

The Creek Line

JULY 2024 Volume 24 Issue 7

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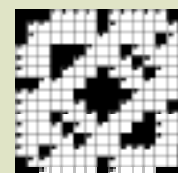
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Photo courtesy St. Johns County

American Flag Rescue Program flag drop-off boxes are conveniently located throughout St. Johns County.

St. Johns County rescues 11,000 American Flags

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

St. Johns County started its American Flag Rescue Program in 2019. As of mid-June, it has rescued more than 11,000 American flags through this program, which allows residents to properly retire flags with honor and respect. American Flag Drop boxes are available to the public at more than 35 locations throughout St. Johns County. In February 2024, the 10,000th flag was collected at the St. Johns County Tax Collector's office. A special video was produced with Tax Collector Dennis Hollingsworth to celebrate the milestone.

The county's recycling coordinator, Christopher Benjamin, founded the American Flag Rescue Program.

He said, "After seeing two American flags discarded in a drop-off trash container at the county landfill, I

Flag rescue program cont. on pg. 13

INK! recognizes Class of 2024 Take Stock in Children® graduating seniors

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The St. Johns County Education Foundation which operates as Investing in Kids (INK!) recently hosted its annual Bright Beginnings Celebration to honor the Class of 2024 Take Stock in Children® graduating seniors in St. Johns County. Fourteen students were recognized in a unique program highlighting their academic achievements hosted at St. Augustine High School on May 13. The students are graduating from St. Johns County public high schools and each will be attending college supported by a Take Stock in Children scholarship funded by individual donors, corporate sponsors, and community partners.

The evening program featured Tim Forson, Superintendent of Schools for the St. Johns County School District. In his remarks, Forson acknowledged graduating students, volunteer mentors, teachers, principals, school board members, and INK! staff, for their

support of the Take Stock St. Johns program. Forson commended the students and their focus on establishing pathways to success with goal setting, hard work, perseverance, and collaboration with their mentors, families, guardians, and teachers.

Since 1998, INK! has been the exclusive umbrella agency in St. Johns County for Take Stock in Children, a statewide non-profit organization that offers deserving low-income students the opportunity to earn college scholarships through educational support, mentorship, and college success coaching. Students apply to participate in Take Stock when they are in the eighth grade in St. Johns County public schools. Upon ac-



Photo courtesy INK!

Bartram Trail High School recipient Alice Oliveira and family with Bev Slough (mentor) and INK! staff member Mike Michel.

INK! cont. on pg. 2

All about the library's Summer Reading Program

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The St. Johns County Library Summer Reading Program, "Adventure Begins at Your Library," runs through July 27. The Bartram Branch Library, and other libraries across St. Johns County, aim to create an exciting summer at the library with story times, special events, teen crafts, and interesting workshops each week.

Designed to promote educational and family-friendly summer fun, the St. Johns County Public Library invites the community to visit the library and participate in this year's reading event. Participants may pick up their free reading logs from any library



Graphic courtesy St. Johns County Public Library System

branch to earn prizes for every five days tracked.

Additionally, more than 100 fun

and educational events are planned throughout the "adventure," along

Summer reading cont. on pg. 16



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ST. JOHNS BEST OF THE BEST 2023
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INK cont. from pg. 1

ceptance into the program, they sign a contract to maintain a 2.5 grade point average (GPA), uphold good behavior and attendance, and stay drug and crime free. Take Stock in Children is a public-private partnership in the State of Florida.

One hundred percent of all monetary donations received by INK! for the Take Stock in Children program are directed to the purchase of the scholarships and are fully matched by Florida Prepaid Foundation with funding by the State Legislature. Community partners and business owners also provide significant support to help with academic and educational assistance.

According to Cathy Newman, INK! executive director, this year's graduating seniors persevered through particularly challenging moments throughout their high school careers.

"As COVID disrupted the start of their high school career, this year's graduates demonstrated resiliency and flexibility while learning in the classroom and online. They have succeeded despite the disruptions COVID caused and we have no doubt that they will continue to do well in the future," she said.

According to James Wheeler, INK!'s Operations and Student Programs Director, and program director of Take Stock in Children in St. Johns County, each graduating senior earned a scholarship with a value of approximately \$6,500, equal to 60 credit hours of tuition at a state college in Florida and

received new laptop computers. Students were honored for their academic accomplishments and donors were recognized through named scholarships for the students.

The 2024 Take Stock in Children St. Johns graduates from northern St. Johns County schools are:

Jordan Graham, Toco Creek High School (Margie Davidson Memorial Scholarship; Jim Davidson Memorial Super Senior Scholarship)

Alice Olivera, Bartram Trail High School (iVenture Solutions/Davidson Cares Scholarship)

Jun Pan, Bartram Trail High School (Snyder Family Scholarship; Take Stock in Children Florida/Asofsky Foundation Leaders 4 Life Fellow)

Cassie Wolfe, Bartram Trail High School (Brooke Ladue Memorial Scholarship)

Cooper Austreng, Ponte Vedra High School (Ponte Vedra Women's Civic Alliance Scholarship)

The event also honored Take Stock mentors who are longtime, dedicated volunteers for students. Volunteer mentors for the class of 2024 included Jeff Adams, Butch Burkett, Larry Dillahay, Kelly Harris, Sheila Lentz, Bob McKeefrey, and Beverly Slough. They collectively volunteered more than 800 hours to mentor the Take Stock class of 2024.

Visit www.ink-stjohns.org for more information.

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July

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 playing-hookie2022@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: Happy Hookers crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on July 2 and July 16 from 5:30 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. The group crochets or knits blankets for cancer patients at area hospitals. All skill levels are welcome. Visit www.sjcpls.org or call (904) 827-6960.

2nd: Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, July 2 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church's Loretto Road Campus in the Kids Space at 2501 Loretto Road. September Quilt-Fest Jacksonville information and volunteer signups will be covered. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

3rd: 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 July 3 from 11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

11th: 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 July 11 from 12:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

12th: First Friday Adult Book Club will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library at 10 a.m. on July 12 to discuss "The First Ladies" by Marie Benedict. Registration is required; email draasch@sjcfl.us.

13th: The Bartram Trail Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, July 13) from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. The topic for the meeting is "Members Present their Brick Walls for Discussion." Email ginglish@comcast.net for more information. Visit www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClubGroup to send a request to join the club.

14th: Unity Basics, a free class will be held from 12 p.m. - 2 p.m. at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road. Join Rev. Yvonne McAndrew for a fun, interactive, informative class on the foundations of Unity. Call (904) 287-1505 or email UCCLOffice2777@gmail.com for more information.

15th: The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, July 15 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. The program will be a reveal of the annual All Star Challenge which is "Make it Modern" for 2024. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

16th: Spycraft will be hosted at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on Tuesday, July 16 from 2:03 p.m. - 2:48 p.m. This free program is part of the Adventure Begins at Your Library Summer Reading 2024. Listen to stories, create ciphers, and learn essential espionage skills. For ages nine to 12; register online at sjcpls.org. Registration opens on July 2 at 10 a.m.

17th: Free Tech Help with David will be held on Wednesday, July 17 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/ for more information.

18th: William Bartram Scenic Highway Group will meet on Thursday, July 18 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 alabatt@comcast.net or call (904) 699-8475.

19th: Adult Craft: Painting Frogs with Don Bowden, Mandarin's "Frog Man" will be held on Friday, July 19 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. at

the Bartram Trail Branch Library. All supplies are provided by the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library. Space is limited; register by calling the library at (904) 827-6960. Registration begins on Monday, July 1.

19th: "Do You Need a Living Will and How Can You Avoid the Need for a Guardianship," 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, July 19 from 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

20th: Dress a Girl Around the World at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will be held on Saturday, July 20 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.

20th: The Northwest St. Johns County United for Progress Club will host a beach party, brunch, and fundraiser at Beachwalk from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. on Saturday, July 20. Visit www.nwstjohnsup.com or email nwsjcp@gmail.com for more information.

27th: St. Johns Farmers Market will be held the fourth Saturday of each month (this month, July 27) 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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Guest Column

Local high school weightlifter headed to national championship

By Jack Kasting, FAMU journalism student
mail@floridanewline.com

As far back as I can remember, my brother and I have always been athletic kids. I think I played just about every mainstream sport out there that was available to me. Football, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, you name it. One thing in particular I picked up from athletics (namely football) is weightlifting. I started freshman year of high school and haven't stopped since. The whole while, my younger brother Chappy Kasting watched me time and time again lifting weights. When he started football in ninth grade, I got excited to see him lift weights and grow like I did; however, I was not prepared for how far he would go and just how fast he got there.

Chappy started Bartram Trail High

School as a freshman in 2021 and joined the football team. Pretty soon after this I began noticing his size and strength increasing rapidly. He just kept getting bigger and bigger! I also began to notice his affinity for the weightlifting aspect of being on the football team. Time went on and he steadily made more progress. He played on the football team for his freshman and sophomore years, gaining muscle mass all the while.

After his sophomore year, Chappy decided he wanted to transition out of football and into weightlifting exclusively, so he joined the Bartram Trail High School weightlifting team. A little bit later he was recruited for the RW3 weightlifting team, which competes in USA Weightlifting. USA Weightlifting competes in Olympic lifting. His

high school weightlifting coach, Ron Reagan, is also his USA Weightlifting coach. Chappy has competed on the BTHS varsity team when in season and competes on the USA Weightlifting Olympic year-round.

Chappy recently competed in the USA Weightlifting State Championship in Live Oak and placed third. As a rising senior, he is currently in the 89 kg weight class for USA Weightlifting, 199 lbs weight class at Bartram Trail, and ranked 13th in the country for his USA Weightlifting weight class. After the state championship, Chappy is now qualified and heading to the USA Weightlifting national championship to be held in late June in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Q: When is the 2024 Primary Election?

A: The 2024 Primary Election is scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 20, 2024. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. Voters must vote at their assigned precinct on Election Day.

Early voting will be available from Saturday, Aug. 10, through Saturday, Aug. 17, from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. daily at all locations. A list of early voting locations will be available 30-days prior to the election at www.votesjc.gov. During early voting, voters can vote at any location.

Q: Is there a deadline for registering to vote or changing my party for the 2024 Primary Election?

A: Yes. The deadline for the 2024 Primary Election is Monday, July 22. To register to vote or change party affiliation online, visit www.votesjc.gov.

Q: Have candidates that are running for office filed their papers?

A: Yes. Candidate qualifying ended June 14 and the 2024 Primary Election ballot has been set.

Q: How can I find out who will be on my ballot?

A: A sample ballot will be mailed to every registered voter unless they requested a vote-by-mail ballot or a sample ballot by email. Sample ballots are mailed three weeks prior to the election,

as well as being available on our website by using the "My Voter Status" tool.

A list of Primary Election candidates is also available on our website along with a full list of candidates who qualified with the Elections Office.

Q: When will vote-by-mail ballots be mailed?

A: Vote-by-mail ballots will first be mailed July 6 to overseas and military voters. The ballots for all other voters who requested a vote-by-mail ballot will be mailed mid-July. The deadline to request a vote-by-mail ballot to be mailed is Thursday, Aug. 8, by 5 p.m.

Visit www.votesjc.gov to request a vote-by-mail ballot. Voters can also use the "My Voter Status" tool to confirm that they have a vote-by-mail request on file, or to track the status of their ballot.

Vote-by-mail ballots must be returned to the Elections Office by 7 p.m. on Election Day to be counted. Secure Ballot Intake Stations will be available at all early voting locations during the hours of voting.

Q: Where can I find more information about the 2024 Primary Election?

A: The St. Johns County Citizen's Guide to the 2024 Primary and General Elections is being mailed to all residences in St. Johns County to share important information about the upcoming elections. Residents can expect to receive the guide mid-July.

You can also call the Elections Office with any questions you may have at (904) 823-2238, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. My staff and I are here to serve you, and we will make it easy for you to vote.

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

Vicky Oakes
St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections

2024 Primary Election
August 20, 2024

Deadline to Register to Vote or Change Party Affiliation
July 22, 2024

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Northeast Florida Endocrine & Diabetes Associates



Dear Members of the Community,

We are excited to announce that Raquel Villavicencio, MD will be joining us in July 2024. As the newest physician to join our practice, Raquel Villavicencio, MD, NCMP, ABOM is excited to announce she is accepting new patients; both men and women with diabetes, thyroid and endocrinology disorders. Dr. Villavicencio is a fellowship-trained physician, triple-board certified in endocrinology, internal medicine and obesity medicine.

Prior to her current role as an endocrinologist, she served as a primary care physician, hospitalist and preoperative assessment practitioner. Dr. Villavicencio is a member of the Endocrine Society and the Menopause Society, where she earned her designation as a certified menopause practitioner. Dr. Villavicencio has also earned a Certificate in Comprehensive Care for Persons with Diabetes from the Endocrine Society, is a certified Prevent T2 lifestyle coach.

Dr. Villavicencio speaks both English and Spanish. She is accepting new patients at our St. Johns and St. Augustine locations.

Please contact our office with any questions or to schedule with Dr. Villavicencio.

Yours Truly,
Northeast Florida Endocrine and Diabetes Associates, PA

St. Johns County Location:

Seton Building
300 St. Elizabeth Way
Suite 160
St. Johns, Florida 32259

St. Augustine Location:

600 Plantation Island Dr S
Suite 1
St. Augustine, FL 32080

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with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: What can you tell us about the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office aviation unit?

A: We refer to them as our "eyes in the sky." Currently we have two aircraft: a 2013 Bell 407 that we bought used from the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and a 1969 Vietnam-era Bell OH-58 that we acquired repurposed in the 1990s under Sheriff Perry from the federal government under the 1033 program. It's important to have two aircraft in case one is undergoing maintenance. About two years ago, we ordered a new Bell 407 to replace the 1969 aircraft, since parts are becoming scarce for repairs to that aircraft. We anticipate getting the new aircraft in late 2024.

We currently lease space at the St. Augustine Regional Airport and share a hangar with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), which also has two helicopters.

Q: What personnel does the unit have?

A: The aviation unit is under the Operations Division. We have four pilots and the lead pilot has the rank of sergeant. These pilots are all very experienced and the goal is to get the aircraft in the air more, which we have been successful in doing. In 2023, we flew 475 flight hours; so far in 2024 we have 590 flight hours. The unit also has two full time mechanics and a part time mechanic.

Q: What are some highlights of the "eyes in the sky?"

A: They are able to assist us in real time, which adds an extra layer of safety for the community as well as our deputies. For example, they can advise

the deputy sheriffs who are in cars as to oncoming traffic.

Flights by our aviation unit are both reactive and proactive — and they can physically respond to calls for service, such as swimmers in distress, stolen vehicles, missing children or elderly, suspected criminals in pursuit, in progress calls and the proactive traffic enforcement for traffic stops.

Q: Do you partner with other agencies?

A: We have many partnerships with local agencies such as St. Johns Fire and Rescue, St. Augustine City Fire Department, and surrounding municipalities. We provide mutual aid for Clay, Flagler and Putnam counties as well as St. Johns County municipalities, Florida Highway Patrol, and FWC. We have a great partnership with the city of Jacksonville as well. Since the closest US Coast Guard Search and Rescue is in Savannah, Georgia, we bolster their search and rescue attempts. We can get on the scene quicker in our area and drop a raft if necessary, but we can't hoist up to our aircraft. We patrol 221 square miles of water in St. Johns County in addition to our 42 miles of beaches. We know lives are being saved because of our aviation unit.

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

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



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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

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August 20



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

Q: Do you have an update on the new schools scheduled to open in 2026?

A: Yes, we have received multiple bids for these two new K-8 schools, to be built in Nocatee and Silverleaf and open in time for the 2026 – 2027 school year. The bids came in at approximately \$61 million each. For comparison purposes, Pine Island Academy, which opened just three years ago, had a bid of \$31 million. These new schools will be the same basic plan as Pine Island Academy, just adjusted for the footprint of the

property.

Q: What's the latest on the school under construction in RiverTown?

A: This school is scheduled to open for the 2025 – 2026 school year. I was able to visit the construction site recently and observe the tilt wall construction in progress. It's an engineering feat: workers form the walls on the ground and then a huge crane, capable of lifting 300 tons, lifts the wall and puts it into a preformed trough. This holds the wall in place and then it is secured with big braces. It took less than an hour to

pick up a wall and put it in the trough. We've used this methodology for a while to build our new schools; this is just the first time I could observe it in person. The construction of this school is coming along on schedule.

Q: And finally with respect to new schools, what is the status of Trout Creek Academy and Lakeside Academy, due to open for the upcoming 2024 – 2025 school year?

A: These two schools are almost if not fully staffed and administration should be moving in fairly soon. They are both scheduled to open in time for orientation in early August.

Q: With respect to all the construction, many schools still have portables. Can you comment on why the district continues to lease them?

A: We continue to have a lot of relocatables because we can't keep up with the growth despite these five new schools under construction. We choose to lease rather than purchase the relocatables, because if we purchase them, they would be listed on the individual school's permanent capacity, which would hurt us in the long run in showing need for more student stations. Additionally, by leasing, we can move the relocatables if we want (and we do this sometimes) plus we can return them if they are no longer needed.

Q: What can you tell us about the upcoming budget process?

A: We will start our budget meetings in July and people will have ample opportunity to see the budget before

we vote on it. We will have a public hearing on July 30 at 5:30 p.m. at the School Board Auditorium on Orange Street and another one on Sept. 10 before our vote, which is scheduled for that same evening. The budget includes the tentative agreement the district has with the teachers' and support staff unions. The agreement for teachers includes the teacher pay allocation from the state that the governor has discussed so much as well as additional money from our district's general fund. These agreements will be voted on for ratification in preplanning in early August prior to the start of the school year and, if ratified, the School Board will vote on them at our meeting on Aug. 13.

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

A: We are pleased that most all of our schools are fully staffed for next year. We still do need all new students to be registered as soon as possible! Visit <https://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/student/enrollment/> to learn what forms are needed and to register online.

Finally, we are excited to have five swimmers from Bartram Trail High School and one runner from Creekside High School who will be attending the Olympic trials. We are certainly proud of their accomplishments.

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.

Coming in August!
BACK TO SCHOOL
GUIDE

Contact Linda Gay
linda@floridanewslines.com
 904.607.5062

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



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

ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Business Briefs

Free class on Beneficial Ownership Information report to be held

Are you a small business owner and have not heard of this new requirement for Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) Report? If so, join the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) of Florida for a workshop where Small Business Development Center business consultants will present an overview of why, how and when to file this new report.

Following the presentation about the new report, consultants will help business owners. There will be computers

and laptops available on site to fill out the report for those who do not bring their own laptop or tablet. Filing is simple, secure, and free of charge. Beneficial ownership information reporting is not an annual requirement. Unless a company needs to update or correct information, a report only needs to be submitted once.

The event will be held at the St. Johns County Main Library, in the Meeting Room, at 1960 N. Ponce De Leon Blvd. on Friday, July 19 from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. The same workshop will be held

at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd. on Thursday, Aug. 1 from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. There is no charge for the workshop; visit <https://sjcpls.org/event/beneficial-ownership-report-requirements-for-small-business-owners/> to register.

New financial advisor for local firm

Edward Jones Financial Advisor Mitch Wright has announced that a new financial advisor, Heather Wright, has joined his office in Fruit Cove on June 1, 2024.

“I am really looking forward to working with Mitch,” said Heather Wright. “I’ll

have all the advantages of working with an experienced investment professional while getting to know local investors.”

Mitch Wright said, “I’m very impressed with Heather, and I’m sure our clients will be, too. Heather will help provide the high level of service investors in Fruit Cove have come to expect from us as we work to make a meaningful difference for our clients and our community.”

The branch office is located at 605 State Road 13N, Suite 101.

Get your small business ready: Hurricane season is here

By Allen Thomas, SBA Southeast Regional Administrator

The predictions for this hurricane season emphasize the need for preparedness for small business owners. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the NOAA National Weather Service forecasters predict above-normal hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin this year. The outlook for the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season (June 1 to Nov. 30) predicts an 85 percent chance of an above-normal season, a 10 percent chance of a near-normal season and a 5 percent chance of a below-normal season. The forecast includes a range of 17 to 25 total named storms. Of those, eight to 13 are forecast to become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), includ-

ing four to seven major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher).

By taking proactive steps now, you can protect your small business from the devastating effects of natural disasters. Remember, the key to resilience is planning, preparation, and the ability to adapt swiftly to changing conditions. Stay safe, stay informed, and make sure your business is ready to weather the storm.

The SBA is one of the first agencies on the ground after a natural disaster and we offer direct, low-interest loans to renters, homeowners, and small business owners. We know what it takes to rebuild a community and we are on the ground assisting from day

one through recovery.

Steps to Prepare:

- 1) Assess the risk: Small business owners should learn the unique vulnerabilities their business may face based on its location and other factors.
- 2) Create a plan: Small business owners should create an easy-to-access plan tailored to their business’s specific needs and operations. The SBA’s Preparedness Checklists provide a helpful framework. Plans should include important items such as remote work arrangements, a critical contacts list which includes local emergency services, utility companies, suppliers, and insurance providers. The preparedness checklist includes reviewing your insurance coverage for your small

business and many other items.

- 3) Execute your plan: Small business owners should review and practice their plan with staff to ensure everyone is on the same page. By remaining proactive, small business owners can put themselves in a stronger position to recover and sustain themselves should disaster strike.

The SBA’s Office of Disaster Resilience and Recovery works closely with its federal, state, and local partners to ensure that all those affected by disasters — including homeowners, renters, and business owners — can get back on their feet.

Visit www.sba.gov for more information.

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Heather Wright
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Newcomers of North St. Johns installs 2024 – 25 executive board of directors

By Michele Oliver
mail@floridanewslines.com

Newcomers of North St. Johns installed its executive board of directors for 2024 – 25 at its May luncheon held at St. Johns Golf and Country Club.

Serving for the coming year are co-presidents Priscilla Cobbs (King and Bear resident) and Michele Oliver (Fruit Cove Forest resident); co-vice presidents Jean Weller (Shearwater resident) and Suzy Catania (South Hampton resident); co-secretaries Denise Miller (Shearwater resident) and Carolyn Hamilton (South Hampton resident); and co-treasurers Kristen

Cohen (Palencia resident) and Kathy Boyd (Del Webb Ponte Vedra resident).

Newcomers of North St. Johns was established in April 2004 to offer people the opportunity to become acquainted with others while finding their place in the community.

“Our club motto is ‘Friendship is a Gift to Be Shared With Others’ and we strive to be a very friendly, welcoming group that offers many opportunities to enjoy social activities and help form life-long friendships,” said Co-President Priscilla Cobbs. “We’ve added a lot of new activities this season to include special social trips

to the Jacksonville Symphony, a trip to Amelia Island and to enjoy a play in Fleming Island.

We look forward to a great year ahead. We invite anyone from the St. Johns County neighborhoods interested in membership to join us.”

Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> to learn more about the organization and to join.



Photo courtesy Gina Roberts

2024 – 25 executive board of directors: Suzy Catania, Denise Miller, Carolyn Hamilton, Kathy Boyd, Kristen Cohen, Michele Oliver and Priscilla Cobbs. Missing is Jean Weller.

Meet new Rotary Club president, Molly Paxton

By Rotarian Al Kalter
mail@floridanewslines.com

Each July, Rotary clubs around the world install new leaders to serve their clubs and communities for a one-year term. Locally, the presidency of the Rotary Club of Bartram Trail — Juntington Creek passes from David Goldman to Molly Paxton. So let’s introduce our new club president.



Photo courtesy Molly Paxton
Zeke and Molly Paxton

A native Floridian, Molly Paxton was born and raised in Palm Beach, where she spent her formative years attending a small private school until 1993. Inspired by the 1989 film “Dead Poets Society,” she pursued English Education at Stetson University in Deland, graduating with a bachelor’s degree; however, after several years working as a high school English teacher, she realized that she didn’t have the patience to spend all day with teenagers. She left the profession in 1998 when she married her husband, Zeke, an active-duty Army helicopter pilot and West Point graduate.

Their military life led them to various postings, including Ft. Rucker in Alabama and Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia, with Zeke also serving a year in South Korea while Molly cared for their young son back in the States. With frequent relocations making long-term employment a challenge, Molly adapted by engaging in diverse roles, from volunteering at libraries to writing product tags for a toy company and working part-time at Barnes & Noble.

Upon Zeke’s military retirement, the family settled in Jacksonville, where Molly found her niche as a product development manager at Advantus, a local consumer goods manufacturer. Her career took her across the globe, sourcing and introducing new products to the US market before she retired in 2022. Married 26 years in August, Molly and Zeke have raised two sons: Jonah, a University of Florida alumnus, and Luke, currently attending Stetson University, continuing a family legacy. Their household also includes two rescue cats, Jazzy and Squeaks.

Molly’s involvement with Rotary began in 2015 when her eldest son participated in the Rotary Youth Exchange program in Croatia. Despite COVID disrupting plans for their younger son’s exchange in Argentina, the Paxtons have hosted five exchange students from other countries. Molly officially joined

Meet Molly Paxton cont. on pg. 15

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Jim and his wife, Paula, live in the southern part of St. Johns with their two horses and loyal pup Cadey. They enjoy attending services at the historical First Baptist Church of Hastings.

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Briefs

Summer Volunteer Blast-Off

RSVP of St. Johns County and the St. Johns County School District will host a volunteer orientation on Tuesday, July 23 for individuals interested in learning more about tutoring and mentoring students in our county.

“We will be sharing strategies with volunteers who are currently serving and those who are interested in volunteering,” said Cheryl Freeman, director of RSVP of St. Johns County.

The conference will take place 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. For more information and to register, contact Cheryl Freeman at Cheryl.Freeman@stjohns.k12.fl.us or (904) 547-3952.

Hospital opens new emergency center for adults and children in St. Augustine

In response to the growing need for high-quality emergency care in rapidly expanding St. Johns and Flagler counties, Baptist Health has opened the Baptist/Wolfson Children’s ER and Imaging Center in St. Augustine. The new 23,879 square-foot emergency care

facility is at the junction of Interstate 95 and State Road 16 at 461 Outlet Mall Blvd. The center will serve the thriving communities in Flagler County as well as in St. Johns County, which is the fourth fastest-growing county in Florida, according to U.S. Census statistics.

“With the rapid growth in our region, it’s critical that we’re meeting the rising demand for convenient access to the right care in the right setting,” said Michael A. Mayo, DHA, FACHE, president and chief executive officer of Baptist Health. “The opening of our new St. Augustine ER and imaging center for adults and children underscores our commitment to providing convenient access to high-quality emergency care for the whole family.”

Two emergency centers are housed within the facility: a Baptist Emergency Center for adults and a Wolfson Children’s Emergency Center for kids from birth to age 17. The new children’s emergency center is fully equipped to care for the specific medical needs of children, with special pediatric protocols

and emergency teams skilled in handling serious pediatric health conditions that may arise from seemingly minor symptoms.

The center also features an imaging center for adults and children, outfitted with the latest technology to provide the community with X-rays, ultrasounds, CT scans, mammography and bone density screenings closer to home.



Photo courtesy Baptist Health
Baptist/Wolfson Children’s ER and Imaging Center in St. Augustine.

Switzerland Point teacher to compete in Miss Florida USA

Callie Johnson will compete in the Miss Florida USA pageant from July 5 – 7 in Coral Springs. Johnson is currently the reigning Miss Jacksonville USA, and a full-time teacher in English Language Arts (ELA) for seventh grade students at Switzerland Point Middle School. She also owns and operates Callie’s Collection Cakes and Confections as a cottage industry baker based in Jacksonville.

Johnson, 27, began her professional career in Jacksonville and St. Johns County focusing on retail, food, non-profit programs, events, and administration. Johnson developed her intensive interest in pageantry while her mother was the pageant director at Creekside High School. Johnson was inspired by a mentor to follow and compete in the Florida Forestry pageants. She served as a state title holder within that organization three

times as Teen Miss Florida Forestry, Miss Florida Turpentine, and Miss Florida Forestry, where she honed her interview and communication skills. She became involved in community volunteering at Ronald McDonald House Charities, raising awareness for the Florida Forest Service, and appearances at local elementary schools to read to students.

Johnson attended elementary, middle and high schools in St. Johns County. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Strategic Communications from Jacksonville University and a Master of Science degree in Communication Management from the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. She was active in Alpha Delta Pi sorority, public relations organizations, and cheerleading in college. She is a Certified Development Executive with NANOE (National Association of Nonprofit Organizations and Executives) and a Certified Wedding and Event Planner (CWP). Johnson currently volunteers for a variety of faith-based activities which help women and children, and she mentors young women with interests in pageant competitions.



Photo courtesy Delisa Keller with DKellerDesigns Photography
Callie Johnson.

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Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

Brandy Lewis

Brandy Lewis is a self-described “outdoors girl,” which she credits to her childhood in Middleburg, near Jennings Forest. “We lived down a one-mile dirt road,” she said. A multi-year age gap between her and two older sisters gave her plenty of time to play outside and contributed to her current passion for gardening and being outdoors. Initially intending to study to become a teacher after she graduated from Middleburg High School, she said that “life happened” and she went into sales instead because that’s where the money was. After a series of sales jobs, her entrepreneurial spirit eventually led her to open her own commercial real estate brokerage firm, Platinum Realty Group. Recently, she was recognized as the Small Business Leader of the Year for the Arlington chapter of the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce for her work in that area. She and her husband Michael have a blended family of two 21-year-old sons, a 17-year-old daughter and a seven-year-old son. The family lives in St. Johns with two rescue pups and a rescue cat — and they spend as much time as possible on the St. Johns River on their bass boat.



Photo courtesy Brandy Lewis
Brandy Lewis.

num Realty Group and now have a staff of six in sales.

Q: What do you like best about your career and what do you find to be the most challenging aspect?

A: I like the flexibility of my schedule to be able to be with my family, in addition to helping my clients. As for the most challenging, I would say it’s name recognition. In the commercial real estate industry, my firm is considered “boutique” and sometimes it’s tough to compete with the big firms whose names are so well known. But once we have a client, we’re more hands-on and can provide better customer service with our successful approach.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: Michael and I worked together at one point when I was a bartender and he was a regional manager at a restaurant. We both ended up leaving the company when we realized we wanted to explore our relationship. We’ve been married for 10 years.

Q: What do you like to do in your spare time?

A: We all love the outdoors. We go hiking locally and on camping trips in our camper. If we can be on the river in our boat, we are there. We enjoy fishing — in fact our littlest one recently caught a seven-pound bass from our backyard! We also love to entertain and I’ve been told my claim to fame is that I make a master charcuterie board!

before I moved on to selling IT managed services. I like the aspect of talking to people and learning about them. Also, I have the ability to not take a “no” personally.

Q: What made you go into commercial real estate?

A: It was actually one of my cold calls for the IT managed services that brought me to commercial real estate. The potential client asked me if I had ever thought about selling real estate; I had always thought of residential real estate, which I wasn’t interested in. But he opened my eyes to commercial and since I’m very business minded, this became “it” for me. I like to help set other people’s businesses up for success by helping them get the best location for their business. In 2018, I opened Plati-

Q: What types of sales jobs have you had and what is appealing to you about sales?

A: My first sales job was selling advertisements on the back of register receipts for a retail store. Then I sold advertisements for Money Pages

Get to Know ...

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

Flag rescue program cont. from pg. 1

proposed and was given permission to initiate an effort to establish public access for collecting and properly retiring old and worn American flags. A pilot program commenced in December 2019 with collection boxes donated by WSOS radio station owner Kevin Geddings. The community’s response has been incredible. More than 11,000 flags have been gathered to date.”

Benjamin explained that the VFW Post 2391 in St. Augustine conducts the official decommission ceremonies, and seven retired veterans have enlisted to monitor and maintain the various collection sites.

A proclamation in recognition and support of the American Flag Rescue Program spearheaded by the Solid Waste Division of the St. Johns County Public Works Department was presented at the June 18 meeting of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners.

There are American Flag Rescue Program flag drop-off locations throughout the community, including county libraries, annexes, and every Ace Hardware store in St. Johns County. Visit <https://www.sjcf.us/outreach/#flag> for a complete list of locations.

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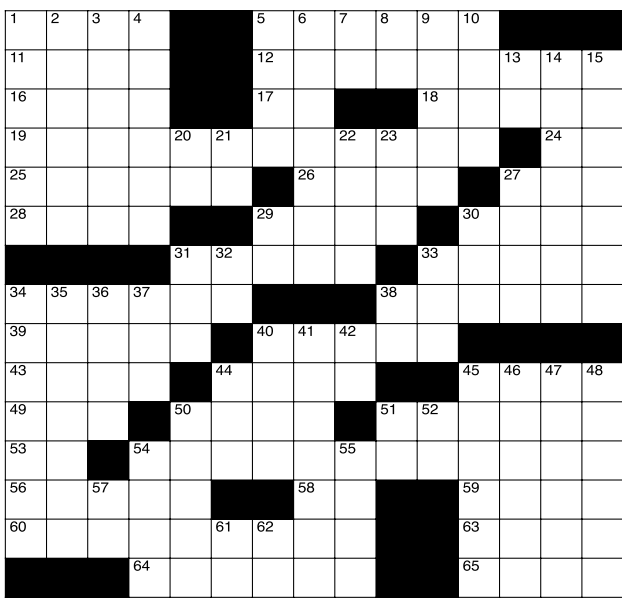
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. Average damage per system (abbr.)
5. Lustful woodland gods (Greek mythology)
11. Colombian Town
12. Sour
16. A way to stuff
17. Former AL MVP Vaughn
18. Carried or transported
19. Cannot even fathom
24. Hammer is one
25. A way to separate
26. Not moving
27. Women's service organization (abbr.)
28. German river
29. Quantitative fact
30. A person's head
31. Process that produces ammonia
33. French modernist painter
34. Too much noise
38. Agree to a demand
39. One a line at right angles to a ship's length
40. Employees
43. Ribosomal ribonucleic acid
44. Component of hemoglobin
45. Quick and skillful in movement
49. Passing trend
50. Part of the eye
51. One who acclaims
53. Deadly amount (abbr.)
54. Taste property
56. Genus of mosquitoes
58. Blood type
59. A group of countries in special alliance
60. Institute legal proceedings against
63. Shade of a color
64. Spoke
65. Work units

CLUES DOWN

1. Charge with a crime
2. Mended with yarn
3. North Atlantic flatfish
4. Boil at low temperature
5. Lapps of northern Scandinavia
6. Poisonous plant
7. Atomic #22
8. 36 inches
9. Monetary unit of Russia
10. Type of gin
13. An alternative
14. Alone
15. A way to ooze
20. Publicity
21. American firm
22. Jewish calendar month
23. Popular sandwich
27. Comedian Cook
29. The NFL's big game (abbr.)
30. Political action committee
31. Make a low, steady sound
32. Legendary sportscaster Michaels
33. One thousand cubic feet (abbr.)
34. Designed to keep ears warm
35. One who scrapes
36. Tear into two or more pieces
37. Supervises flying
38. Flying arm of the U.S. military (abbr.)
40. District in Peru
41. One died leaving a will
42. Morning
44. The world of the dead
45. Widen
46. Drink containing medicine
47. Celebrating
48. Secret encounters
50. A type of tag
51. Halfback
52. Modern tech
54. Monetary unit
55. Resigned to one's sleeping chamber
57. Execute or perform
61. "The Golden State"
62. "The Beehive State" (abbr.)

SUN SAFETY WORD SEARCH

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

WORDS

- CANCER
- COVER UP
- DERMATOLOGIST
- HEAT
- INDEX
- INDOORS
- MELANOMA
- MORNING
- PROTECT
- RADIATION
- RASH
- REFLECT
- SHADE
- SKIN
- SPOTS
- SUNBLOCK
- SUNBURN
- SUNGLASSES
- SUNLIGHT
- ULTRAVIOLET
- UMBRELLA
- WIDE-BRIMMED

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Clue: Skin protectant
- B. 9 23 16
Clue: Headgear
- C. 24 20 1 15 12 15 26
Clue: Early day
- D. 3 9 23 17 5
Clue: Not sunny

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Meet Molly Paxton cont. from pg. 10

Rotary in 2018, along with her husband, although they enjoy being members of separate clubs for the differing opportunities and perspectives. As she approaches her sixth year as a Rotarian, Molly's commitment to community engagement through Rotary remains steadfast.

Q: What do you see as the purpose of Rotary, both locally and globally?

Molly: To me, Rotary's purpose is all about reconnecting with our humanity. Rotary reminds us that every action counts. It's about making a positive difference, no matter how big or small, because ultimately, we're all in this together. Life's short, so let's spend it lifting each other up and making the world a better place for everyone.

Q: What goals do you have for your year as club president?

Molly: My main goal as club president is to ensure that every member feels fulfilled and valued in their Rotary

experience. We're a diverse group, each with our own reasons for joining, whether it's community service, networking, or simply enjoying camaraderie. Another of my goals is to increase our visibility in the community.

Q: What should people know about our Rotary Club?

Molly: The Rotary Club of Bartram Trail — Julington Creek is not just a breakfast meeting group. Our club is a lively group of friends who are passionate about making a difference, both locally and globally. Whether it's organizing social events, tackling community projects, or leading global grant initiatives, we're united by our commitment to Rotary's core value of "Service Above Self."

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

A historic transformation begins at America's First Parish

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

In a landmark effort to preserve and enhance a cornerstone of Florida's Catholic heritage, the rectory of America's First Parish at 38 Cathedral Place in St. Augustine is set to undergo a \$4 million renovation. This project aims to modernize the historic rectory, ensuring safety and efficiency for those who serve its community of parishioners and countless tourists.

For nearly 60 years, the rectory has been the heartbeat of the Catholic faith in St. Augustine. Built in 1965 by Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley during a period of rapid growth in the Diocese of St. Augustine, the 14,000-square-foot rectory has housed numerous priests, including the current resident's Father John Tetlow, pastor, Father Mac Hill, Father Ignatius Yeruva, and occasionally Bishop Erik Pohlmeier. Nicknamed the "Hurley Hilton," it once served as a dormitory for the many priests recruited by Archbishop Hurley to support new parishes statewide.

Despite several pastors recognizing the need for renovation, financial constraints and other church maintenance priorities deferred the project for many years. Now, with critical

repairs becoming unavoidable, Father Tetlow has taken action.

"I cannot, in good faith, ignore the urgency of this project any longer," he said. "These renovations need to happen now while we can address them proactively."

The planned renovation aims to respect the rectory's historical and architectural heritage while upgrading essential systems. A significant portion of the budget addresses the original 1965 electrical, plumbing and windows, and also the HVAC issues that have caused ongoing leaks and air-quality problems. Additionally, the floor plan will be reconfigured and expanded to separate the priest's living quarters from the parish office and ministry spaces. Jacksonville contractor Auld & White has been selected for the construction, slated to begin in early July and expected to last eight months.

St. Augustine holds a special place in American history, with the first parish Mass on American soil celebrated here in 1565. Today, America's First Parish serves nearly 1,000 families and welcomes a quarter of a million visitors annually from around the world.

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Fishing

Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis
mail@floridanewsline.com

Ah, such comfortable weather we have in the month of July. High humidity and daytime temperatures rarely dip below 90. A glorious time to venture outside. I'm hoping you could sense the sarcasm as I write this, but with all the heat and humidity comes hot fishing.

I recall writing similar things just last year about the struggle to find comfortable times and places to fish this time of year. Comfort for us might also be better fishing as well. Early and late, deep water, and shade all being positive things to improve the chances of catching fish and the length of time you can pursue them.

Shrimp have trickled into the river and this month we should be happy to have fewer throws of the cast net to make for a day's fishing. Fishing them under docks and area bridges can catch just about everything in the river right now — stripers, redfish, flounder, and sheepshead just to name a few. Presenting them with jig heads, floats, and free lined will all work, but few methods

catch everything like the jig head. You can experiment with different colors but chartreuse always has a place in my jig head collection. I use either a 1/8 oz. or 1/4 oz. depending on the size of the shrimp, depth of the water, and speed of the current. I want the shrimp to reach the bottom, but I don't want it to sink too fast since a lot of fish like to hit it as it falls. I also don't spend a ton of money on them since you're bound to lose some jig heads to fish around structure. If you rig the shrimp on the hook just right, you'll rarely get snagged except on crab traps. Pass the hook through the shrimp from top to bottom near the tail and then twist the hook around and bury it into the bottom of the shrimp near its head or mid section. Don't let the hook point poke through the top of the shrimp since that's what makes it almost snag proof. I hope the short description helps, but if not send me an email and I'll send you a picture or diagram to explain it better. Give it a try this month and be sure to stay hydrated out there. Tight lines.

Summer reading cont. from pg. 1

with regularly scheduled story time, book club, and STEM programs. Patrons are encouraged to stop by any of the six St. Johns County Public Library branches and enjoy various programs that offer:

- Camping-themed family fun, including games, scavenger hunts, story time, and more.
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Wild Wonders, Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens.

- Nature Detective workshops hosted by the Garden Club of St. Augustine explore the world of monarch butterflies.
- Magic shows with Magician Mark Alan.
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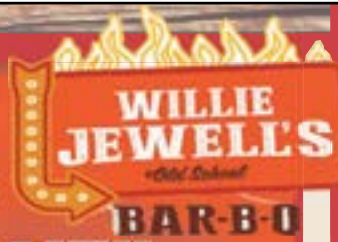
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Travel

Bentonville, Arkansas: Artful adventures will surprise you

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

If you were a billionaire, what would you do with your money? Alice Walton, daughter of Walmart founder Sam Walton, is one of the richest women in the world. She decided to collect American art and build a museum to showcase it in her hometown, Bentonville, Arkansas. The little city in the Ozark Mountains has a population of around 55,000. Alice Walton wanted to make great works of American art accessible to the public, particularly in a region that lacked major cultural institutions. Her vision was not just about housing art but creating a space where art and nature coexist harmoniously.

She succeeded! The Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art is like no other art gallery I've toured; it's a really stunning and fun space. I found attractive wood and glass buildings surrounded by ponds that bring the outdoors in. Walkers and bikers enjoy five miles of trails on 120 acres, including outdoor sculptures.

I wandered through five centuries of galleries featuring masterpieces like Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington, Norman Rockwell's *Rosie the Riveter*, Georgia O'Keeffe's painting *White Flower*, which was purchased in 2014 for \$44.4 million, Chihuly glass chandeliers, and Andy Warhol pop art. I entered the "Infinity Mirrored Room," being thrown off balance by dancing spots of light and reflections. Best of all,

the museum is free.

A visit to the world-class Crystal Bridges Museum would be enough to bring one to Bentonville, but downtown offers much more. The Momentary, a former cheese factory, houses an extension of more contemporary art installations. These provocative and whimsical pieces are shown on a rotating basis. The Momentary also includes a coffee house, a Tower Bar with the city's best views, and live music performances.

I also visited the Museum of Native American History (MONAH), founded by David Bogle, a member of the Cherokee Nation. The museum aims to preserve and promote an understanding of Native American cultures from prehistoric times to the present through artifacts, textiles, and artworks. I especially liked a collection of historic handmade dolls and the Hopi tribe's Kachina figures.

Bentonville holds Walmart's headquarters, so naturally, you'll find the Walmart Museum. Located in Sam Walton's original 5 & 10 store on the town square, the museum chronicles Walmart's rise from a single-dime store to a global retail giant. The Interactive exhibits, a hologram of Sam, and historical artifacts provide a likable experience. End your visit with a treat from the old-fashioned soda fountain. To me, Bentonville's main square resembled a Normal Rockwell painting



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

of a typical small American town.

Bentonville, known as the Mountain Bike Capital of the World, offers cyclists the impressive Coler Mountain Bike Preserve and Slaughter Pen Trails. Find umpteen miles of trails from beginner to expert.

Bentonville played a significant role in the Civil War, culminating in the Battle of Bentonville, one of the largest battles fought in the state. Visitors can explore the Pea Ridge National Military Park and the Benton County Courthouse, which served as a Union hospital during the war.

I spent one night (not enough) at the 21c Museum Hotel in the heart of Bentonville, within easy walking distance of the attractions and restaurants.

This boutique establishment blends an immersive modern art experience with luxury accommodations. I found life-size green penguins, the hotel trademark, scattered about. Placing one outside a door or elevator lets you make another traveler laugh. Breakfast in the Hive restaurant was outstanding.

I'd never heard of Bentonville or been to Arkansas before my recent trip (combined with Little Rock), but I can honestly say I'd love to return. I'd spend more time in the museums and enjoy the small-town feel and fine restaurants.

If you go: Visitbentonville.com

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

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Gardening

Drought and heat: What's next?

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale
mail@floridanewsline.com

I'm writing this on June 12, and there has been no appreciable rain in my area for several weeks. Without an irrigation system, it has been tricky to keep plants going. But if this is a foretaste of things to come, it will be useful to see what survives and what perishes. Anything that is lost in the excessive heat we've been experiencing won't be replaced unless I install a low volume irrigation system for selected areas. And I shall aim to group plants according to their need for water, which is a standard requirement when choosing the Right Plant for the Right Place.

I have been watering my favorite shrubs with a hose. The few perennials I planted, in anticipation of rain, have needed water nearly every day. Unfortunately, once our sandy soil dries up it is difficult to rehydrate and water can simply run off. It's worth repeating that adding organic matter regularly and using two to three inches of mulch to conserve moisture does help. Clearly I need to try harder!

For people who have lawns, the lack of rain has been difficult. The summer watering schedule of twice a week is usually adequate to keep a healthy well-established lawn going through dry times, but especially if turf is accustomed to being over watered it probably won't adjust very easily to lack of rain and high temperatures. Turf only needs watering when it begins to show at least one of the following signs of stress: grass blades become slightly blue and begin to fold, and footprints in the grass don't spring back quickly. It's also important not to mow a lawn too short. Standard St. Augustine grass should be three-and-a-half to four-inches high to encourage healthy deep roots. Other species have their recommended heights so it's important to know which grass you are dealing with.

It's a shame when people don't appreciate the best ways to take care of their

lawns. Replacing turf is costly, and overuse of water is wasteful, considering most of us use potable water for irrigation. Even an irrigation system that runs off a well uses precious groundwater. If you need detailed advice, check out this article: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ep236>. It covers all you need to know to take care of a lawn successfully and sustainably.

Working outside in the heat can be downright dangerous. Try to work early in the day. Take care to drink plenty of water, slather on the sunscreen, and rest indoors or at least in the shade to cool down when you get weary. For more information, visit <https://gardeningso-lutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/weather/heat-safety/>

It's also a difficult time for our backyard birds. One of my favorite species, the brown thrasher, really seems to enjoy bathing in our bird bath, but they all need access to clean water. It is important to clean a birdbath regularly as algae grows quickly in the heat and the water doesn't stay fresh for long.

The new flower bed outside our kitchen window is doing well, but as the plants were installed only recently, they need watering until they're established. The manyflower beardtongue (*Penstemon multiflorus*) is living up to its reputation as a food source for hummingbirds. In among bunch grasses and teamed up with white wandflower (*Gaura lindheimeri*) the effect is lovely.

As for what we can expect after this horribly dry period, we only need look at what happened recently in central and south Florida, where some areas experienced up to 20 inches of rain in two days. We may well be dealing with similar conditions before the summer is out. Let's hope the hurricane season won't be as bad as predicted.

Watering restrictions: What you need to know

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The St. Johns River Water Management District's watering restrictions are designed to ensure the efficient use of water for landscape irrigation. The restrictions allow enough water to maintain healthy landscapes year-round.

The mandatory restrictions specify the time when watering may occur, the amount of water that may be applied, and the days when watering may occur for residential and nonresidential locations. These days depend on whether the address ends in an odd or even number, and on the time of year.

During Daylight Saving Time, homes with odd numbered or no addresses

should water on Wednesdays and Saturdays, while homes with even numbered addresses should water on Thursdays and Sundays

During Eastern Standard Time, homes with odd numbered or no addresses should water on Saturday, while homes with even numbered addresses should water on Sunday.

In all cases, homeowners should water only when needed and not between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Also, water for no more than one hour per zone. Restrictions apply to private wells and pumps, ground or surface water and water from public and private utilities.

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