

Ponte Vedra NewsLine

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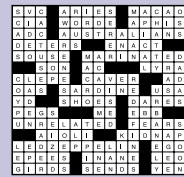
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Photo courtesy MetroCreative

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.

As of the start of Daylight Saving Time in March, homes with odd

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Ponte Vedra Writers help other writers

By Maggie FitzRoy
mail@floridanewsline.com

Novelist Kevin Pettway has been writing for 20 years, but he spent half that time learning and developing his craft before realizing his dream of becoming a published author. Part of his education involved attending writing workshops led by other writers, and on Feb. 22 he led a "Humor in Writing" workshop at the Ponte Vedra Beach branch library to teach a room full of fellow writers how to add humor to their work.

Whether writing fiction or nonfiction, "humor adds variety, like in soup," said Pettway, who writes funny fantasy books full of adventure, friendship and more. "Humor, like salt, is a flavor enhancer. Any genre of books can be enhanced with humor."

Pettway's workshop was hosted by the Florida Writers Association, a nonprofit organization whose mission is "to provide writers with knowledge, opportunities and connections to support their goals." The Ponte Vedra Writers branch meets at 11 a.m. the fourth Saturday of every month and hosts free workshops on a wide variety of topics. Upcoming meetings include "How to Sell Books to Hollywood," on May 24, and "Meandering Memoirs," on June 28.

"Writers Helping Writers is the motto of FWA," said Vic DiGenti, FWA (Florida Writers Association) regional director, who has also been group leader of the Ponte Vedra Writers for 17 years. He



Florida Writers Association Northeast Florida Regional Director Vic DiGenti leads a Ponte Vedra Writers meeting Feb. 22 at the Ponte Vedra Beach branch library.



Photos courtesy Maggie FitzRoy

Novelist Kevin Pettway leads a workshop on humor writing Feb. 22 at the Ponte Vedra Beach branch library.

has a mailing list of 800 writers in the Northeast Florida area, which includes groups in Nassau, Clay, St. Johns, and Duval counties.

The Ponte Vedra meetings are open to the public and you don't need to be a member to attend. DiGenti said as many as 40 to 50 writers may show up in any given month.

"It's remarkable how many writers there are in the area," he said. "They come because they want to improve their craft."

Pettway, who lives in Riverside, said for the first 10 years of his writing career, "I mostly wrote and rewrote the same book over and over again." He feels his experience is typical of a lot of writers because there is so much to learn. "Typically, you will write three, four, or five novels before you are ready," he said. "I call them trunk novels. Nobody ever sees them. You toss them in the trunk and move on."

He says he is glad he did that "because by the time I met my publisher, I was ready."

He'd also discovered that he was good at

writing funny, which involves techniques that he learned by studying comedy and which he was happy to share with others during his PowerPoint presentation. His advice included using humor as a trust-building tool; using humor to make characters relatable; and using the rule of three to create and then subvert expectations.

"Humor deepens the story no matter the genre," he said. "It's a tool that makes you a better writer."

Workshop attendee Cherry Lindholm said she attends monthly meetings depending on the topic, and that she was interested in learning how to incorporate humor in her work.

"I like the process of writing," she said. "It's very involving."

Andy Reistetter has been a regular attendee at the Ponte Vedra meetings since 2008. A golf and travel writer as well as an author of inspirational and spiritual books, he said he enjoyed Pettway's presentation.

"It was good," he said. "All the workshops are good. Very educational."

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Briefs

Vicar’s Landing Foundation Charity Classic doubles the fun

The Vicar’s Landing Foundation has announced that the 20th annual Charity Classic is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8 at The Yards at Sawgrass Players Club. This year, the event doubles down on the excitement again with two distinct tournaments: the Charity Classic Golf Tournament and the Charity Classic Pickleball Tournament.

Both tournaments will run concurrently, offering participants a unique day of friendly competition. Registration for either tournament includes delectable food, refreshing drinks, and exciting door prizes. All proceeds from Drives & Dinks will directly benefit vital community charities serving St. Johns County seniors. This year, the foundation is supporting exceptional organizations focused on addressing hunger and food insecurity among seniors in the area: Epic Cure, Pie In The Sky, Meals On Wings, and the Meals on Wheels program of the St. Johns County Council on Aging.

“For two decades, the Charity Classic has been a testament to our community’s unwavering commitment to enhancing the lives of seniors throughout our region,” said Bruce Vorsanger, Vicar’s Landing Chief Development Officer. “We are delighted to invite golf enthusiasts and pickleball aficionados alike to showcase their talents, contribute to our mission of service and compassion, and enjoy the camaraderie of our vibrant giv-

ing community.” Everyone in the community, participant or not, is invited to register for the special after-party that will kick off after the tournaments. There will also be a drawing for door prizes and a silent auction. This celebratory event will feature music, cocktails, and hors d’oeuvres, providing a perfect opportunity to keep the fun going even after the play ends. For more information, visit <https://vicarslanding.com/golf-charity-home-page/>

First Coast Cultural Center announces senior director of operations

First Coast Cultural Center announced its appointment of Silvia Romero as senior director of operations beginning March 1, 2025. Romero will replace president and chief executive officer, Donna Guzzo, who has been at the helm of the non-profit organization for the past eight years.

Romero, who joined First Coast Cultural Center as director of programs in 2023, has a long list of qualifications for this role. After receiving a bachelor’s degree in Art History at the University of North Florida, Romero was a museum educator and then associate director of education for the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens in Jacksonville, where she managed a \$1 million endowment to provide arts integration to underserved students for six years. Through her career, she led arts fundraising for a deaf preschool’s annual gala, worked as an arts and Montessori educator, and then became

arts education manager at Shorelake Arts, a non-profit organization in Seattle, Washington.

“The communities between Jacksonville and St. Augustine will continue to have high quality arts programming available for children and adults,” said Romero. “Our goal is to carry out the team’s vision of serving the public through classes and presentations, while infusing arts integration during the school day for children with disabilities.”

Romero will work alongside fundraising manager, Kimberly Sheridan, who oversees membership, events, and local grants. In addition, Candice Sirak will continue in her role as senior music therapist and Sound Connections® Music Therapy manager, providing much-needed services to students with disabilities in St. Johns County Schools. KickStART, after school arts enrichment, will also continue to serve students. Meanwhile, Charlotte Chastain, formerly Guzzo’s administrative assistant, will teach more of her popular art classes at the Center.

Showcase quilts needed

Quiltfest Inc. of Jacksonville has opened the submission window for quilts to be showcased at the Prime Osborn Center from Sept. 18 – 21, 2025.

This judged event is open to all quilters and will feature up to 450 quilts.

Visit <https://quiltfestjax.com/enter-your-quilt/> for a complete list of categories and rules.

Retired psychologist unlocks secrets of haunting characters

Psychologist turned bestselling mystery writer Jack Lawrence has a fresh perspective on creating compelling, psychologically rich characters that engage readers and keep them hooked. He’s going to share that key with members and guests of Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime writers on Saturday, April 12 at 11:15 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library.

Lawrence will talk about creating core fears and desires of your characters — using real psychological principles — to elevate your story. Learn how to create unforgettable protagonists and villains whose motivations feel deeply human, making every twist and turn resonate with readers on a deep emotional level. From detectives to masterminds and their victims, discover how psychology can transform your character development process from flat to unforgettable.

Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime is a chapter of the national organization and serves mystery, crime, and thriller writers and readers. Programs feature speakers in forensic science, psychology, and law enforcement fields. Bring your coffee and bring a friend. The group welcomes men and women to learn more about writing, promoting, and enjoying crime fiction. Contact floridasistersincrime@gmail.com for more information.

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BFF

Best Furry Friend of the month

Breed:
Beagle Corgi mix

Favorite Activity:
Hoves to sail run on the beach at sunrise

Favorite Treat:
Soup bones

Favorite Friend:
Me! (his human mom), because he looks at me like I'm his whole world.

How did your BFF get his name?
His name was AJ in the shelter where I adopted him 10 years ago, but I changed his name immediately to a nautical name. I settled on Scout because I immediately got the image of him on the bow of the boat.

Meet Scout!

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

Summer Camp
& Activities Guide in this issue!

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

Don't miss our May issue featuring our Summer Camp & Activities Guide!
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MYSTERY PHOTO

Can you guess where this is?
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Last month's Mystery Photo was the fountain outside the office building on Fort Wade Road in Nocatee.

Answers

Puzzles

PG 8

CRYPTO FUN

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A. flowers B. buds C. warmth D. rainy

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April

Community Calendar

What's Happening in Ponte Vedra

Council on Aging offers interest groups at the COA Center at UF Health Nocatee. Meetings are free and self-guided. Advance registration for clubs and meetings is required; email pbrunell@Stjohnscoa.com or call (904) 814-9407. Tuesday clubs include: Open Card Play, every Tuesday 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. and Caregiver Support Group, every Tuesday 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Wednesday groups include: Mah Jongg Meet-up, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Palm Valley Market is held inside and on the grounds of the Palm Valley Community Center at 148 Canal Road, every Tuesday from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. The market offers organically grown produce, microgreens, eggs, grass-finished beef, all natural chicken, Mayport shrimp, prepared meals, preservative-free bread, honey, tea, natural skincare, custom jewelry and soy candles. Visit the Palm Valley Market Facebook page for more information.

1st: Essential Tremor Support Group Meet, Greet and Educate will be held on Tuesday, April 1 at 11 a.m. at Baptist Health Place in Nocatee, 400 Colonnade Drive. Elaine Keebaugh, Ph.D. will discuss "Brain Health: What are Things We Should Do (and Shouldn't Do) to Promote Overall Brain Health?" All are welcome. RSVP to Jan Kary at jkary@verizon.net or (202) 438-6750.

1st: Vicar's Landing monthly Boutique Sale will be held Tuesday, April 1 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at 1000 Vicar's Landing Way. The sale includes framed art, jewelry (14k gold, sterling silver, costume and designer), many \$1 knick-knacks, antiques and household furnishings. The public is welcome. Checks or cash only please. The Vicar's Employee Scholarship Fund receives all the proceeds. Call Beverly Webb at (904) 315-2610 for more information.

1st: Purely Social hosted by Ponte Vedra Woman's Club will be held on Tuesday, April 1, from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at Cruisers in Jacksonville Beach. Visit www.pontevedrawomansclub.com for more information and to register.

2nd: Coastal Friends will host Michael Fitzgerald, music historian, at the monthly luncheon on April 2 from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club. The luncheon is open to members, guests and the community. The cost to attend is \$25. Reservations must be made in advance by contacting bartshar@comcast.net as soon as possible.

3rd: Bingo will be held at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on Thursdays from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. for four weeks beginning Thursday, April 3. Contact Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information and to register.

5th: Wellness events at Sawgrass Village will be held every Saturday in April from 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Hosted by Mind Body Social, all events are free and open to the community. Events include wellness classes such as yoga and barre, all held on the lawn in front of ABC Liquors. Visit <https://mbs.events/sv/> for more information and to register.

8th: Dr. Gerson Yessin Music Series Presents the Sean McCarthy Trio at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library on April 8 from 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. The concert will feature an evening of a rich blend of country, bluegrass, folk, Trop Rock and Americana. Doors open at 6 p.m. The concert is free and is sponsored by the Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library.

8th: PVB Adult Coloring Club at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library will be held on April 8 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. This program is for adults older than 18; bring a snack or drink for yourself or to share with others. Call the library at (904) 827-6950 for more information.

12th: NE Florida Sisters in Crime will host psychologist turned bestselling mystery writer Jack Lawrence on April 12 at 11:15 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Bring your coffee and bring a friend; the group welcomes misters and sisters to learn

about writing, promoting, and enjoying crime fiction. Visit nefloridasistersincrime.org for more information.

15th: Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library will host speaker Leah Lynch, president of the Hope Division for the Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless, in the FOL Room at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library on April 15 at 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. Lynch oversees all educational and workforce development programs, two commercial kitchens and social enterprises for the center. She is the founder of "Let's Play" sports camp in partnership with Nike and the NFL.

16th: Ponte Vedra Woman's Club general meeting and luncheon will be held on Wednesday, April 16 at 12 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club. The program will be "Interior Design," featuring speaker Celia Rigby. The cost of the lunch is \$30. Registration required; visit www.pontevedrawomansclub.com for more information.

16th: America 250 Patriot Memorial dedication, to honor the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, will be held on April 16 at 11 a.m. at the Jacksonville Beach Veteran Memorial Park, 429 First Street South in Jacksonville Beach. The community is invited to attend this event sponsored by the Ponte Vedra Chapter - Daughters of the American Revolution.

17th: St. Johns County Republican Party District 4 monthly meeting will be held on the third Thursday of each month (this month, April 17) at 6:15 p.m. at Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Blvd. Visit stjohns.gop for more information.

17th: Free Tech Help with David will be held on Thursday, April 17 from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Drop in for tech assistance with your Android, Apple, and Reader devices; no RSVPs required. Visit sjcpls.org/branches/ponte-vedra-beach-branch/ for more information.



19th: Earth Day Community Cleanup, sponsored by Beaches Go Green, will be held on Saturday, April 19 from 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. at four beachside locations, including Mickler's Beach access. Visit beachesgo-green.org for more information.


24th: Crafters Corner will be held at Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library on April 24 from 3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. This hands-on crafting session, where attendees will create mini terrariums, offers a perfect opportunity to unwind and socialize. Supplies for this program are generously provided by the Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. RSVP required; contact Tessa Highstrom at thighstrom@sjcfl.us or call the library at (904) 827-6950.

26th: GTM Research Reserve will host its monthly Beach Cleanup on Saturday, April 26 from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. No registration is required; meet at the Visitor Center, 505 Guana River Road in Ponte Vedra Beach where gloves and trash bags will be provided. Visit gtmnerr.org for more information.


26th: Ponte Vedra Writers will meet on Saturday, April 26 at 11 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Retired corporate executive and college professor Lou Pugliese is the featured speaker. He will discuss how he turned an idea into a series of novels in his presentation "One Man's Journey from Retirement to Becoming an Author to Self-Publishing." The meetings are free and open to the public. Visit www.floridawriters.org for more information.

28th: Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will meet on Monday, April 28 at 5:30 p.m. for Chat & Chew before the 6 p.m. meeting at Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. The featured speaker will be Dr. Sunil Joshi, chief health officer for the City of Jacksonville, who will present a health outlook for the First Coast region and answer questions. Email pvdemclub@gmail.com for more information.







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with St. Johns County School Board Member
Kelly Barrera, District 4

Q: How is the search process going for the new superintendent?

A: We are moving forward with the next steps and by the time you read this, all applications will be in. We will be making finalist selections and starting video and written interviews. You can check our school district website for ongoing updates. I'd also like to thank all community members whose input has already been received.

Q: Do you have an update on the new RiverTown school scheduled to open in the fall?

A: The RiverTown school now has a name: Hallowes Cove Academy, reflecting the natural beauty of the local waterways as well as the history of the area, was selected. Principal Jessley Hathaway couldn't be more excited. Community meetings have started and ideas for mascots will now be fine tuned, now that we have a school

name. It's important to note that approximately 80 percent of teachers going to the new school will be from existing schools. This keeps everyone growing and learning and focusing on students.

Q: What is expected for District 4 next school year?

A: We're not expecting too many changes for our district for next year. Ocean Palms and PVPV Rawlings will have extra space, as I've mentioned before, for families interested in joining our St. Johns County School District family or for those wanting a different experience.

Q: What district updates can you share?

A: We are working on the school calendars for the 2026 – 27 and 2027 – 28 school years. Once the drafts are complete, we will put them online and

ask for input from our school community.

Q: Do you have any kudos to share?

A: We have lots of fun things to celebrate:

Two Ponte Vedra High School students were invited to represent the St. Johns County School District at the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair, to be held in Columbus, Ohio in May: Nicolette Finn and Anya Dorairaj.

Tuba player Campbell Jones of PVHS was named to the High School All State Band.

Nease freshman Aarna Warekar won the chess championship.

Sree Vidya Siliveri, an eighth-grade student at Landrum Middle School, moves on to the National Spelling Bee in May.

Students recently participated in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. county-wide poster and essay contest. For the poster contest, Sophia Hinkle (11th grade) from PVHS placed first and Tess Impey (11th grade) from PVHS placed second. For the essay contest, Crawford Teideberg (seventh grade) from Landrum Middle School placed first and Sophia Koppenhafer (ninth grade) from PVHS placed first.

Finally, the Nease NJROTC Brain Brawl teams competed in the Area 10 Regional Championships. The Nease A Team emerged as champions and will compete in the national competition at the Naval Academy in Annapolis.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

A: They can email me at kelly.barrera@stjohns.k12.fl.us or call me at (904) 547-7510.



with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Illegal immigration is a hot topic; how does this affect SJSO?

A: The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office has been enrolled in the federal 287(g) program for many years, which allows SJSO deputies to conduct immigration enforcement in partnership with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We have a full-time task force that has been working on Interstate 95 to combat narcotics and human trafficking; this group will also assist with immigration enforcement.

Q: What can you tell us about your working relationship with the federal government?

A: We have a duty to partner with federal officials and the new administration has been crystal clear that illegal immigration is a priority. We have had a strong relationship with our federal partners for many years working not just immigration, but human trafficking, sex

trafficking, narcotics, and other illegal activity.

Q: How do you prioritize immigration enforcement?

A: The priority is finding illegal aliens who are wanted for crimes. We meet frequently with federal, state, and local partners to discuss the worst of the worst, criminal aliens wanted in Florida or in the immediate area. If you are wanted — whether you're an illegal alien or you're a citizen of the United States — we are going to find you and hold you accountable for your actions.

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

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

Relay For Life of First Coast to raise funds to help end cancer

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The American Cancer Society Relay For Life of the First Coast, to be held on Saturday, April 12 at American Cancer Society – Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation Hope Lodge, will unite the community to celebrate survivors and remember those lost to the disease. The Opening Ceremony and Survivor/Caregiver lap will be held at 4 p.m., with the Survivor Reception at 5 p.m. and the Luminaria Ceremony at 8:30 p.m.

In 2025, there will be more than 2 million new cancer cases and 618,120 deaths from cancer are expected to occur in the United States, with more than 171,960 cancer cases expected to occur here in Florida. Cancer continues

to be the second most common cause of death among Americans, after heart disease.

Relay for Life of the First Coast raised more than \$90,000 for the American Cancer Society's mission in 2024 and aims to raise \$90,000 this year. Dollars raised each year by Relay participants across the country help support the American Cancer Society's mission in countless ways, including funding and conducting breakthrough research, providing education and advocating for the needs of cancer patients and their families, and providing essential services throughout their cancer journey.

Visit RelayForLife.org/FirstCoastFL to sign up for Relay and join your community in the fight against cancer.

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Guest Column

Change in 2025 Homestead Exemption

By St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

St. Johns County homeowners who receive homestead exemption will see a change on their 2025 property record card. In the past, homestead exemption has totaled \$50,000 for those entitled to the full homestead benefit. This year, the homestead exemption value is \$50,722 for those same homeowners. This increase is due to Constitutional Amendment 5, now Florida Statute 196.031(1)(b), that was approved by voters in November.

Homestead exemption reduces the amount of property taxes paid by a Florida homeowner on their primary resi-

dence. Homestead exemption has totaled \$50,000 for eligible homeowners with the first \$25,000 applied to all property taxes, including school taxes, and the second \$25,000 applied to the assessed value between \$50,000 and \$75,000, not including school taxes.

With Amendment 5, homestead exemption will still be applied in the same way, but the difference will be with the second \$25,000 amount. Now, \$25,000 will be the base with the total adjusted to account for annual inflation, which is determined by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI is reported by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor

Statistics and measures inflation on consumer goods and services. The CPI will be reviewed yearly, and if the inflation adjustment is positive, then an increase will be made to the second \$25,000. With this new calculation, this year's homestead exemption increased by \$722 to account for inflation.

Homeowners may be wondering if homestead exemption can decrease below \$50,000 due to this new legislation, and the answer is no. That is because the amount will only change when the inflation adjustment is positive. Therefore, the minimum total for homestead exemption is \$50,000 for homeowners entitled to

the full homestead benefit.

Homestead exemption is important in reducing a homeowner's property taxes. It not only reduces a property's taxable value, but it also puts a 3 percent cap on the amount the home's assessed value can increase annually. Also, homestead exemption is the gateway for other exemptions, meaning homeowners need to qualify for homestead exemption to be eligible for additional exemptions.

Contact St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer with any questions or to provide additional information at Eddie@sjcpa.gov or (904) 827-5500.

Coastal Friends' fashion show supports local businesses

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

On March 5 Coastal Friends hosted its annual Fashion Show, "A Glamorous Affair," at Marsh Landing Country Club in Ponte Vedra Beach with 110 in attendance.

Patti Mason, Coastal Friends member, said, "What an absolutely spectacular event. Every detail of the Fashion Show was flawless, from décor to incredible fashions, hair, makeup, and even perfect shoes. It was a masterpiece and a fun time was had by all."

This year, Coastal Friends proudly supported the local business community. Event sponsors were all women- or family- locally owned businesses, including A'propos Boutique, Ellie Bing, Carla Shoes & Accessories, Studio Sage, The Social Society, and D Florals. Two of these sponsors, The Social Society and

D Florals, were recently established in the community in 2024.

The annual Coastal Friends fashion show, held each spring, features the latest fashions with Coastal Friends members as fashion models.

Joanne Long of Carla Shoes & Accessories said, "I have been doing fashion shows for the past 28 years and this was one of the best — from the team that organized it, to the models and the participating sponsors. It was great fun for all of us."

Coastal Friends was established in 1998 to foster friendships through social activities and community engagement among women from Jacksonville, the Beaches, Nocatee and St. Augustine communities. Contact brookemeister@msn.com for more information on how to join the group.



Coastal Friends members who served as models at the group's annual fashion show.

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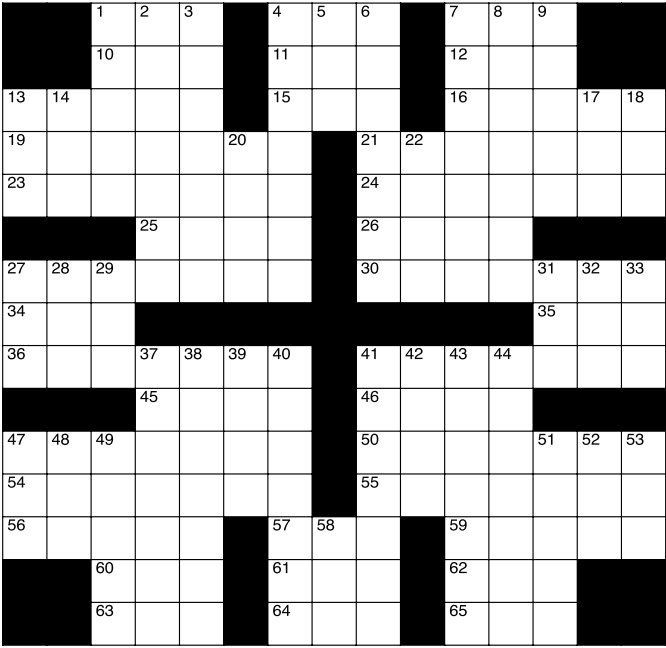
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. English TV station
4. It fuels cars
7. Where ships dock (abbr.)
10. Indigenous people of Thailand
11. Midway between northeast and east
12. Small Milky Way constellation
13. Fritz __, Austrian chemist
15. A Brit's grandmother
16. Colombian city
19. Visualize
21. Charged
23. People's assets
24. Informative books
25. Jeer
26. You can do it with your horn
27. Agents of your downfall
30. Central Uganda city
34. Supervises flying
35. Type of tree
36. Alfalfa
41. Dishwasher soap brand
45. Hall where military eats
46. Ancient Greek City
47. Speaks incessantly
50. Discuss again
54. Extreme greed
55. Adopt or support
56. Fantasy writer Russell
57. Seize
59. Early Mesoamerican civilizati
60. Noted pet detective Ventura
61. Automobile
62. Georgia rockers
63. Color opposite green
64. Amount of time
65. Attempt

CLUES DOWN

1. Sheep sound
2. Some can be emotional
3. Inflammation of colon lining
4. Origins
5. Comedienne Gasteyer
6. Perceived by the senses
7. A place to play ball
8. Occur before
9. Animal body parts
13. Thanksgiving dessert
14. Root mean square (abbr.)
17. 1960s teen idol Bobby
18. Promotional materials
20. One point east of northeast
22. Piers Anthony protagonist
27. Popular sports league
28. Cologne
29. Partner to cheese
31. Constrictor snake
32. Not good
33. Supplement with difficulty
37. Hug with fondness
38. Enforced again
39. Small amount of time (abbr.)
40. Substance
41. Anterior parts of the brain
42. Brews
43. Where ships load cargo
44. Holiday season singer
47. “__ humbug!”
48. Monetary unit of Macao
49. Popular children's book elephan
51. Glutinous
52. Function
53. Old world, new
58. Swiss river

SPRING HAS SPRUNG WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- APRIL
AWAKENING
BLOOMS
BREEZE
BUDDING
BUNNY
CHIRPING
EGGS
FLOWERS
GARDEN
GREEN
GROWS
INSECTS
NEST
POLLEN
REBIRTH
SAPLING
SHOWERS
SPRING
SUNNY
SUNSHINE
TREES



Solve the code to discover words related to springtime.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 10 = R)

- A. 2 7 22 19 21 10 4
Clue: Blooms
- B. 6 15 11 4
Clue: Beginnings of flowers
- C. 19 23 10 12 16 5
Clue: Temperate climate
- D. 10 23 9 26 14
Clue: Lots of wet precipitation

Briefs cont. from pg. 2

Newcomers group seeks members

Newcomers of the Beaches is a social club that promotes friendship for women who have moved into the beaches area within the last two years or have experienced a change in their lifestyle (for example, retirement, widowhood, divorce). The group’s motto is “Happiness is Making New Friends” and there are a wide range of activities to encourage fellowship and fun. Women who enjoy outdoor activities can join in to play golf, walk on the beach, ride bikes on interesting paths, or join in “Ladies Adventure” with educational tours or fun day trips. The club hosts monthly or biweekly canasta, pinochle, euchre, Mah Jongg, Rummikub, Five Crowns, and Mexican Train for the game players in the group. Members join with friends to try out venues for breakfast, lunch or dinner out. For readers, there are two book clubs that meet monthly, one in-person club and a zoom book club. Members may join the volunteer efforts in various community outreach programs. Partners are not forgotten; Happy Hour out and some evening game nights encourage activities for couples.

Newcomers of the Beaches luncheons take place on the second Wednesday of most months and feature a speaker or activity for members’ education and enjoyment. The April luncheon will be held on April 9 at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club and will feature the club’s popular fashion show with members

modeling JMcLaughlin clothing.

Visit Newcomersofthebeaches.com for more information. Click on the menu item “About Us” for information about membership. Annual dues are \$35 and prospective members may attend two monthly luncheons before becoming a member.

Rock music historian is guest speaker at Coastal Friends lunch

Coastal Friends will host Michael Ray Fitzgerald as the guest speaker at the Wednesday, April 2 luncheon. The luncheon runs from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. and will be held at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy.

Fitzgerald, a musician, media scholar, former university instructor from Jacksonville, and author of five books, will talk about the importance Jacksonville has played in the history of rock music, including the genre known as southern rock.

The luncheon is open to members and guests, as well as the community. The cost to attend is \$25. Reservations must be made in advance by contacting the luncheon chairman at bartshar@comcast.net.

Luncheons are held on the first Wednesday of every month, except July and August. New members are welcome throughout the year. Contact brooke-meister@msn.com for more information on how to join.

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Literacy comes to life at Ocean Palms

By Lisa Farese
mail@floridanewslines.com

Ocean Palms Elementary School celebrated literacy week by inviting national bestselling author, Greg Tang, to the school to teach literacy through play to kindergarten through fifth grade students.

With four sessions, three for students and one for teachers, Tang took students

on a journey fusing literacy and math with games such as a unique take on bingo. Students communicated back to Tang using hand signals and white boards to express their understanding.

Tang's books, which include titles such as "The Grapes of Math," "Math Fables," and "Math-terpieces," are known for incorporating both math and literacy.



Photos courtesy Lisa Farese

National bestselling author, Greg Tang, leads Ocean Palms Elementary students through games and activities that teach math and literacy.

The Pantry Raiders

Pecans add the perfect finishing touch

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Pecans can make any recipe better. Whether they add a nutritious crunch to oatmeal, star as the lead ingredient in pecan pie or give cookies that little something extra, pecans elevate the foods they touch.

In this recipe "Twice-Baked Sweet Potatoes" from "Simply Scratch" (Avery) by Laurie McNamara, honey-covered pecans are the crowning touch on sweet potatoes, helping to make this side dish one to remember at any special meal.

Twice-Baked Sweet Potatoes (Serves 4)

- 2 medium sweet potatoes, scrubbed
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp. pure maple syrup
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. kosher salt, plus a pinch
- 2 tbsp. honey
- ¾ cup coarsely chopped pecans

Preheat the oven to 400F.

Massage the olive oil onto the sweet potatoes and set them on a small baking sheet. Bake for 1 hour or until a knife glides through effortlessly. Let cool until safe to handle. Keep the oven on.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Twice-Baked Sweet Potatoes

Halve the sweet potatoes horizontally and carefully scoop out the flesh into a medium bowl. Set the skins aside. Add the butter, maple syrup, chili powder, cinnamon, and ¼ teaspoon of the salt and use a potato masher to mash the filling until smooth.

In a small bowl, combine the honey, pecans, and a pinch of salt.

Place the skins side by side in a small baking dish. Spoon the filling in, dividing it evenly, and top with the honeyed pecans. Bake for 5 minutes. Serve warm.

Summer Camp Activities Guide*



Questions to ask before enrolling in a summer camp

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Millions of children spend a significant portion of their summers at camp. The American Camp Association reports that 26 million children enroll in summer camp each year, and many of those youngsters make mem-

ories that last a lifetime while building lifelong friendships along the way.

Camps have arguably become even more important in recent decades as more and more households have featured two working parents. Single-parent households also rely on summer camp to keep kids occupied and

entertained while school is not in session and Mom or Dad is working. Such situations illustrate how important summer camp can be and underscore the significance of asking the right questions before enrolling a child in camp. In addition to inquiring about hours of operation, insurance and pricing, parents can ask the following questions before enrolling a child in summer camp.



Millions of children spend a significant portion of their summers at camp.

notable because parents may want their children to attend a camp that will feature some familiar faces. Attending camp alongside classmates or neighbors or teammates can calm kids' nerves and make them more excited about going to camp each day in the summer. But camps open to children from other towns also can be beneficial by allowing children to expand their social networks beyond their own towns.

What is the history of the camp?

A camp that has been in business for decades is not necessarily superior to one that opened more recently, but it's still worth asking how long a camp has been around. It might be easier to determine if a given camp is what you're looking for if it's been around awhile. Such camps may have a significant number of Google reviews and may even provide testimonials from past campers and parents. A camp that's been around awhile also can share information regarding its return rate, which indicates the number of youngsters who have come back each summer. A strong return rate can indicate campers enjoy their experiences each summer.

Who is eligible to attend camp?

Some camps restrict enrollment to youngsters within a predetermined age bracket, while others may be exclusive to legal residents of the town where the camp is being held. Eligibility is not only a significant variable in regard to determining who can and cannot attend a given camp; it's also

Camp directors and staff members spend a lot of time with campers each summer, so it's important that parents ask who these people are, how they're trained and how much experience they have. No business can avoid employee turnover completely, so parents who hold out for a camp that's had the same employees for decades will likely find themselves with an unhappy non-camper come the start of summer. But questions about turnover rate, training and the counselor selection process are viable questions to ask prior to enrolling a child in a particular camp.

What is the camp itinerary?

Kids might grow bored if camp features the same itinerary each day, and parents might feel such camps are not worth the investment. Ask about the typical camp itinerary, including field trips, daily activities, special events, and entertainment. The more entertaining and fun a camp is, the more likely youngsters are to love spending time there.

Is physical activity part of the camp?

Many students attend academic camps or camps where they learn to play music or further their existing skills. But parents know that physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle and a great way to make the best of the summer sun. When considering a specialty offering like band camp or STEM camp, ask about what role, if any, physical activity plays in a typical day.



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Travel

Iceland in Winter

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

Floridians enjoy some of the mildest winters in the U.S., but I grew up in Virginia, recalling snow-filled childhood memories. Craving a winter wonderland, I set off for Iceland, hoping to see snowfall and the Northern Lights.

Surprisingly, flights from New York or Boston to Iceland take only five hours — closer than many imagine. Yet, everything in Iceland feels foreign — in the best way. The language is complex and nearly impossible to pronounce, the currency can be perplexing, but almost everyone speaks English. The highland is the dramatic range of landscapes — otherworldly in any season.

As my plane landed, I glimpsed a layer

of white blanketing everything, a vision of Game of Thrones' icy Wall. Unable to check into my hotel so early, I headed straight to the Blue Lagoon.

Iceland's most famous attraction was actually formed by accident. In 1976, wastewater from the Svartsengi geothermal power plant created a mineral-rich pool. Initially deemed unsafe for bathing, it soon became a local secret as workers discovered its soothing effects. By 1981, researchers confirmed the water's healing properties, and in 1992, the Blue Lagoon officially opened as a spa retreat.

After showering, I descended steps into an indoor extension of the pool before slipping through a curtain into the open air. The cold morning wind jabbed me, but the water felt silky and warm. Steam rose against the black lava fields, creating an ethereal atmosphere. I smoothed the silica mud — provided on-site — over my face letting it dry as I meandered around. I explored a small cave, the steam room, and a sauna. Fully relaxed, I finally made my way to Reykjavik.

Reykjavik is a blend of Nordic charm and modern energy best enjoyed on foot. I passed colorful buildings adorned with street art, visited Hallgrímskirkja, the striking church with panoramic city views, and admired Harpa Concert Hall's shimmering glass facade. Along the waterfront, I paused at the Sun Voyager, a sleek steel rib-like sculpture reminiscent of a Viking ship.

The next morning, I set off on a small-group tour of the Golden Circle, arriving at Thingvellir National Park just as the sun crept over the horizon (winter daylight comes late). Fresh snowfall blanketed the landscape, turning it into a magical scene. A tiny church stood near the winding Öxará River, looking like something from a fairytale.

At Gullfoss, a thundering two-tiered waterfall, snowflakes swirled around me as mist rose from the canyon below. The Hvítá River plunges 105 feet into a rugged abyss. I took in the view from multiple vantage points — each more picturesque than the last, and wished I could have lingered longer.

Next was Haukadalur, a geothermal field alive with bubbling mud pots and steaming vents. I watched Strokkur Geyser erupt, a sudden burst of scalding water rocketing skyward before vanishing just as quickly. Unlike Yellowstone's Old Faithful, Strokkur's displays are brief but frequent.



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Blue Lagoon in the early morning.

Another long day took me along Iceland's stunning south coast to Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon and nearby Diamond Beach. Icebergs, freshly calved from the glacier, floated across the lagoon before washing ashore, glistening like diamonds against the black sand. The surreal contrast of ice and volcanic shore is mesmerizing — I could hardly tear myself away.

No winter trip to Iceland would be complete without chasing the Northern Lights. Bundled up and full of anticipation, I ventured beyond Reykjavik to escape light pollution. But luck was not on my side; only the faintest shimmer of green and purple flickered across the cloudy sky. Still, the magic of Iceland in winter left me spellbound as I returned to sunny, warm Florida.

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



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