legislation. We must secure our borders, airports, waterways, and roads from illegal alien invasion by any means necessary and I have a plan. The establishment political class is content to maintain the status-quo. I am not. With your vote, I will fight for my con-

stituents, not for big development, the insurance industry or the trial lawyers. I will legislate conservatively and with the Constitution as my guide.

#### David Shoar (R)

I am running for the Florida Senate because we need consistent Trump conservatives who have the courage to stand for our shared values and fight back against the special interests and liberals who are enriching themselves at the taxpayers' expense. I am a husband, father, and grandfather who has lived in and served this community for decades. I have dedicated my life to service in uniform, from the streets of St. Augustine as a patrolman, to the sands of Iraq as an Army Combat Engineer, to my 16 years as St. Johns County Sheriff. I am proud of my record as Sheriff of cutting crime in half. In Tallahassee, I will take on the politicians and political insiders and hold them accountable. I will stand with President Trump, as I have since 2016, to stop illegal immigration, combat Biden's inflation and get our insurance

costs under control. Together, we will restore a sense of law and justice in our country. As a longtime St. Johns County resident, I also know how important it is to protect against overdevelopment so we can maintain our quality of life. As your State Senator, I will look out for you, not the special interests.

#### Tom Leek (R)

As a member of the state Senate, I hope to continue serving the people of Northeast Florida by establishing Florida as the most law enforcement friendly state in the union, by working on many of the conservative advances of the past few years in school choice, economic development and important social issues that strengthen the family, and by building upon my current accomplishments in the Florida House. That is why I am proud to have the strong support of all four sheriffs in Senate District 7, along with our great Governor Ron DeSantis, At-

Candidates cont. on pg. 8

**NICK PRIMROSE**  
 FOR FLORIDA HOUSE

**CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICAN**  
 FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
 IN ST. JOHNS COUNTY



**ENDORSED BY SEN. RICK SCOTT & REP. CYNDI STEVENSON**

PAID BY NICK PRIMROSE, REPUBLICAN, FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 18.

**PRIMARY ELECTION DAY**  
**AUGUST 20<sup>TH</sup>**



★ ★ ★ **LEARN MORE AT NICKPRIMROSE.COM** ★ ★ ★

# Primary Election Guide

Candidates cont. from pg. 7

torney General Ashley Moody, and others. They know that a strong and safe community allows families and businesses to thrive, and it has been my honor to work together toward those shared goals. My wife, Michelle and I, along with our two daughters, have made Northeast Florida our

home for more than 30 years. We love this community. The people, historic venues, and the beaches and lakes which remain a constant reminder of old Florida. I ask for your vote on Tuesday, Aug. 20 and thank you for participating in the political process to make our community and our state the freest in the nation.

## Florida House District 18

### Kim Kendall (R)

FAA Air Traffic Controller... small business owner... extensive work and endorsements at state and local levels — yes, these are all a part of who I am, but what makes me uniquely qualified is my heart and fight for this community. Growing up in GTMO, Cuba I saw firsthand Cuban base- workers giving Castro 90% of their wages... these workers who were already limited in their monthly rations of rice and underwear. Now there are those who want that kind of society for us... they want to take away our Faith... they want to break apart our family... and they want the soul of our nation. I have battled the establishment to protect our children, to protect our Faith, to keep our family values intact. I've gone toe to toe with developers and special interest groups who have tried unsuccessfully to make me go away. This is a critical year... we need warriors... those who will not be used as puppets... those who care deeply about our Constitution and our community. I am the one who has and will continue to fight for us. You can count on me to always show up and to never back down.

### Nick Primrose (R)

Growing up in apartments with a single mom, my American Dream was owning a home and creating a better future. I found that here in St. Johns County. As a husband and father, I care deeply about protecting our way of life in Florida. Having served as Deputy General Counsel for Governors Rick Scott and Ron DeSantis, I am the most qualified, experienced candidate. From advising on economic prosperity and keeping Florida open during COVID to answering the call during hurricanes, my proven track record will deliver results on Day One. I will: 1) Support our law enforcement so they can continue to protect our communities; 2) Keep our schools #1 by expediting school construction, empowering parents, and improving teachers' quality of life; 3) Secure funding for road projects and infrastructure; 4) Cut red tape to promote small businesses and job creation; and 5) Protect our wildlife corridors, beaches, and the St. Johns River. I'm a proven conservative and honored to have the endorsements of Senator

Candidates cont. on pg. 10

**RE-ELECT**



*Our Sheriff*

# Rob Hardwick

Republican for St. Johns County Sheriff

**VETERAN**

★

**CONSERVATIVE LEADER**

★

**OUR SHERIFF**

**Rob Hardwick's Record Speaks For Itself**

Combated Crime  
& Reduced Recidivism

Retained & Recruited Only  
**The Most Qualified Deputies**

Invested In The Latest Technology  
**To Keep Us Safe**

**GETTING REAL RESULTS**  
**IT'S THE ROB HARDWICK WAY!**



**Republican Primary: Tuesday, Aug. 20**

Paid for by Rob Hardwick, Republican, for St. Johns County Sheriff. Use of title and pictures in uniform does not imply the endorsement or support of any law enforcement organization.

BRANDON

# PATTY

FOR ST. JOHNS COUNTY CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER

**Devoted Husband & Father**  
**Dedicated Clerk & Comptroller**  
**US Naval Reserve Officer**





Paid by Brandon Patty, Republican, for St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller. Use of military rank, job titles, and photographs in uniform does not imply endorsement by the Department of the Navy or the Department of Defense.

# 2024 Primary Election · August 20, 2024

## OPEN TO ALL REGISTERED VOTERS IN ST. JOHNS COUNTY



### Florida is a Closed Primary State

- Democrats receive a **Democratic** ballot
- Republicans receive a **Republican** ballot
- Voters with No Party Affiliation or a minor party receive a **Nonpartisan** ballot and cannot vote for party candidates

#### Exception:

Universal Primary Contests are the exception. There is one Universal Primary Contest on the 2024 Primary Election ballot: Clerk of Circuit Court and Comptroller (Rep). This contest is open to all voters and will appear on **all** ballots.

### Voting by Mail?

The deadline to request a vote-by-mail ballot to be mailed for the 2024 Primary Election is August 8 by 5 PM. Visit [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) or call the Elections Office to request your ballot.

Vote-by-mail ballots must be returned to the Elections Office by 7 PM on Election Day, August 20, to be counted.

Vote-by-mail ballots can also be returned to Secure Ballot Intake Stations available at all seven early voting locations during the hours of voting.

### Election Day

To vote on Election Day, you must go to your assigned polling place between the hours of 7 AM and 7 PM on Tuesday, August 20, 2024.

Some precincts have changed since the last election. Verify your Election Day polling place at [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) before heading out to vote!

### Early Voting

**August 10 – August 17, 2024**  
**9 AM to 6 PM**  
**Daily at all locations**

**PONTE VEDRA BRANCH LIBRARY**  
101 LIBRARY BLVD  
PONTE VEDRA BEACH

**JULINGTON CREEK ANNEX**  
725 FLORA BRANCH BLVD  
ST. JOHNS

**SILVERLEAF AMENITY CTR**  
218 SILVER FOREST DR  
ST. AUGUSTINE



**SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS OFFICE**  
4455 AVENUE A, SUITE 101  
ST. AUGUSTINE

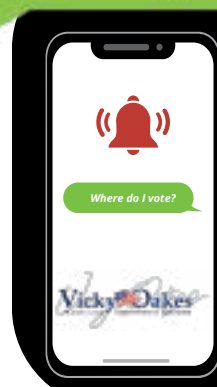
**ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH CITY HALL**  
2200 A1A SOUTH  
ST. AUGUSTINE

**SOUTHEAST BRANCH LIBRARY**  
6670 US 1 SOUTH  
ST. AUGUSTINE

**W.E. HARRIS COMMUNITY CTR**  
400 E. HARRIS ST  
HASTINGS



### TextMyGov



### Text Us!

Text **HI** to **904-439-4555** to use our texting service to find important election information!

Text **VOTESJC** to **91896** to subscribe to Election Alerts straight from the St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Office!

# Primary Election Guide

**Candidates** cont. from pg. 8

Rick Scott, Congressman Michael Waltz, our outgoing State Representative Cyndi Stevenson, FOP, PBA and many other trusted leaders and organizations. I humbly ask for your vote to bring strong, conservative leadership to our community.

## County Commission District 1

### Ann-Marie Evans (R)

Over the course of my life, I have fought for what's right both in my personal life as well as my professional life. I am ready to fight for you, the people of St. Johns County. Over the course of the incumbent's term, our schools lost their #1 ranking, our roads became increasingly congested and 15,000 more homes/apartments were approved. You've probably seen the attack ads. Ads that suggest I'm a liberal, ambulance chasing, tax raising Seattleite. Let me set things straight — I am a conservative and I fought for injured people. I do not want to raise your taxes and I never lived in Seattle. See my website for further lie debunking. These ads were paid for by a Gainesville PAC chaired by

Commissioner Whitehurst's treasurer. I have worked as an attorney (admitted to practice WA only) and owned a boutique law firm. I have worked as a public records officer, victim advocate and realtor. I'm married to a retired police sergeant. I'm a Mom of seven including a lawyer, Marine and deputy; I have teens in our schools. Together, we can change the trajectory of our county. Endorsed by SJC Republican Party and Republican Liberty Caucus.

### Christian Whitehurst (R)

I'm Christian Whitehurst and have the privilege of serving the great people of St. Johns County as County Commissioner, District 1. As a fiscal conservative, I believe the government can operate with less of your hard-earned money. I have never raised taxes and proudly voted against a tree tax that would burden homeowners. As a business owner, I know how to balance a budget and have fought to eliminate wasteful spending. I have slowed the growth of development by denying projects that are incompatible or lack proper infrastructure. We used developer impact fees to fund \$600 million in road projects, four new regional parks, and five new fire stations with sheriff office substations. We also

secured state and federal funding to provide beach renourishment to areas affected by past storms. Our law enforcement and first responders are the reason St. Johns is the safe haven destination to raise a family. I have always supported the Sheriff's Office and Fire Rescue to ensure they have the resources and equipment necessary to keep our community safe. With your vote, I promise to continue fighting for the values of St. Johns County.

They have sacrificed so much for our freedom and way of life, and we must ensure they receive the care and respect they deserve. Additionally, I stand firmly with our first responders, ensuring they have the resources and support needed to keep our community safe. Lastly, I am dedicated to protecting our quality of life, ensuring that St. Johns County remains a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

### Heather Harley-Davidson (R)

A 55-year local, Heather Harley Davidson's candidacy is about fiscal responsibility, environmental protection, and the rights and needs of people. 1999 St. Johns County Land Development Code, she lobbied for property rights and environmental protection. She is knowledgeable about land use: a licensed real estate broker and state certified general contractor attending UNF, receiving a Bachelor of Science Industrial Technology Building Construction Management and Minor Business Administration. Married in Grace United Methodist Church St. Augustine 1986, with two children. Her family owned Advanced Building Company of North Florida for 25 years, decade of restaurants and inn

Candidates cont. on pg. 11

**ALERT:**  
Attack ads filled with lies about us are funded by developer-tied PACs. Please read our statements on our websites that expose the lies.



**Overcapacity roads. Overcrowded schools that are no longer ranked #1 in the state. Vote out the commissioners who are overdeveloping our county.**

Fl. Dept. of Ed.

**Henry Dean approved nearly 30,000 homes in two terms and Christian Whitehurst approved over 15,000 in one term. Both tried to raise our sales tax.\* Elect the Anns, Aug. 20.**

**Endorsed by the St. Johns County Republican Party. Slow the growth. Elect the Anns.**



**Challenging Whitehurst. Ann-Marie owned a thriving law firm.\* Mom to 7, she is the proud wife of a retired police officer. Ann-Marie is exposing wasteful county spending.**  
\*Admitted to practice law in WA only

[ElectAnn-Marie.com](http://ElectAnn-Marie.com)



**Challenging Henry Dean. Ann has two sons in our schools and is a former businesswoman of 25 years. A current HOA board president, Ann helped win the fight against a wood burning polluter in our county.**

[VoteAnnTaylor.com](http://VoteAnnTaylor.com)

# Primary Election Guide

**Candidates** cont. from pg. 10

keeping. Currently, she is grandma of five, an award-winning artist, and the commission seat will be her only job. Her critical thinking is her gift she utilized during the week-long 2025 Budget Series, allowing her to delineate many areas of reduction for a fiscally responsible government. The most challenging and critical issues facing St. Johns County are uncontrolled growth, states overreach in development practices, and the road map within 2025 Comprehensive Land Plan map for higher density creating bigger government. We can't close the gates, but we can slow developers' impact on our quality of life and make them pay their share.

**Michael McDonald (R)**

I am devoted to protecting this beautiful county we call home for generations to come. I was born and raised in St. Johns County, and I am very fortunate to have a lot of family in the area. Throughout my life, I have seen significant change with no signs of growth being managed. I attended our local schools from K-12. From the age of 12, I was working in this community doing whatever I could. Fresh out of high school, a local painting contractor asked me to lend a hand

on a weekend job. I quickly realized this would become a career for me. I truly enjoy seeing projects from start to finish. I have built long lasting relationships, and I have always been accountable to my clients. That's the approach I will take as County Commissioner. I seek the change this county needs: more accountability, more maintenance, more transparency, more local economic opportunities, more checks and balances with less waste and less development! I am a proud local business owner, homeowner, father, husband, and very active community member. I would be more than happy to talk with anyone from my community about my unwavering commitment to St. Johns County.

**Clay Murphy (R)**

St. Johns County has been my home for 33 years. This is where I raised my family, served as a law enforcement officer and where my wife and I opened our own business — Sonny's BBQ in St. Augustine. I love this area. When I was a State Trooper, I turned down a promotion because I didn't want to leave St. Johns County. This is where I plan to retire and watch my grandchildren grow up. But I am very concerned that our quality of life is suffering because

of rapid overdevelopment. Worse, there are special interests who are trying to accelerate it even more. I disagree strongly. Economically, St. Johns County is one of the wealthiest counties but has been forced to go in debt to pay for public safety and infrastructure because of poor planning. It's time for new leadership who will represent the residents and taxpayers, which is why I'm running. As a former law enforcement officer, I fought to keep NE Florida safe. As your next County Commissioner, I'll fight even harder to control the growth and make it pay for itself, for low taxes, responsible budgeting, and for our time-honored American values.

**County Commission District 5**

**Henry Dean (R)**

As a Conservative Republican, I've dedicated my career to serving our community. My proven record of land conservation reflects my deep respect for our natural resources and my determination to preserve them for future generations. Supporting small businesses and fostering economic growth have been central to my efforts, as I believe a thriving economy benefits us all. Standing

with our veterans and first responders is a core value of mine. Their sacrifices deserve our unwavering support, and I am committed to ensuring they receive the recognition and resources they need. I've also been a staunch advocate for our tourism industry, recognizing its vital role in our local economy. Leading the effort to protect our beautiful beaches has been one of my proudest achievements. By investing in infrastructure, I've worked tirelessly to fix our roads and improve our transportation systems. Holding developers accountable is crucial to maintaining the character and sustainability of our communities, and I've always prioritized responsible growth. Throughout my career, I've focused on slowing the rapid growth that can threaten our way of life, ensuring that development is balanced with conservation and community needs. My dedication to these principles guides me every day in my service to you.

**Ann Taylor (R)**

First, I must explain why it's so important that I have been endorsed by the St. Johns County Republican Party. My opponent is supported by PACs that have ruthlessly broadcast and mailed the most

**Candidates** cont. on pg. 12



*Endorsed by St. Johns County Republican Party*



★★★ FEARLESS ★★★  
CONSERVATIVE

*Kim*  
KENDALL



VoteKimKendall.com   

**MEET KIM KENDALL**

Kim Kendall has been a local community leader and a strong advocate for education and parental rights in Florida for many years, chairing statewide literacy initiatives, working on state-appointed education task forces, and serving as state education chair for the Florida Federation of Republican Women.

**AND SHE'S A TRUE LOCAL:** Kim and her family have lived in St. Johns County for over 20 years!

- Served as an FAA Air Traffic Controller
- Married to Her Husband, Kelly, for 30 Years and has Two Adult Children
- Owned Two Dry Cleaners
- Grew up on Naval bases, including Guantánamo and the Philippines

*Endorsed by Florida Firefighters*



**ST. JOHNS COUNTY PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS & PARAMEDICS ASSOCIATION**  
An Affiliate of the International Association of Firefighters  
Proudly Protecting Your Property, Lives and... Our Community.

KIM KENDALL *for*  
STATE HOUSE, DISTRICT 18!




**Proudly Supported by  
Veterans and Law Enforcement**



**Jim's Experience and Leadership**

**4th Generation Law Enforcement Officer**  
**27 Year Career at the St. Johns Sheriff's Office**  
**Began as Reserve Deputy and promoted through the ranks to Lieutenant**  
**Experience in every department:**  
**SWAT Team - 13 Years**  
**Dive Team - 8 Years**  
**Bomb Squad - 6 Years**



**Leadership. Transparency.  
Fiscal Responsibility.**

Paid by Jim Priester, Republican, for St. Johns County Sheriff.

**Primary Election Guide**

**Candidates** cont. from pg. 11

profound lies about me — lies that cut to the very core of who I am and what I stand for. It won't matter what my goals and qualifications are if you believe I'm a "woke liberal" who has supported "sex changes for children." That is how desperately the developers are trying to keep my opponent in his seat. I stand for slowing the growth; he has approved nearly 30,000 housing units. That's just one difference between us. I would rather have devoted this space to telling you about my 25 years experience as a businesswoman; how I'm an HOA president who has advocated on behalf of my neighbors; and how my two sons and my husband are my inspiration. I will never call for a tax of any kind as my opponent has done — and as I have been falsely accused of. Please learn more about me on my website. Thank you for allowing me to correct a grievous misrepresentation of who I am.

**St. Johns County Sheriff**

**Rob Hardwick (R)**

I am Rob Hardwick and I have the honor of serving as your St. Johns County Sheriff. My agency has accomplished a lot during the last four years. Through our community policing and use of technology, we have fought crime, reduced recidivism by nearly 10 percent, provided first-class customer service, and saved taxpayer dollars. We are consistently out in the community building relationships between our citizens and SJSO. Additionally, we have made recruiting and retention a top priority. We went to work and successfully advocated to raise the base pay and benefits package for our agency personnel. Now, the agency is almost fully staffed for the first time in its history.

As a combat veteran who served 25 years in the United States Army and the Florida National Guard and after 30 years in law enforcement, I remain as committed as the day I started to serve my fellow citizens. My wife, Kendell, and I have been married for 33 years and have two amazing adult sons. We are active in various community organizations and I am a proud local youth coach. I would be honored to earn your vote on Aug. 20 for St. Johns County Sheriff.

**Jim Priester (R)**

I'm Jim Priester, a recent retiree of the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office after a highly decorated 27 year career and now a candidate for St. Johns County Sheriff. I am a fourth generation Florida law-enforcement officer, not a politician. My campaign is focused on being fiscally responsible, demonstrating what it means to be transparent with our community and being the leader our agency so desperately needs. I will host Public Safety town hall meetings to engage and communicate directly with our community because public safety will always be my number one priority. We will openly communicate on our social media networks allowing our citizens to comment publicly; we will never censor your right to free speech. We will post

our budget and expenses quarterly so our taxpayers can see where their money is being spent. I will lead by example and set the positive tone for the agency so our deputies know we support them. I will streamline every part of the budget in order to pay our deputies a competitive wage comparable to surrounding agencies. I've spent my life serving St. Johns County and I'd be honored to earn your vote for Sheriff on August 20. Thank you.

**St. Johns County Clerk of Court**

**Denver Cook (R)**

I am proud of my service as a USAF Veteran and military intelligence analyst and as a former gang intelligence officer. I am also proud of my years working as a general contractor managing millions of dollars in government infrastructure projects. What I am most proud of however, is being the father of three amazing young adults. As a father I have been able to advocate for better spending behaviors at the county and school district, served as chairman and vice-chairman of several youth risk prevention and diversion committees. We are all concerned about how growth impacts our daily lives and our families. As Clerk I will bring daylight to the decisions and ensure the taxpayers have the visibility and information needed to advocate for a better community. Only through transparency, oversight and accountability can we have the responsiveness in government and in Florida; this is the Constitutional role of the Clerk of Court. As your next Clerk of Court and Comptroller I will use the Constitutional Power of this office to ensure there real fiscal transparency of your tax dollars, real oversight of county spending, and real accountability over county programs and services.

**Brandon Patty (R)**

Brandon Patty, a proud Conservative Republican, serves St. Johns County with integrity and dedication. As a devoted husband and father, his family values guide his work as Clerk and Comptroller. His experience as a U.S. Naval Reserve Officer has instilled the discipline and dedication necessary to serve the community effectively. In 2020, Brandon successfully advocated for and secured an additional judge to facilitate justice and improve the efficiency of the legal system. He launched the Property Fraud Notification and Prevention Campaign to protect residents from the growing threat of white-collar crime. Brandon has been awarded the Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting, the gold standard in governmental accounting and financial reporting, for four consecutive years. This recognition underscores his commitment to transparency and fiscal responsibility. He has worked tirelessly to alert residents to various scams, including false missed jury notifications and false county deed records solicitations, thereby protecting the community from fraud. By leveraging cutting-

**Candidates** cont. on pg. 15

VoteTomLeek.com



# TOM LEEK

THE REAL CONSERVATIVE FOR  
ST. JOHNS COUNTY  
IN THE FLORIDA SENATE



Endorsed by  
**Governor Ron DeSantis**

**“I’m happy to endorse Tom Leek,** a proven conservative, for the Florida Senate. In the Florida House, he has fought alongside us on the countless initiatives that have made Florida the freest state in the union. **I look forward to continuing to work with him as District 7’s next Senator.”**

**VOTE FOR TOM LEEK**

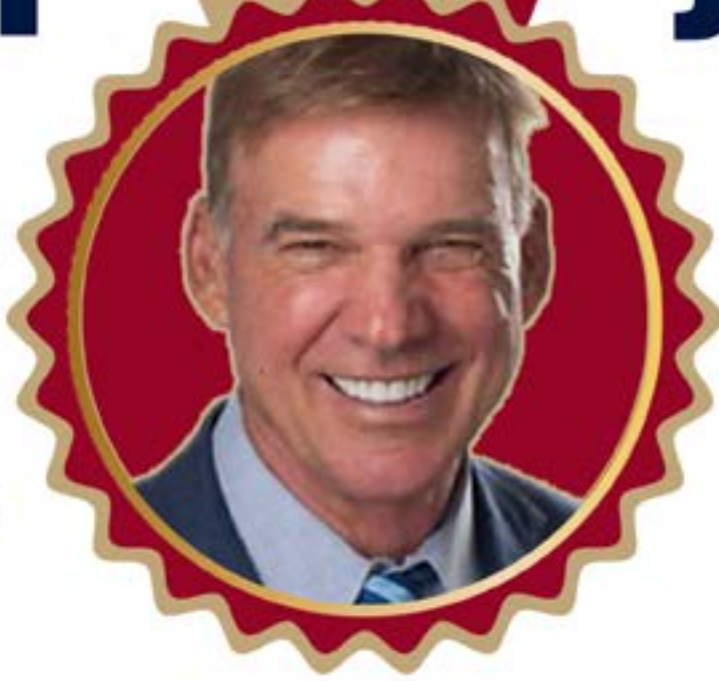
**IN THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY  
FLORIDA STATE SENATE DISTRICT 7**

**EARLY VOTING IN ST. JOHNS BEGINS AUGUST 10  
ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, AUGUST 20**

# GERRY

# JAMES

NOT FUNDED BY  
BIG INSURANCE,  
DEVELOPERS,  
OR  
TRIAL LAWYERS



FUELED BY  
THE PEOPLE  
POWERED BY  
PATRIOTS

## Vote August 20th Primaries

*An America First Patriot*

The Real Conservative, Constitutional, and Christian Candidate

Paid for by Gerry James Republican for State Senate District 7



## CHRISTIAN WHITEHURST

★  
County Commission



### Promises Made, Promises Kept.

When I was elected in 2020 I promised to fight for St. Johns County, and that's exactly what I did. I led the charge for four new regional parks, providing more ballfields, green space and recreational opportunities for our children and families. As a conservative Republican, I fought to eliminate wasteful spending and keep taxes low to protect our quality of life. I've fought to slow the growth by denying incompatible developments to allow our infrastructure to catch up and ensure developers pay their fair share. With your vote, I will continue fighting for our St. Johns values every day.

-Christian Whitehurst

### Fighting For St. Johns

- ✔ Slowed the Growth
- ✔ Led Effort for 4 New Regional Parks
- ✔ Increased Infrastructure
- ✔ Protected Our Beaches
- ✔ Held Developers Accountable
- ✔ Supports Veterans & First Responders

Proudly  
Endorsed by:



# Primary Election Guide

Candidates cont. from pg. 12

edge technology such as artificial intelligence, Brandon has enhanced efficiencies and service delivery in county

offices. Brandon Patty's commitment to these values guides his daily service to the community, ensuring that St. Johns County remains a safe and prosperous place to live.

## Voter Bill of Rights

- Vote and have his or her vote accurately counted.
- Cast a vote if he or she is in line at the official closing of the polls in that county.
- Ask for and receive assistance in voting.
- Receive up to two replacement ballots if he or she makes a mistake prior to the ballot being cast.
- An explanation if his or her registration, or identity, is in question.
- If his or her registration, or identity, is in question, cast a provisional ballot.
- Written instructions to use when voting, and, upon request, oral instructions in voting from elections officers.
- Vote free from coercion or intimidation by elections officers or any other person.
- Vote on a voting system that is in working condition and that will allow votes to be accurately cast.


*Hometown Conservative*

# Roy ALAIMO

FOR ST. JOHNS COUNTY COMMISSION

APPOINTED by GOVERNOR DESANTIS

- Protected Our Beaches
- Limited Government
- Slowed the Growth
- Invested in Public Safety
- No New Taxes



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

## TRUMP REPUBLICAN

# Shoar

## FOR STATE SENATE

### A TRUSTED CONSERVATIVE LEADER Looking Out For Us!

- ✓ Secure the Border
- ✓ Lower the Cost of Living
- ✓ Gulf War Veteran
- ✓ 40 Year Law Enforcement Career
- ✓ Former Chief of Police, City of St Augustine
- ✓ Former Sheriff, St Johns County



**VOTE TRUMP REPUBLICAN  
DAVID SHOAR FOR STATE SENATE  
AUGUST 20**



[Info@VoteShoar.com](mailto:Info@VoteShoar.com)

[VoteShoar.com](http://VoteShoar.com)



[/VoteShoar](https://www.facebook.com/VoteShoar)

Paid by David Shoar, Republican, for State Senate.

# Primary Election Guide



with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

**Q: When is the 2024 Primary Election?**

A: Election Day for the 2024 Primary Election is Tuesday, Aug. 20, 2024. Polls are open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and voters must vote at their assigned polling place. Some Election Day polling places have changed since the last election. To find your polling place, check your voter information card or visit [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov).

**Q: How do I know what's on my ballot?**

A: Sample ballots have been mailed to all registered voters who have not requested a vote-by-mail ballot or requested to receive sample ballots by email. To view your sample ballot online, visit [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) and click My Voter Status.

**Q: I have recently moved. Is it too late to update my registration?**

A: No! To update your address online, visit [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov). If you are unsure if your

record is up to date, use the My Voter Status tool to verify your information.

**Q: I requested a vote-by-mail ballot. Can I still vote in person?**

A: Yes, if you have not returned your vote-by-mail ballot, you can still vote in person. New procedures recently issued by the State require poll workers to ask a voter who was mailed a vote-by-mail ballot if they brought it to the polling place. If yes, the vote-by-mail ballot must be surrendered prior to voting. A vote-by-mail ballot cannot be taken into the voting booth at the polling place.

**Q: If I make a mistake on my ballot, can I get a new one?**

A: Yes! If a voter makes a mistake on their first ballot, they are entitled to up to two additional replacement ballots. If you make a mistake while marking your ballot, you must return to the poll worker WITH your ballot in hand. A ballot with a mistake on it returned to the poll worker is called a "spoiled bal-

lot." To ensure a spoiled ballot cannot be counted, it must be physically altered. Before surrendering the spoiled ballot, the poll worker will ask the voter to fold the ballot in half and tear the wcorner.

**Q: Will there be law enforcement at my voting location to keep the workers and voters safe?**

A: All polling places in St. Johns County are assigned a team member called a Poll Deputy. At the completion of training, Poll Deputies are sworn in and deputized by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office. The deputy is the eyes and ears

of law enforcement at the polling place; they are always present during Early Voting and Election Day to maintain order and ensure a safe voting experience for St. Johns County voters.

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

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

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# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## Three ways to increase small business profits

Contributed by SCORE Jacksonville

No matter how you slice it, there are only three ways to increase the profits you derive from your business: You can raise prices, you can sell more products or you can cut costs.

Understandably, you may be inclined to point to things like launching a mind-blowing marketing campaign or upselling existing customers to increase per-transaction revenue as ways to boost profits. And you'd be right — but those activities fall under the “sell more” or “raise prices” categories. With that in mind, let's talk about what you can work on today to either help you sell more, charge more or spend less.

**Sell More:** A comprehensive list of things to do to help your business sell more products or services would fill this entire space and several more. Fortunately, there are a few quick and easy-to-implement ideas to get started.

- **Reach new markets:** Can you explore new marketing channels to reach more potential customers? Are there online ad platforms you haven't tried? Are you maximizing your social media profiles to drive more customers? Can you tweak a product so that it's more appealing to a

new or different demographic?

- **Explore upsells:** Can you upsell existing customers by steering them to a higher-priced “premium” version of your product? Can you offer add-ons? What about giving them more access to features for an additional fee? Is it possible to offer longer warranties? Note: Depending on how it's structured, upselling may also fall into the “raise prices” category below.

- **Bundle products and services:** You often see this with intangible services like internet and cable TV or home and auto insurance, which are often bundled together into a single product. Can you add a complementary product or service to what you're already offering so you can effectively sell more and increase the overall revenue for your business?

**Raise Prices or Charge More:** You shouldn't simply attempt to raise prices in a vacuum. The price you charge should always be in relation to the perceived value you deliver. So, if you want to charge more, you should deliver more value or, at the very least, increase the perception of that value.

What can you add to your product or service that increases its perceived value

but doesn't add to your cost to deliver it? Alternatively, how can you communicate your value in a different way, so it's seen as being worth more? Can you add “bonuses” or add-ons that take the overall value above and beyond what you're charging? Can you segment your audience in a way that those who can pay more will (by offering a regular version and a more expensive “pro” version of software, for example)?

**Spend Less:** Finally, we come to the category that allows you to increase profits from the other side of the equation. Rather than increasing revenue, you can also reduce costs. Here are some ideas to trim your expenses.

- **Negotiate better deals:** It may not always be possible, but it can't hurt to explore ways to save money on the supplies you need to deliver your products. Suppliers may be willing to offer discounts or special deals for bulk purchases, particularly if you've been a long-time customer.

- **Review marketing performance:** Are all your marketing campaigns producing a return on investment (ROI)? Are you paying every month for activities that aren't moving the needle? Ensure you have effective tracking in place to

measure campaign performance, so you can eliminate what's not working and do more of what is.

- **Explore less-expensive alternatives:** When was the last time you evaluated your spending? Are you sure there aren't cheaper alternatives for the goods and services you currently use that are just as good as, if not better than, what you're using now?

Remember, boosting profits fundamentally boils down to three core strategies: raising prices, selling more, or cutting costs. To optimize profitability, focus on the actions that align with these areas, and you'll ensure a robust and sustainable financial future for your business. Have more questions? Reach out to SCORE Jacksonville for free, expert mentoring and resources to guide you through your small business journey. Visit [www.score.org/jacksonville](http://www.score.org/jacksonville) to learn more.

SCORE Jacksonville provides free and confidential one-on-one business counseling by phone, email, and in-person in Northeast Florida. SCORE Jacksonville also conducts workshops for both start-up entrepreneurs and seasoned small business owners.

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### Fiscal Year 2025 cont. from pg. 5

values results in \$40.8 million in incremental property taxes for the county.

“Taxpayers need to understand, particularly homeowners, that Florida's Save Our Homes provision protects homestead properties from the full percentage increase in assessed value,” Office of Management and Budget Director Jesse Dunn said. “At the proposed flat millage rates, homestead property will experience an approximate 3 percent increase over last year. About two-

thirds of our St. Johns County residential parcels are protected by the Save Our Homes program.”

Dunn shared that a non-homestead property is capped at a 10 percent increase annually.

Details on the proposed budget, videos of the workshop sessions, and more are available at [www.sjcf.us/2025budget](http://www.sjcf.us/2025budget). On the webpage, the public can view the Fiscal Year 2025 Recommended Budget Workbook, which is broken

down into the following sections:

- The Budget Summaries Section provides basic information, including personnel requests, capital equipment, and vehicles.

- The Budget by Fund Accounting overviews the \$1,215,721,492 Fiscal Year 2025 Recommended Budget.

- The Budget by Service Area provides line-item details for each County government service area.

- The Capital Improvement Plan provides an overview of major capital improvement projects identified (funded or unfunded).

The Truth in Millage (TRIM) notices will be mailed to each property taxpayer. These will include the proposed millage rates, the estimated taxes a taxpayer could pay, and information on the first public hearing. Once adopted, the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget begins on Oct. 1, 2024.

**Briefs**

**ACT and Digital SAT Prep Classes offered by Friends of Bartram Trail Public Library**

Dates for ACT and Digital SAT prep classes will be Aug. 15, 22 and Sept. 5, 12, and 19. Registration is in progress. Classes are one hour 15 minutes each and students may sign up for either or both series. SAT classes will be from 5 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. and ACT classes will be from 6:30 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.

The sessions will include two English/Reading and two Math. Following a

practice test completed at home, the fifth and final session will be a

review from 5 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. for English/Reading and from 6:30 p.m. – 7:45 p.m. for Math. Students should bring calculators.

Each series of five sessions costs \$50 or \$100 to attend both series. These proceeds are a donation, and with the other donations are used to fund all library programs at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. Purchase of a specific review/prep book is also required.

There is a cap of 25 students per series. The last day to register is

Aug. 10, 2024, unless the cap is reached prior to this date. If the cap is

reached, the registration for that class will be closed. Registration information can be obtained at the Bartram Trail Library reference desk, or by contacting Phyllis Macy at [macy17@yahoo.com](mailto:macy17@yahoo.com)

**Clerk's Office to hold Passport Saturday event on Aug. 3**

The St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller will hold a special Passport Saturday event on Aug. 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Richard O. Watson Judicial Center in St. Augustine. The extended business hours make applying for a passport more convenient for those seeking to travel this upcoming season.

“We recognize the challenges of coordinating schedules for passports during regular business hours,” said Clerk Designee John Rundgren. “Holding this Passport Saturday event is our way of making the process easier and more convenient for local families.”

The Recording Department will be open on Aug. 3 to accept and review applications for first-time passports, new passports for persons whose previous passport was issued more than 15 years ago, minors under age 16, or whose passport was lost, stolen, or damaged. Other passports must be renewed by mail using Form DS-82, which is available at <https://travel.state.gov/>.

Anyone traveling internationally must have a passport book, including infants, and every applicant for a new passport must appear in person, regardless of age. According to the U.S. Department of State, the current processing times for routine service are between six and eight weeks and expedited service is between two and three weeks.

Visit <https://stjohnsclerk.com/passports/> for more information and details about required documentation, fees, and acceptable forms of payment.

**St. Johns County Parks and Recreation launches new app**

On July 1, the St. Johns County Parks and Recreation Department launched a brand-new app, giving residents an intuitive platform for community engagement, education, and exploration.

The SJC Parks and Rec app allows users to find parks and beaches (and even individual amenities like skate parks, dog parks, boat ramps, etc.) using intuitive interactive maps, register quickly and easily for programs and events, and listen to region-specific audio tours about county history.

These location-based audio tours can be downloaded by users ahead of visits to different parts of the county, allowing them to listen to the stories of our past and present while enjoying our parks and beaches well into the future.

“There’s so much history in St. Johns County, and on park properties, that we thought this would be the best way

to let people experience it conveniently,” Parks and Recreation Director Ryan Kane said.

“We love that the app gives our residents an easy way to sign up for our park programs as well as learn more about the parks themselves, not to mention our beaches, boat ramps, and everything in between,” Community Program Manager Tess Simpson said.

The SJC Parks and Rec app is available to download from the Apple App Store and Google Play. Visit [www.sjcl.us/sjc-parks-rec-app/](http://www.sjcl.us/sjc-parks-rec-app/) for more information.

**St. Johns County Public Library System launches revamped Bookmobile**

The St. Johns County Public Library System has announced the return of its bookmobile, which provides books and programs to regional areas of the community. The new bookmobile schedule is in effect until Aug. 26 and includes:

- Mondays: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Faith Community Church, 3450 County Road 210, St. Johns
- Wednesdays: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at UF Health Nocatee, 351 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra
- Fridays: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the World Golf Village Convention Center, 500 S. Legacy Trail, St. Augustine

Additional details are available at [www.sjcpls.org/branches/bookmobile](http://www.sjcpls.org/branches/bookmobile).


“After a brief hiatus for mechanical maintenance, the Library System’s community outreach team has been busy preparing a revamped summer schedule to ensure the public’s browsing experience remains comfortable and enjoyable,” St. Johns County Public Library System Director Debra Rhodes Gibson said.

The bookmobile allows patrons to browse onboard items, pick up requested items, return items, and use free Wi-Fi.

**ElderSource seeking St. Johns County representation for Advisory Council**

ElderSource, a nonprofit organization that works to empower elders, adults with disabilities and their caregivers in order to age with dignity and independence, is seeking volunteer members to its Advisory Council, specifically seniors who reside in St. Johns County. Duties for an Advisory Council member are to report on the needs of elderly and emerging issues in their respective counties; review and comment on the agency’s Area Plan; study legislative issues and advocate on behalf of the elderly; assist in promoting the mission, programs and activities of the agency; and to educate the public about the needs and the contributions of the elderly.

“Our Advisory Council members are an important asset to our organization,” said Linda Levin, CEO of ElderSource. “They are an active voice we need to hear in order for us to stay




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## Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
mail@floridanewsline.com

### Tracy Tripp and Edward Mickolus

Authors Tracy Tripp and Edward Mickolus may have taken very different paths in life, but their passion for books, writing and fulfilling their purpose in life is very much the same. The two decided to collaborate on a crime thriller book after meeting at a St. Augustine book fair in 2018 and becoming friends. The book, "White Noise Whispers," won the duo second place at the Florida Writers Association Royal Palm Literary Awards in the Mystery or Crime category. Mickolus gives all the credit to Tripp, the principal author. "She is able to sit in the heads of all of her characters and make them all sensitive, understandable and likable," said Mickolus.

Tripp, 54, grew up in a small town in upstate New York on a dairy farm, one of seven children, working to put herself through college at SUNY Oswego and then Buffalo State College for graduate school to become a teacher. She taught both English and science, but ended up focusing on language arts. After having three children and later moving to Julington Creek in 2012, she took a class through a children's writing institute and Gotham Writers' Workshop. She started to write and eventually published her first novel "Parting Gifts" in 2021. "It is such a journey to go from a thought to a book," said Tripp, who now has written five novels and two children's books. Tripp is also a substitute teacher in St. Johns County.

### Get to Know ...

Interested in being featured? Email Martie Thompson at [editor@FloridaNewsLine.com](mailto:editor@FloridaNewsLine.com)



Photo by Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
Tracy Tripp and Edward Mickolus

Mickolus, 73, grew up in Michigan, the son of a Ford Motor Company dynamometer test engineer. He attended Georgetown University on a Ford Motor Company scholarship and then pursued graduate studies at Yale University via a National Science Foundation fellowship. He then served in various positions in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for 33 years, where he was CIA's first full time analyst on international terrorism; analyzed African political economic, social, military and leadership issues; wrote political-psychological assessments of world leaders; and managed collection, counterintelligence and covert action programs against terrorist, drug traffickers, weapons proliferators and hostile espionage services. He has

written 50 books so far, ranging from terrorism studies to humor. Mickolus moved to Nocatee in 2013.

### Q: What future projects do you have in the works?

TT: I have a sixth novel currently in the editing phase. I used my life as a backdrop, and I weaved in a mafia and a murder that did not happen.

EM: I have five books in the works, including International Terrorist Events 2023-2024, All the Presidents' Heroes: Inspirational Stories from State of the Union Honorees, Famous Last Meals, Naked Came the Spy and its sequel and Stories by the Side of the Road.

### Q: Who are some of your favorite authors?

TT: I like Jodi Picoult, Abraham Verghese and Jojo Moyes to name a few.

EM: Tracy Tripp, Dave Berry, Jeffery Deaver, Carl Hiaasen, Roger von Oech, Joseph Wambaugh, Ed McBain also just to name a few.

### Q: What are your hobbies?

TT: I like to play tennis, practice yoga and workout. I love to spend time with my family and to travel.

EM: I have collected 1,700 fashion challenged neck ties from about 30 nations. Ties are one of the few pieces of men's clothing that allow us to express our individuality. I also love classic cars, acting in the Performing Arts Club of Del Webb, teaching at the University of North Florida, stand-up comedy and trivia.

### Q: What is your life philosophy?

TT: I once heard this at church, and it really spoke to me. God is going to call you to do something, and your job is to do it. The outcome is up to Him. Accept it. Success is that you followed through.

EM: I am really motivated by service and assisting others. I was able to do that by working at the agency. Now, I really enjoy mentoring and teaching students and serving as a lector at church.

### Q: Share a little about your family.

TT: My husband of 29 years is Steve Tripp. We have three adult children, two daughters, 21 and 20, and a 24-year-old son (first grandchild in October).

EM: My wife of 41 years is Susan Schjelderup. We have one 36-year-old daughter and an 18-month old granddaughter.

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*Fishing* | **Jimmy's Fishing Report**  
 By Jimmy Tomazinis  
[mail@floridanewline.com](mailto:mail@floridanewline.com)

I know summer is far from over, but August still seems like an end of one summer at least. Kids go back to school and that means a lot of routines go back to normal. The traffic is more predictable in the morning and there's fewer people on the water during the week. It also gets people settled to staying around the house for a bit since the busy summer travel season comes to a close. I found myself doing a good bit of traveling this summer to fish familiar but very different waters down south. How special it is to actually have clear water and be able to just watch fish. I've said it before, and I'll say it again — fishing different areas will make you a better angler. Understanding why fish are in a spot and not just knowing a spot is huge. So, if you didn't or don't make the point of fishing somewhere new, I'd highly recommend it.

Since we're settling back into being around the house more this is what the river's got to offer. Shrimp were very slow to show, but they will be bigger and more plentiful. Docks and bridges are great places to try them. It's still hot,

so shade is a good thing. Trout should still be around our area, but you might have to go north if we get a decent amount of rain. They are one of the few summer residents that like a little more salt. Flounder should also be picking up around structure and drop offs. Remember that if one flounder likes a spot there's a pretty good chance that others will as well.

I will also be watching the surf this month for tarpon and the beginning of our fall mullet run. If we get any strong east or northeast winds it can get the mullet started, especially as it gets closer to September.

I also want to put a little PSA out there since unfortunately it is algae bloom season. Doctors Lake has been bad the last few years and there's always a chance in our area. If you see algae in the water, it's best to avoid it since there's no way of knowing if the toxins they produce are present or not. You can also report any blooms you observe to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Let's hope for the best. Tight lines.

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**Team wins fifth Florida state championship since 6u**



Photo courtesy Chris Thompson

The 12u Julington Creek Diamond King Elite team won the 2024 Cal Ripken Florida State Championship on June 30 at Jax Beach. Their record was 5 – 0 and they outscored opponents 58 – 13. This is the age group's fifth state championship at Julington Creek since they were playing allstars at five years old. Pictured are Parker Karvonen, Gavin Ramigio, Tyler North, Johnny Degrado, Zach Childers, Piercen Rumble, Mark Thompson, Jaxson Sotomayor, Cadyn Hacker, Will Campbell, Paul Fleischer, Brantlee Mullins and Tyson Jordan. The manager is Chris Thompson and coaches are David Mullins and Travis Jordan.

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# Gardening

## Heat and storms, and flowers

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewslines.com

We've seen the first major storm of the season, Beryl, and it has been disastrous for our neighbors in the Caribbean, Mexico, and parts of coastal Texas. Doing our best to prepare for such an event is important, so please check out our city's website if you need more information: <https://www.jaxready.com/>. Meanwhile, we have high temperatures and associated stormy weather conditions that we also need to be prepared for.

After the extended dry period from May into June, thankfully lawns that were looking brown have greened up again. In my front yard, lance leaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) is looking healthy and its new flush of bright yellow daisy-like flowers are attracting small pollinators. The wild petunias (*Ruellia caroliniana*) that were suffering from lack of rain have also begun flowering again, and I'm glad to see butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is blooming.

It's not an easy thing to have flowers in bloom throughout the year. When I look around my neighborhood in the first week of July, I see white gaura, or whirling butterflies (*Gaura lindheimeri*), sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.), blue daze (*Evolvulus glomeratus*), tall red pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), African iris (*Dietes iridioides*), tropical red salvia (*Salvia coccinea*), soap aloe (*Aloe maculata*), firebush (*Hamelia patens*), and purple passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*), which are all either native or considered "Florida Friendly."

For an easily used App from the UF/IFAS Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program website, visit <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/apps/butterfly-gardens/>. I've been looking at it on my laptop, but it can be used on phones and tablets too. You can find a list of plants suited to a butterfly garden, and for each plant

you can see its flowering time, as well as information on how and where it will grow best. To make full use of the App requires making an account to personalize a garden design and plant list, but simply accessing information on butterflies and plants doesn't.

As well as being useful for butterflies, bees, and other insects, having flowers in your garden that bloom throughout the year makes for a prettier yard, which is something many of us aspire to. I don't always achieve that, so anything that clues me in to what might bloom in mid-summer, for instance, when conditions are difficult, is welcome! I can also recommend the Xerces Society for native plant recommendations: <https://tinyurl.com/bdz9jwtn>. Here you will find bloom times for each plant and information on what insects they attract, as well as other factors you need to choose the right plant for the right place.

If you are a gardener who enjoys propagating your own plants, whatever they may be, you will have bags of potting soil and maybe amendments like vermiculite and perlite with which to adjust the texture and water-holding ability of that potting soil. Please pay attention to how you deal with using and mixing those products. When they become dry and dusty they can be easily blown around and, if inhaled, can be dangerous. At best they are irritants and in the worst case they could cause a serious lung infection which is difficult to treat, MAC lung disease, so be aware and use a well-fitting N95 mask if you work in an enclosed space. Perlite and vermiculite can irritate the eyes, so safety glasses would be helpful. And wear gloves — which is a recommendation on all bags of potting soil — just in case you have any small cuts and scrapes.

## The Pantry Raiders

## Keep the barbecue fired up

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Backyard barbecues remain popular even when the summer slowly begins to wind down. Though traditional favorites like hamburgers and hot dogs always have a place at the table, grilling aficionados may be on the lookout for new recipes to test their skills.

"Buttermilk Chicken Kebabs" from "Casablanca: My Moroccan Food" (Firefly Books) by Nargisse Benkabou does not disappoint. Even though buttermilk is not a traditional Moroccan ingredient, the author uses it to tenderize the chicken and make these kebabs even more mouthwatering with an added hint of tang. These smoky skewers can be enjoyed on their own, or cooked and added to salads or served on flatbreads.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative  
Buttermilk Chicken Kebabs

### Buttermilk Chicken Kebabs

- Serves 4 as a starter
- ½ cup buttermilk
- ½ cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. clear honey
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ½ tsp. salt, or more to taste
- ½ tsp. ground black pepper
- 1 lb., 2 oz. boneless, skinless chicken

thighs or breasts, cut into bite-sized chunks

Place all of the ingredients, except the chicken, in a large bowl and stir to combine. Add the chicken and turn to coat with the marinade. Cover with the plastic wrap and leave to marinate in the fridge for 2 to 12 hours.

When ready to serve, thread the pieces of chicken onto skewers. Preheat a barbecue or heat a griddle or skillet over high heat. Place the skewers on your barbecue or skillet and cook for 5 minutes on each side, turning every now and then, until golden on all sides and cooked through. Serve immediately.



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# Travel

## Naples, Italy: Don't miss this underrated city

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Naples, Italy, often seems to be snubbed, overlooked, or underrated. Most travelers use it as a base for tours to Pompeii or the picturesque villages clinging to the Amalfi Coast. Still, they need to explore the city's charms. During my visit, I saw and highly recommend Pompeii and the Amalfi Coast, but I am so thankful I added three wonderful days in the city. Honestly, I wish I had stayed longer.

The Naples Archeological Museum ranks as one of the grandest in the world. Begun as a palace when Naples had kings, it expanded to host a treasure trove of priceless ancient artifacts, sculptures, artworks, and furnishings. I marveled at the beauty of 2,000-year-old mosaic floors, jewelry, and vases in the building that still feels like a palace.

When the excavations at Pompeii began in the 1700s, the king ordered all the best discoveries sent to him. So, when you visit the ruins, you'll see primarily replicas of the artworks that graced the mountain town. The originals are kept safe in the Naples Archeological Museum, including the famous erotic art in the Secret Room. You'll want to see these authentic gems. In addition, the museum houses the fabulous Farnese Collection, a display of behemoth statues that stood in Rome's Baths of Caracalla. I felt tiny

next to these giants.

Like all Italian cities and towns, Naples contains many ornate churches. But a smaller private chapel surpassed the golden icons. The Cappella Sansevero is home to the stunning Veiled Christ carved in 1753. A life-sized marble statue of Christ crucified lies on a pillow topped with a flowing, translucent shroud. It's made from one solid block of Carrara marble and mesmerizes all. You wonder if it's magical as you peer through the stone. This work is considered one of the most extraordinary sculptures on earth.

Within a few yards stands another staggering piece: The Release from Deception. Fishing nets surround the figures again carved from solid marble. The tangled netting is so intricate it defines reality. Don't miss the Sansevero Chapel.

The famous artist Caravaggio, known for his use of dramatic light, escaped Rome for Naples after supposedly murdering a man. In 1607, Caravaggio painted the fascinating Seven Works of Mercy above the main altar in the Misericordia Church, where you can still see it. This masterpiece depicts the seven virtues, some say, to atone for himself. Sadly, the artist was killed returning to Rome, where he



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Crowded alley.

was to be pardoned. Caravaggio died at age 37 and left few masterworks, so grab the opportunity.

As you wander through Naples's tiny, crowded alleyways, you'll see local artisans carving cameos and presepi. Presepi are miniature to life-size keepsake nativity figures by expert craftsmen. You'll also find less expensive presepi dressed as villagers in traditional costumes, some incorporating movement. A new, kitschy form of presepi are pop entertainers or sports figures.

Naples's history includes ancient Roman remains now beneath the streets, and several tours take visitors below. The city also boasts three funiculars to whisk folks up the hill for fantastic harbor views.

Remember that pizza originated in Naples? When hungry from exploring the walkable historic district, be sure to enjoy the yummy thick-crust pie; however, my favorite meal came from the Seafront Pasta Bar. Here, a team of chefs prepares mouthwatering fresh pasta dishes in front of diners sitting at a bar. So delicious and better than the Food Network.

Some will call Naples gritty, but it has jewels. I missed the Opera House, Castle, Royal Palace, and Hanging Gardens because I needed more time!

If you go, I recommend Rick Steves' Guidebook.

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

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