



Photo courtesy Julington Creek Prop Club

Julington Creek Boat Parade of Lights signals start of holiday season

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

The Julington Creek Boat Parade of Lights will light up Julington Creek on Saturday, Dec. 7 beginning at 7 p.m. The annual event, sponsored by the Julington Creek Prop Club, is celebrating its 36th year — and Prop Club Commodore Bob Ponik is extending an invitation for St. Johns County and Mandarin neighbors to come out and get in the holiday spirit.

“Spectators can view the parade from the Julington Creek Bridge walkways,” Ponik said.

Established in 1988, this annual event features an estimated 40 boats

Boat Parade cont. on pg. 2

Lights, music, Santa ... the holidays are here!

By Emily Lisska
mail@floridanewsline.com

The fifth annual Mandarin Community Tree Lighting on Friday, Dec. 6 at the Mandarin Community Club features a soaring live tree, Santa and his helpers, and the popular area musicians Smooth Vibes. A new pavilion added to club grounds this year provides a place for families to enjoy an early evening snack or meal from a handful of area food trucks and vendors.

Jacksonville Jaguars’ first Hall of Fame inductee Tony Boselli will throw the switch at 6:30 p.m. to light Mandarin’s 20 foot tall Fraser fir. The tree is believed to be the tallest live-cut outdoor Christmas tree in Jacksonville.

Prior to the tree lighting, visits with Santa and his special elves will take place inside the historic Mandarin Community Club, where parents have the opportunity to take photographs. Nearby, children can create a letter or “request” to Santa.

The 101-year-old Mandarin Community Club originated the Christmas tree



Photo courtesy Olis Garber with Olis Garber Photography.

Mandarin Community Club board member Susie Scott stands beside Mayor Donna Deegan, and Councilman Michael Boylan as the mayor through the switch to light Mandarin’s Community Christmas Tree.

lighting at its historic property at the corner of Mandarin and Brady roads during the Covid pandemic. The idea was suggested by its youngest board member at the time, Brett Nolan. In the event’s first year in 2020, attendees pulled up and sat in their vehicles, much

like a drive-in theater of decades past.

Now, five years later, the tree lighting hosts hundreds on the grounds, and many consider the event a kick off to the holidays.

Tree lighting cont. on pg. 10

Mandarin Museum to host its annual Winter Celebration



Photo courtesy Olis Garber

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Mandarin Museum will host its 2024 Winter Celebration presented by TC Federal Bank on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024 from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. throughout the museum and Walter Jones Historical Park, located at 11964 Mandarin Road. Admission is free.

“We are excited to host this beloved community event,” said Brittany Cohill, executive director at Mandarin Museum. “Each year we hear from families that annual attendance is part of their holiday tradition.”

Winter Celebration cont. on pg. 10



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Briefs

Italian heritage scholarship opportunities available
The Order of the Sons of Italy in America (OSIDA) promotes, enhances, and encourages the study of Italian heritage and culture. The local chapter offers two scholarships to high school seniors of Italian descent who display academic excellence and leadership abilities. Applications are available for students from public and private high schools in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, and Nassau counties.

For an official scholarship application, send your request to Lucy Cortese atlcortese@att.net. Note that completed applications and supporting materials are due by March 14, 2025. Award decisions will be announced by April 4. Recipients will be honored at a recognition dinner on April 25.

Mandarin Women’s Club celebrates the season
The ladies of the Mandarin Women’s Club will start off the holiday season with a tour of homes in Fernandina on Dec. 6, followed by two special dining experiences on Dec. 13 and Dec. 14 at HarborChase.

Due to Christmas, the December members-only Holiday Luncheon

will be on the third Thursday of the month, Dec. 19 at the Ramada Inn in Mandarin, 3130 Hartley Road. The luncheon will feature festive holiday items donated by club members and available to win with the purchase of tickets. The tickets will be sold at the luncheon and will cost \$10 for a strip of 25 tickets. Attendees will have a chance to win homemade goodies, wine, holiday decorations, jewelry, scarves, and many other items.

Doors open at 10:30 a.m. and reservations for the luncheon are required.

The luncheon cost is \$25 and your check must be received by Monday, Dec. 9. To make reservations and obtain payment instructions, members should contact Barbara Metallo. Visit www.mandarinwomensclub.com for more



Photo courtesy Gail Packard

Boat Parade cont. from pg.1
of all shapes, sizes, and themes, all decked out in their holiday finery. The parade route begins at the Julington Creek Marina, goes underneath the Julington Creek Bridge and motors around Bulls Bay (where Julington Creek empties into the St. Johns River), then returns under the bridge and continues down Durbin Creek.

Homeowners with docks located on the parade route also join in the fun as decorated docks can vie for a variety of prizes. Tradition holds that the boaters judge the docks.

“The people along the shores of the creek put on quite a show for us every year,” Ponik said. “We have people shooting fireworks, parties with live bands, and bonfires. Some have as many as 100 people waving and shouting ‘Happy Holidays!’ The people on shore have as much fun as the boaters.”



Photo courtesy Julington Creek Prop Club

ganizational prep work done in advance of this event. The Prop Club starts in October each year contacting boaters, area merchants, and residents, gathering donations for the event. Some of the boats participating in the parade are Prop Club members and others come from all over the area. Boats range in size from 17 to 40 feet in length.

“Annual dues from Prop Club members provide some of the funds for the Julington Creek Boat Parade of Lights, but we depend on and appreciate many local businesses’ and waterfront owners’ contributions as well,” Ponik said. “Without their help we would not have this event.”

The Julington Creek Prop Club is a social organization of past, present, and future boaters that meets on the second Saturday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Julington Creek Marina dock; all interested boaters are invited to join for boating information and fun at the creek. Email commodore@jcpropclub.com for more information.

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Breed:
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Favorite Activities:
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Favorite Foods:
She is willing to try anything and everything.

Favorite Friends:
Her sister Candace, an Anatolian shepherd.

How Did Your BFF Get Her Name?
We adopted her from the shelter last fall and took her camping. The Embers from the camp fire sparked her name.



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 Mandarin NewsLine. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in Mandarin NewsLine! Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet.

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Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from your friends at Mandarin NewsLine

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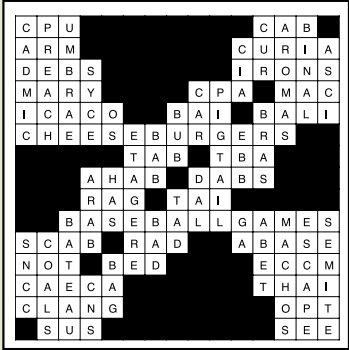
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MYSTERY PHOTO

Can you guess where this is?

Submit your answer to: mail@FloridaNewsLine.com.

Last month's Mystery Photo was Julington Creek Animal Walk on San Jose Boulevard.

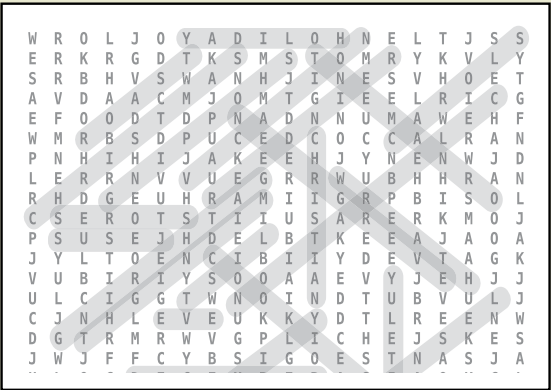


Answers
Puzzles
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December

Community Calendar

What's Happening in Mandarin

Shuffleboard is played on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. (beginning Dec. 3) at Tommy Hazouri Park (formerly Mandarin Park). The courts are at the park entrance next to the tennis courts. Try to get there a few minutes early for court assignments. Beginners are welcome. Just show up (a few minutes before playing time), unless it rains.

Toast of Jax Toastmasters meets every Saturday, except on holiday weekends, at 8:30 a.m. at Baha'i Community Center, 5034 Greenland Road. Guests are welcome. The meetings can also be attended online at <https://toastofjax.toastmastersclubs.org/>.

Acoustic Jam Session is held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Kids' Building of Trinity Mandarin, located at 2955 Orange Picker Road. This jam is open to everyone and all levels of ability are welcome. Come to play with the group or just sit back and enjoy the music. For more information, contact Burt Coulliette at (904) 302-0423.

Playing HOOKie, a group for those who enjoy knitting, crocheting and looming (with all items donated to charity) meets every Wednesday from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Maple Street Biscuit Company, 1627 Race Track Road in St. Johns. Visit the group's Facebook page (Playing HOOKie) or email playinghookie2022@gmail.com for more information.

MomCo (formerly known as MOPS), a fun and safe place to connect with other moms, share breakfast, and hear from guest speakers on various topics, will meet every other Tuesday from 9:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. on the Mandarin Presbyterian Church /Loretto Road Campus with childcare provided. Space is limited; visit mandarinpres.com/momco to register. Email MOPS@mandarinpres.com for more information.

3rd: Craft and Chat – Winter Series will be held at the Mandarin Branch Library in the Magazine Galley on Tuesday, Dec. 3 from 5 p.m. – 6 p.m. Visit jaxpubliclibrary.org for more information.

3rd: Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, Dec. 3 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church on the Mandarin Road Campus in the Woody Room (left-side far door) at 11844 Mandarin Road for a Holiday Party. Bring \$20 for the catered meal. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

7th: Winter Celebration at Mandarin Museum and Walter Jones Historical Park will be held on Saturday, Dec. 7 from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. The community is invited to this annual event featuring photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, pony rides, games and crafts and live entertainment. Admission is free. Visit www.mandarin-museum.org/events/winter-celebration or call (904) 268-0784 for more information.

8th: Mandarin Parkinson's Support Group meets at Church of Eleven 22, 4911 Losco Road, on the second Sunday of each month (this month, Dec. 8) from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. Contact group leader Katheryn Donaldson at serving4_him@yahoo.com or (904) 710-1449 for more information.

12th: As the Page Turns Book Club meets on Thursday, Dec. 12 from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. at the Mandarin Branch Library. This book club is for readers who are looking for something new to read. Registration is required; visit jaxpubliclibrary.org.

14th: The Southern Genealogist's Exchange Society will meet from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Dec. 14 at Mandarin Branch Library, 3330 Kori Road. The program will be the second annual SGES Social with Antique RoadShow, which features a show and tell by members who bring an heirloom, photo or scrapbook to share. Email Sgesjax@att.net to reserve a space. Visit www.sgesjax.org to register for the meeting or call (904) 778-1000 for more information.

14th: Grace & Recovery Foundation will host 12 steps of recovery, prayer, meditation, and fellowship for individuals and family members affected by addiction on Dec. 14 at San Juan del Rio Catholic church, 1718 State Road 13 in St. Johns. Visit www.graceandrecovery.org for more information and to register.

14th: Second Saturday Arts and Farmers Market at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. on Dec. 14 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Visit www.facebook.com/SecondSatMarket/ for more information.

16th: The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, Dec. 16 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd.

The program will be a TREEmendous Holiday celebration. Guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

18th: Read to Sammy the Golden Retriever Therapy Dog on Wednesday, Dec. 18 from 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. at the South Mandarin Branch Library. Drop in and give your child an opportunity to practice their reading skills one-on-one with a trained therapy dog. Read to Sammy on this same day from 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. at the Mandarin Branch Library on Kori Road. Call (904) 255-2665 for more information.

19th: Mandarin Women's Club's Holiday Luncheon for members only will be held on Dec. 19 beginning at 10:30 a.m. at the Ramada Inn in Mandarin. The luncheon cost is \$25 and must be received by Monday, Dec. 9. To make reservations and obtain payment instructions, contact Barbara at (904) 612-6494 or email her at barbara.metallo@outlook.com. Visit www.mandarinwomensclub.com for more information on events, photos, and membership forms.

20th: The Italian American Club of Jacksonville will hold its popular Spaghetti to Go on Friday, Dec. 20 from 5 p.m. until the spaghetti is gone at the club building, 2838 Westberry Road. Take out only; cash, credit and debit cards are accepted. Dinners cost \$13 and there are small charges for extra meatballs, cannolis and pizza rolls. No phone orders. Call (904) 586-2700 for more information.

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with Jacksonville City Council Member Michael Boylan, District 6

Q: What is the latest information you have to share [as of interview date of Nov. 19] regarding the Orange Picker Road / dog park project?

A: The rerouting of Orange Picker Road is completed now. Most recently, I've been working with the Parks and Recreation Department to lay out the proposed small and large dog parks. The plan is for the grassy treed area next to the parking lot along Orange Picker Road to become the new playground area. The dog park will be off Brady Road, behind the tennis courts in the former playground area. There will be two defined areas here for the dog parks, one for small dogs and one for large dogs — so that the smaller dogs can have their own separate space.

Q: Will parking change or be impacted?

A: We will see some more parking spaces, as we are trying to get cars (except handicap spaces) off Brady Road. We plan to take advantage of increased parking spaces now available on the south and north ends of the park. We will be hosting a Town Hall meeting in late November for public feedback.

Q: What is happening with the sidewalk extension along Mandarin Road?

A: A letter was sent from JTA to all affected neighbors along Mandarin Road in late October. It's important to note that the survey company working now is merely cataloging trees. It is a high priority of everyone to preserve

as many as possible to preserve the beauty of the area. Once this has been completed, we will have a Town Hall meeting at the Mandarin Community Club, likely after the first of next year, to share our findings.

Q: Do you have anything else to share with District 6?

A: First, the yard waste issue is finally settling down and we seem to be on a case-by-case basis at this point. I'd like to commend Waste Pro for being so attentive and the City of Jacksonville for sending one of its claw trucks to Mandarin to assist with pickup. In hindsight, the city would have probably been wise to contract with an outside vendor from the outset.

Secondly, I was happy to attend a couple of events on Sunday, Nov. 17. I was honored to present to the pastor and congregation of Mandarin United Methodist Church a resolution approved by the City Council recognizing the 150th anniversary of the church. I also participated in the unveiling of the Harriet Beecher Stowe statue at Walter Jones Historical Park. Sculpted by Brenda Council, this life-sized bronze statue is interactive in that you can sit next to the statue and view her teaching writing to two young boys who likely worked on her farm.

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

A: Community members can email me at MBoylan@coj.net or call (904) 255-5206.



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Annual wreath laying ceremony honors veterans

The Mandarin Community Club held its annual wreath laying ceremony in honor of Veterans Day on Sunday, Nov. 10. Participants this year included the American Heritage Girls Florida Troop 1512 and the color guard from the Florida Chapter of the Sons of American Revolution. Held in the Billard Park every year since 2007, this event is geared towards honoring veterans and



Photo courtesy Kelley Swain

active service men and women alike. Pictured are the Sons of the American Revolution color guard and Mandarin Community Club board member Emily Lisska.



Photo courtesy Charles Schoonmaker

Greenland Pines Elementary Unity Club Relay Race, October 2024

Exciting new clubs at Greenland Pines Elementary

By Janine Santangelo
mail@floridanewslines.com

Greenland Pines Elementary has announced the launch of several new clubs designed to enrich the student experience and foster a sense of community and learning.

Lego Club: Building Future Innovators

The Lego Club, through First Lego League, is divided into two teams: the Lego Explore Club for second and third graders, and the Lego Challenge Club for fourth and fifth graders. Students develop STEM and critical thinking skills through hands-on learning, coding robots and creating projects with Lego parts. The Lego Challenge Club is currently working on an innovative project to address ocean-related problems and designing a robot for missions.

Girls on the Run: Empowering Young Girls

Girls on the Run is an evidence-based program that inspires girls in grades three through five to recognize their inner strength, increase their physical activity, and learn to stand up for themselves and others. At the end of the season, the team will complete a 5K together.

Chess Club: Building Strategic Minds

The Chess Club is offered to third and fifth graders. Meeting twice a month before school, students play against other chess enthusiasts, promoting unity, building friendships, and learning about sportsmanship.

Top Cats: Developing Student Leaders

The Top Cats program is for fourth grade students recommended by their

third grade teachers. Top Cats assist teachers and staff in the morning before school, helping with tasks such as walking younger students to class, stuffing Tuesday Folders, and sharpening pencils. Top Cats must maintain an "A" in conduct and continue to be role models for other students.

Safety Patrol Club: Leading with Responsibility

The Safety Patrol Club provides students with valuable leadership opportunities while supporting the school community. Safety Patrol members ensure the safety of students during arrival and dismissal times, assist with traffic control, and promote a safe school environment.

Spanish and American Sign Language Clubs: Language Learning Fun

Now in their second year, the Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL) clubs were formed through a partnership with Mandarin High School. These clubs are led by Spanish and ASL high school honor students, along with a teacher sponsor.

Unified Sports Club: Inclusive Fun for All

As a Special Olympics Unified School, Greenland Pines brings together students with and without disabilities for sports, games, and school events. Peer buddy partners are formed within the group to create a supportive atmosphere for students of all ages and abilities. The club meets every Thursday from 3:10 p.m. – 4:10 p.m., engaging in activities ranging from 4-square to flag football.

Janine Santangelo is the School Advisory Council (SAC) chair for Greenland Pines Elementary.

Loretto Elementary honors veterans

Loretto Elementary School faculty, staff and students gathered to pay tribute to veterans in their lives during Loretto Elementary School's second annual Veterans Day Flag Raising Ceremony. Honorees included family members from across generations, such as parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and faculty, many who are currently serving or have served in the military. The event featured a small breakfast reception, flag raising ceremony and a walk down the "Hallway of Heroes," which provided a tangible, visual reminder of the service and sacrifice made by veterans in the community. It was a memorable day of appreciation and pride for the school community.



Photo courtesy Stacy L. Bradley



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Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

Gail Packard

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

When Gail Packard was growing up in Cincinnati, Ohio and attending an all-girls Catholic high school, she thought she might want to become a nun. Or perhaps a flight attendant. "I love people," she said. In the early 1960s, she and her girlfriends saw the movie "Where the Boys Are" and all decided they wanted to move to Florida ... but she was the only one who did. At the young age of 21 she attended a "land party" and ended up purchasing a piece of land in Cape Coral, Florida. She moved down there at the age of 22 and the rest is history. She moved to Miami, held a number of interesting jobs (including with Eastern Airlines), earned her associate's degree at age 48, and lived through Hurricane Andrew before retiring and moving north to Mandarin in 2008. She is an active member and the Publicity Chair for the Mandarin Women's Club. She has two adult children and three granddaughters.



Photo courtesy Gail Packard
Gail Packard

most of the people moving there were families. So, I moved to Miami Beach and got my real estate license. I spent a couple of years selling land in the Bahamas (although I lived in Miami Beach).

Q: How did you end up at Eastern Airlines?

A: After selling real estate for a few years, I learned that you didn't have to be a flight attendant to get flight privileges. I worked for Eastern Airlines for 23 years, until they closed. I spent 19 of the years in human resources, coordinating the hiring of pilots and flight attendants, then worked four years in reservations. By then I was married and had two young children, who were nine and 11 years old when Hurricane Andrew hit. We survived the north eyewall and it seems strange to say, but the camaraderie from this experience was unbelievable. We met neighbors we had never known. Our house was damaged, but we never lost our roof so we could continue living there. It was a long recovery process.

Q: What did you do after Eastern Airlines shut down?

A: I learned of a group of businessmen who were helping to provide education to laid off employees. I earned my associate's degree and walked in the graduation ceremony at age 48 next to the 20-year-olds. I then went to work as an office manager for a financial corporation and stayed there for 17 years, until my children were both out of college. I retired, ended my marriage on a happy note, and reconnected with a girlfriend who lived in Jacksonville. So I moved here in 2008 and I love it. Everyone is so friendly.

Q: How did you get involved with the Mandarin Women's Club?

A: I wanted to get involved and meet people. First, I joined the Temple Sisterhood and became certified as a braille transcriber. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done, but so rewarding. Then in 2014 a neighbor invited me to a Mandarin Women's Club luncheon. The group's motto is "Where Strangers Become Friends" and that's true. We have a great group of all ages with so many activities to enjoy. We especially enjoy eating! We have a monthly meeting with either a motivational speaker, or Bingo, or a fashion show, from September through May. We are up to 208 members this year.

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

A: I love to travel and have been on 18 cruises. I go to the gun range; I'm a pretty good shot! I also like playing cards and Mexican Train.

Visit www.mandarinwomensclub.com to learn more about the Mandarin Women's Club.

Briefs cont. from pg. 2
information on events, photos, and membership forms.

Some members of the Mandarin Women's Club enjoyed playing Mexican Train at their recent Game Day.

Church reappoints pastor

Philip R. Cousin AME Church of Mandarin, Inc. has announced the 10th appointment of Rev. Roger L. D. Williams, as its pastor. Bishop Marvin C. Zanders II made the appointment at the 149th Session of the East Annual Conference held at the World Golf Village Conference Center Oct. 29 to Nov. 1, 2024.

Rev. Williams plans to continue partnerships and fellowship with Mandarin pastors, community leaders, and not for profits, such as Mandarin Museum, and United Community Outreach Ministry Food Pantry, and is seeking to expand the church's mission to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people in the Mandarin community.

Rev. Williams will be celebrating 24 years of pastoral leadership in December. He served AME congregations including New Fountain Chapel AME Church on the Jacksonville Eastside, Greggs Temple AME Church on the Northside, and Mount Zion AME Church in Hastings. Philip R. Cousin AME Church, originally known as Mount Zion AME Church, is one of the oldest African American churches in the city and has served the people of Mandarin for more than 138 years. The church was established on Nov. 13, 1886, and was renamed Philip R. Cousin AME Church at the 11th Episcopal District of the AME Church's Annual Conference in October 1990.

Rev. Williams will celebrate 39 years of marriage to Elvia S. Williams in December. They are the parents of two sons, Joseph Williams an Army Veteran living in Arizona, and Steven Williams of Jacksonville.

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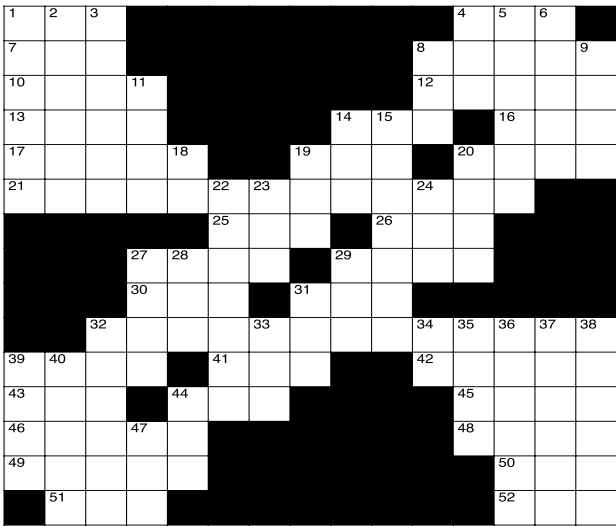
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. Central processing unit
4. Taxi
7. Body part
8. Papal court
10. Young women making their public debuts
12. Metal shackles
13. Joseph's wife
14. Licensed professional
16. Partner to cheese
17. Mild fruits
19. File format
20. Province of Indonesia
21. Beloved grilled foods
25. Bar bill
26. Don't know when yet
27. Whale ship captain
29. Touches softly
30. Mock
31. Red-brown Pacific sea bream
32. Summer entertainment option
39. Protective crust
41. Cool!
42. Behave in a way that belittles
43. Denial
44. A place to sleep
45. Electronic counter-countermeasures
46. Intestinal pouches
48. SE Asia family of languages
49. Sound
50. Select
51. Give the impression of dishon
52. Witness

CLUES DOWN

1. Of cadmium
2. Deliver a sermon
3. Inner regions of a shadow
4. Aggressive dog
5. Smells
6. Twofold
8. Former OSS
9. Computer language
11. Indian groom
14. Automobile
15. Hairstyle
18. Atomic #76
19. Guy (slang)
20. Ladies' undergarments
22. Furniture with open shelves
23. Back-arc basin
24. Partner to flow
27. A type of horse
28. Possesses
29. Split pulses
31. Small amount
32. Flat-bottomed riverboat
33. Not good
34. Atomic #31
35. Assist in committing a crime
36. Chauvinists
37. Get away
38. One of a people who speaks a Semitic language
39. Civil rights college organization
40. Combustible dark rocks
44. Grocery container
47. Central nervous system

CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH

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

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



Solve the code to discover words related to Christmas.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 16 = E)

- A. 15 22 5 5 8
Clue: Happy
- B. 23 22 5 20 9 12 8
Clue: Special occasion
- C. 9 16 11 16 18 7 16 26
Clue: Twelfth month
- D. 1 26 16 24 16 19 3 24
Clue: Gifts



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Gardening

The garden slows down

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale

As autumn makes way for winter, we see the changes in our fall blooming flowers. They are setting seeds, which is a forerunner of things to come, but there's also a sense of decay as stems darken, dry, and become brittle. Those hollow stems become places for some of our native bees and other insects to overwinter. This is a time to consider how, or indeed whether, to tidy our landscapes.

One of the easiest things to do to support wildlife is to "leave the leaves," especially beneath trees and in flowerbeds. Insects that inhabit deciduous trees often have a life-cycle which includes a spell on the ground, cocooned — often literally — in the shelter fallen leaves provide, or in the soil below. If you are tackling a mess of leaves on a lawn, rake them into beds, either beneath trees or shrubs, or among your flowers, but take care not to smother the plants. Leaves act as a mulch that can break down relatively quickly and supply valuable nutrients to the soil: nature's soil builder. If you have more than you can use in your beds, running a mulching mower over a light leaf fall on the lawn will supply nutrients to benefit the grass. For the rest, find an out-of-the-way place to heap them up, where insects and other creatures can make use of them. Left for a year or so they will have decomposed into friable leaf mold, which would enrich and improve your soil. Or simply use leaves as the "brown" component in your compost

pile. You could even offer them to a neighbor gardener. To take them to the curb for collection is like giving money away!

Those dry dead stems which are potential insect nurseries may not appeal to your eye, but rather than remove them completely, trim them back to a minimum of 12 inches, preferably a little taller, to give the insects a chance to complete their lifecycles. Take the cuttings and pile those up out of the way to provide more shelter for tiny creatures. If the plants are perennials which die back to the ground, the remaining stems can be useful reminders of their locations.

Clumping grasses also provide shelter for wildlife. If you feel compelled to cut them back, hold off until spring when new growth is beginning to emerge. Over winter they can give interesting structure to the landscape, and they may also house queen bumblebees nesting down at the base. If you like to watch your backyard birds you may have seen how grass seeds appeal to birds like the beautiful painted bunting.

Your lawn has also been slowing down — meaning it will need mowing less often, if at all. For more information on lawn care, and other aspects of gardening, check out <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn-and-garden/lawn-maintenance/>. It's a potential starting point for leisurely browsing now the nights are drawing in.

Robotics teams combine for highest score in world

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Bolles upper school FIRST® TECH Challenge robotics teams Static Discharge and Mischievous Mechanics teamed up to not only tally the top score in Northeast Florida and the state of Florida, but the highest score in the world at the Northeast Florida Meet 1 on Oct. 19.

The two teams worked together to earn an impressive 226, making a strong statement as they continue to excel during the 2024 – 25 FTC season. In fact, the top six scores in the world are held by Static Discharge and their randomly selected alliance partners during the competition. Bolles FTC teams Patent Pending and Jurassic Spark, comprised of middle school students, also competed in Meet 1, held at Atlantic Coast High School.

FIRST® TECH Challenge students work together with their mentors to design and build robots to compete in a dynamic challenge released every September. Teams program classroom-scale robots to follow autonomous commands before student

drivers take control in two-on-two matches. According to FIRST®, more than 87,400 students in seventh through 12th grades competed in FTC in 67 countries during the 2022 – 2023 season.

Bolles upper school physics teacher Devan Skapetis and upper school fine arts teacher Chris Hicks coach all four Bolles robotics teams in the new Robotics Lab on the first floor of the Frank R. Sanchez & Hope and Dana

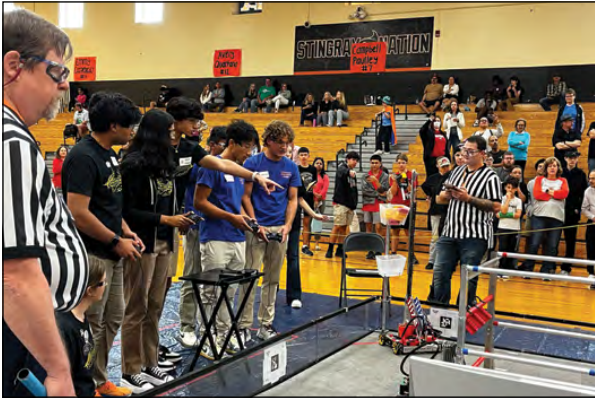


Photo courtesy Bolles
Bolles upper school FIRST® TECH Challenge robotics teams Static Discharge and Mischievous Mechanics.

E. Fender Center for Innovation.

Static Discharge includes the following students: Jayan Deshmukh '26, Rohan Deshmukh '25, Nishta Jijosh '26, Eesh Majithia '25, Jay Manohar '26 and Meghanne Posick '26. Mischievous Mechanics includes the following students: Jay Alanghat '26, Bowen Body '26, David Dong '26, Jake Kovacoc '27 and Arnab Shah '26.



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Tree lighting cont. from pg. 1

“In the Christmas tree lighting’s fifth year, some surprises are planned for this newly honed Mandarin tradition,” said Nolan, now the club’s vice-president. “We’re grateful to Mr. Boselli for lighting our tree this year.” In 2023 Mayor Donna Deegan served as the dignitary to light Mandarin’s tree. That event is a finalist for a City of Jacksonville 2024 Neighborhood Award.

Food vendors at the event include the Empanada Lady, Nothing Bundt Cakes, and limited Chick-fil-A sandwiches, with the “cow” on hand for photos and fun. Hot and cold drinks will be available.

While the event is free with gates opening to the public at 5 p.m., non-perishable donations for the Mandarin Food Bank are requested. Attendees are also encouraged to bring a chair or blanket as seating is limited. Carpooling to the

event is encouraged.

Also on the grounds, the Mandarin Museum and Historical Society will open the 1911 Mandarin Post Office and General Store showcasing a hub of community activity a century ago. The Mandarin Community Club is located



Photo courtesy Olis Garber with Olis Garber Photography.
Santa and his helpers greet families inside the historic Mandarin Community Club.

at 12447 Mandarin Road.

If you go: Gates open at 5 p.m. The tree lighting is at 6:30 p.m. Santa is available in the club from 5 p.m. until the tree lighting. Don't forget your non-perishable contributions to the Mandarin Food Bank and to carpool due to limited parking!

Winter Celebration cont. from pg. 1

Since 1999, this annual event has brought the community together for a festive day filled with fun, creativity, and holiday cheer. In addition to museum exhibits and reenactors, attendees can look forward to a free photo opportunity with Santa and Mrs. Claus, pony rides (and a full size horse for older children), games and crafts. Live entertainment from community groups will take place throughout the event on the 1875 Farmhouse front porch and area non-profit organizations will be on hand to share information.

All historic buildings in the park will be open for tours and attendees will be able to meet the Maple Leaf divers. Mandarin Frogs will be for sale as well.

“There will be seasonal treats and an exciting gift card raffle featuring local businesses and restaurants,” Cohill said.

Visit www.mandarinmuseum.org/events/winter-celebration or call (904) 268-0784 for more information.

Located along the St. Johns River in Walter Jones Historical Park, Mandarin Museum is dedicated to sharing the Manda-



rin’s history, culture, and natural resources. Through exhibits, educational programs, and community events, the museum serves as a hub for cultural enrichment and engagement. Mandarin Museum is open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Admission is free.



Photos courtesy Olis Garber



Choose your Nutcracker

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

“The Nutcracker” is believed by many to be a time-honored holiday tradition. In Northeast Florida, the tradition continues with five productions of the ballet this December. Since each performance is unique, following is a guide highlighting the dates, times and locations of each to help you choose “your” Nutcracker.

Community Nutcracker

Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 14 at 1 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Florida Theatre
www.jaxnutcracker.org
Artistic Directors Dulce Anaya, Debra Rankin and Mark Spivak continue this holiday tradition which began in 1992. Community Nutcracker is the only nonprofit, volunteer-run organization that offers a portion of its proceeds to local charitable agencies with each performance — and has donated more than \$900,000 in the past 33 years. The performing company is made up of local talent with more than 200 dancers ranging in age from nine to adult from

Northeast Florida auditioning and performing in the production. In an effort to promote the arts in schools, Community Nutcracker also offers matinee performances for school groups as well as a Community Service Night (invitation only).

Christ Church Nutcracker Ballet

Dec. 14 at 6 p.m.
Lazzara Theater, UNF Fine Arts Department
www.missfeliciasdance.com

This year marks the 29th performance of the Christ Church Nutcracker Ballet, directed by Felicia Rhoden of the Christ Church Dance Ministry as well as owner of Miss Felicia’s Dance. Nearly 300 performers, aged two to 90 years old, will take the stage and proceeds will benefit children’s charities.

Jacksonville Symphony’s First Coast Nutcracker

Dec. 13 at 8 p.m.
Dec. 14 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Dec. 15 at 2 p.m.

Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts
www.jaxsymphony.org/first-coast-nutcracker/
Jacksonville Symphony’s First Coast Nutcracker has been a tradition in North Florida for more than 50 years. Under the direction of choreographer and artistic director Rhonda Stampalia, the First Coast Nutcracker showcases internationally renowned principal dancers, the area’s finest young dancers, and Tchaikovsky’s best-loved melodies performed by the Jacksonville Symphony.

The Nutcracker 2024 by the Florida Ballet

Dec. 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 21 at 4:30 p.m.
Dec. 22 at 2 p.m.
Lazzara Theater, UNF Fine Arts Center
floridaballet.org/thenutcracker

The Florida Ballet’s Nutcracker features swirling snowflakes, waltzing flowers, and dancing bonbons. From the captivating dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy to the iconic snow scene, this enchanting classical ballet is set to the beloved music of Tchaikovsky and features more than 100 local dancers.

St. Augustine Ballet Nutcracker

Dec. 20 at 7 p.m.
Dec. 21 at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Dec. 22 at 2 p.m.
Lewis Auditorium at Flagler College
www.santaugustineballet.com

This year’s production of “The Nutcracker” marks the 16th annual performance by the St. Augustine Ballet and features professional ballet dancers as well as dance students from St. Augustine and surrounding areas. The St. Augustine Ballet, under the artistic direction of Luis Abella, is a non-profit organization with a mission to involve community members of all ages in meaningful dance experiences.

Christmas FANTASTIQUE

Dec. 7 at 7 p.m.
Dec. 8 at 7 p.m.
Lewis Auditorium at Flagler College
www.zoikasdance.com

This original production by Zoika’s Dance tells the classic holiday story of “The Nutcracker” through the language of dance, featuring classical ballet, as well as tap, hip hop, acro, and contemporary dance. Professional dancers join young, local dancers on stage for the holiday extravaganza.



WALK THROUGH

LIVE Nativity

DECEMBER 6 & 7 5:30-8:30 pm

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JACKSONVILLE, FL 32223
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4:30pm // Family & Children’s Celebration with Live Nativity
7:00pm // Contemporary Candlelight & Communion Service
9:00pm // Traditional Candlelight & Communion Service

2501 Loretto Road, Jacksonville



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Travel

Exploring Tennessee's
Whiskey Trail

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewsline.com

While I am not overly fond of whiskey, I was curious about the history and production that make Tennessee whiskey special. So, I took a trip along the Tennessee Whiskey Trail starting at Jack Daniel's in Lynchburg, the oldest registered distillery in the United States.

The founder, Jasper Newton "Jack" Daniel, or "Gentleman Jack," established the distillery in 1866 at Cave Spring Hollow, a natural limestone spring free from impurities. Over time, the brand became iconic, with its Old No. 7 recipe and the signature charcoal mellowing process (Lincoln County Process), the key to Tennessee Whiskey.

Guides at the 1,700-acre Jack Daniel's site walk groups through the entire whiskey-making process, from charcoal mellowing to aging in oak barrels. Here, I discovered the unique production rules that define a "Tennessee Whiskey." The rules stipulate that a whiskey must be made in the state, contain at least 51 percent corn in its grain mash, must be distilled at no more than 160 proof (80 percent alcohol by volume) and enter the barrel for aging at no more than 125 proof (62.5 percent alcohol by volume), and must be aged in new, charred oak barrels. The barrels must be freshly charred and used only once for aging.

One of the defining characteristics of Tennessee Whiskey is the Lincoln County Process. This unique process



Jack Daniel's in Lynchburg is on the Tennessee Whiskey Trail.

involves filtering the unaged whiskey through maple charcoal before aging it to give it a smooth and rich character.

A fascinating note about the small town of Lynchburg: While the distillery has been producing since 1866, the city is "dry." The distillery is legally allowed to make and sell unopened bottles of their spirits and provide a tour tasting, but you will not find a restaurant or bar in the town that serves alcoholic drinks. Strange indeed.

Located just a short drive away in Tullahoma, the George Dickel Distillery offers a quieter, more intimate experience. Founded in 1870, George Dickel chills its mash before filtering it through charcoal, adding a unique smoothness and



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Close up of a barrel room.

richness to the whiskey. The distillery's location in Cascade Hollow feels like a hidden gem, with beautiful countryside views. I went into one barrel room that held 57,000 barrels of aging whiskey and had a chance to take a taste sample when I thieved the barrel. That is, lowering a tube into the barrel and removing a single pour's worth of liquid. This sample showcases the color, aroma, and flavor unique to its time in the barrel; however, I chose not to taste it! The distillery tour tasting includes their beloved No. 12 and Bottled-in-Bond varieties, which left me with fond memories.

One of the Trail's newer but most inspiring stops is the Uncle Nearest Distillery in Shelbyville. It's named for Nearest Green, the former enslaved man who taught Jack Daniel the art of whiskey-making. Uncle Nearest products are dedicated to preserving Green's legacy.

The site rests on a former horse farm and includes a BBQ restaurant and the Humble Baron Bar, the world's longest bar- following a curvilinear path around



A whiskey tasting.

an immense room and often with live music. The insightful tour includes a Hollywood production documentary, state-of-the-art facilities, interactive exhibits on Nearest Green's life, and a tasting of their award-winning expressions. You can easily spend a half day there.

I didn't visit all 30 Tennessee distilleries on the Trail, but I was doused in history and enjoyed the state's rolling hills and small towns. If you want to raise a glass, look for more information at www.tnwhiskeytrail.com.

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

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Welcome to Mandarin,
Jessica Domitrovic, MD.



Baptist Primary Care is excited to welcome **Jessica Domitrovic, MD**, to our Mandarin Landing primary care office. Dr. Domitrovic is a board-certified family medicine physician who treats patients from birth to geriatrics.

Dr. Domitrovic listens compassionately to her patients' concerns to form a wellness plan that aligns with their goals, enhances their mental and physical health and helps them make informed decisions.

She specializes in:

- Preventive care
- Treating high blood pressure
- Musculoskeletal Care
- Women's health
- Diabetes management

Dr. Domitrovic is excited to work with Mandarin residents to reach their wellness goals and is now accepting new patients at Mandarin Landing, Suite 1401.

To book an appointment
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