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BFF Best Furry Friend



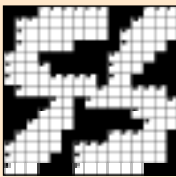
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Photo courtesy North Florida Women's Chorale

The North Florida Women's Chorale performs its holiday concert.

## North Florida Women's Chorale presents holiday concert

By Lisa McManus

The North Florida Women's Chorale will present its holiday concert, "Angels of Light," on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 4 p.m.

The performance, under the direction of Kerry Fradley, will take place at Community Presbyterian Church, 150 Sherry Drive.

The program will feature an inspiring selection of choral works celebrating the beauty and message of light during the holiday season. The Chorale is recognized for its artistry and expressive performances.

Admission is free, and donations are gratefully accepted to support the group's continued musical outreach. For more information, visit [www.womenschorale.org](http://www.womenschorale.org).

# Highlight of a Lifetime

## Ponte Vedra alumna presents honor to Spike Lee

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman  
editor@floridanewslines.com

A Ponte Vedra High School alumna and junior acting student at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) recently experienced a career highlight, stepping onto the stage to present the Lifetime Achievement Award to legendary filmmaker Spike Lee.

Kaya Heath, a Ponte Vedra resident, was selected to present the award to Lee during the eight-day SCAD Savannah Film Festival. Lee, known for seminal films such as "Malcolm X," "Do The Right Thing," and the Oscar-winning "Blackkklansman," was honored for his three decades of defining work in cinema. Lee attended the festival to screen his most recent film, "Highest To Lowest," which stars Denzel Washington.

The honor reflects Heath's deep connection to Lee's work; she previously interned at his production company, 40

**Highlight** cont. on pg. 2



Photo courtesy Savannah College of Art and Design

Spike Lee, center, Legend of Cinema Award recipient, poses with Kyle Anderson and Kaya Martinez-Heath at the Signature Screening of "Highest 2 Lowest" and Award Presentation during the 28th SCAD Savannah Film Festival on October 28, 2025 in Savannah, Georgia.

# Palencia Elementary 'rocks' birthdays

By Susan Orlando

Palencia Elementary School's PTO has introduced a unique way to celebrate students' birthdays, honor special teachers, or support sports teams by sponsoring one of the school's painted rocks. If a student has an upcoming birthday during the school year, families can consider sponsoring one of the school rocks to have painted in their honor. The option is also available for a student's half-birthday if their birthday falls in the summer months.

The cost to reserve a rock is \$25 for 24 hours. Reservations are managed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Families who wish to extend the time may reserve a maximum of two consecutive days in a 30-day period.

Two rocks are currently available: one located at the front entrance of the school, near the Palencia Park/Village Drive entrance, and the second at the back of the school, at the Kensington/Las Calinas gate on Regalo Road. Parents are encouraged to sign up for the rock corresponding to the entrance they typically use for drop-offs. Parents who bus




Photo courtesy Palencia Elementary School

A pirate-themed rock at Palencia Elementary School celebrates Max and Cali's summer birthday.

their children may still consider driving them on their birthday so they can see their special creation.

For those who are not artistically inclined, local artists who specialize in rock art are available for hire. The most popular artist is Jessica Bryce, who owns and operates Bryce Brushworks. Bryce has been painting rocks for St. Johns County schools for many years, with pricing starting at \$100, plus potential add-ons

**Palencia** cont. on pg. 2



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**Highlight** cont. from pg. 1

Acres and a Mule Filmworks. Heath is a junior acting student at SCAD, which hosts the largest university-run film festival in the United States.

While at the festival, Heath and her fellow students attended intimate masterclasses and Q&A sessions with other distinguished actors and filmmakers, including Miles Teller, “Wicked for Good” director Jon M. Chu, and actor Mark Hamill.

Heath’s selection for the presentation follows her participation in the Gersh

U class, an exclusive program where SCAD entertainment arts students receive a week of hands-on training, masterclasses, and networking with top industry professionals from the Gersh talent agency. This immersive experience is designed to equip students with the skills and connections essential for successful creative careers.

SCAD’s School of Film and Acting has consistently been recognized by The Hollywood Reporter, ranking among the top schools in categories for drama, costume design, film, production design, and visual effects.



Kyle Anderson and Kaya Martinez-Heath speak onstage at the Signature Screening of “Highest 2 Lowest” and Award Presentation during the 28th SCAD Savannah Film Festival on October 28, 2025 in Savannah, Georgia.



Photo courtesy Palencia Elementary School

A tropical design marks the birthday of Sunny Hazel on one of the Palencia Elementary School rocks.

**Palencia** cont. from pg. 1

depending on the intricacy of the design. Weather conditions, such as rain and humidity, occasionally make completing the piece impossible, but artists will do everything possible to complete the art. For parents with time and “artistic chops,” painting the rock as a DIY proj-

ect is also an option, but those choosing this route must follow the guidelines provided on the PTO website.

To reserve a date, visit the Sign-Up Genius link available at [www.palenciairatespto.com/reserve-the-rock-1](http://www.palenciairatespto.com/reserve-the-rock-1). To book Bryce Brushworks, visit [www.brycebrushworks.com](http://www.brycebrushworks.com) or call Jessica at 202-590-6759.



Photo courtesy Palencia Elementary School

One of the school's two available rocks features a Washington, D.C., skyline to celebrate a student's 10th birthday.

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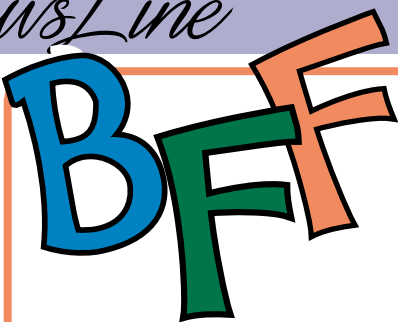
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Best Furry Friend  
of the month

Meet Rosie and Lacy!



**Breed:**

Rosie/Golden Doodle and Lacy/  
Papitese

**Favorite Activity:**

Beach walking and chasing the ball

**Favorite Food:**

Greenies

**Favorite Friends:**

One another and their human beach  
buddies

**How did your BFF get their name:**  
Rosie was named after a little girl in  
the neighborhood and we liked the  
name Lacy.

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@floridanewline.com to enter your pet.



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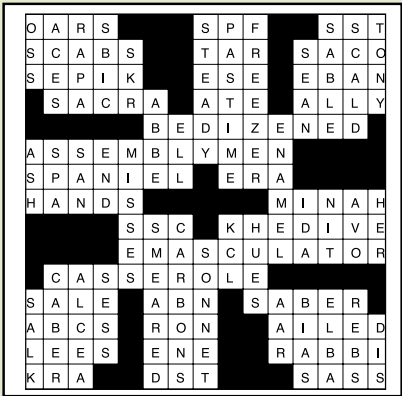
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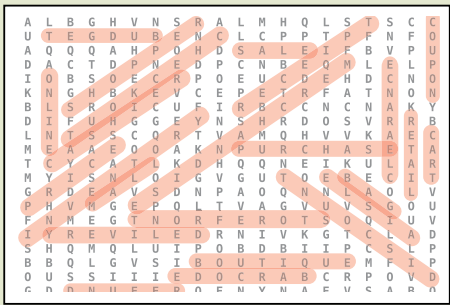
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# December

## Holiday & Community Events Calendar What's Happening in Ponte Vedra

To submit items for the Community Calendar, email [editor@floridanewsline.com](mailto:editor@floridanewsline.com).

**Nov. 15 - Jan. 11**

**St. Augustine Nights of Lights**

The 32nd annual Nights of Lights illuminates historic downtown St. Augustine with over 3 million tiny white lights nightly. Recognized by National Geographic as one of the "10 Best Holiday Light Displays in the World." Light-Up! Night is Saturday, Nov. 15, with entertainment at 4 p.m. and lighting ceremony at 6:30 p.m. Free Park & Ride shuttle available. Visit [www.floridashistoriccoast.com/nights-lights/](http://www.floridashistoriccoast.com/nights-lights/)

**Late Nov. - Dec. 2025**

**St. Johns Snow Globes**

Unique Christmas experience on weekends at Julington Creek Plantation. One-hour bookings include private holiday-themed geodesic dome, charcuterie boxes by LetsCheese Jax, s'mores, photo opportunities and classic holiday movie. Proceeds support Southside Saddle Club's equestrian programs. Visit [www.stjohnssnowglobes.com](http://www.stjohnssnowglobes.com)

**Dec. 1-13**

**Seymour's Holiday Book Sale & Bazaar**

Holiday and seasonal books for all ages, puzzles, games, audiobooks, CDs and DVDs at discounted prices. Features a Holiday Gift Table with new and gently used items. All proceeds benefit the Ponte Vedra Beach Library and community. December 1-13 at Seymour's Bookstore inside the Ponte Vedra Branch Library. Open during regular library hours: Monday-Wednesday 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday-Friday 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

**Dec. 2**

**"Holiday Carols"**

Join Denise from Discovery Commons for festive Christmas carols and a sing-along to kick off the holiday season. Tuesday, December 2 from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at COA's THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach.

**Dec. 2**

**Vicar's Landing Boutique Sale**

Shop jewelry (14K gold, sterling silver, costume and designer), knick-knacks with many \$1 items, framed art, and holiday items. The monthly Vicar's Cottage sale features antiques, household items, home furnishings and art. Proceeds benefit the Vicar's Employee Scholarship Fund. Tuesday, December 2 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Vicar's Landing-Sawgrass Community Building. Cash or checks only. Call Beverly Webb at 904-315-2610 or Janet Nicosia at 904-607-2078 for more information.

**Dec. 3**

**Coastal Friends Holiday Luncheon**

Enjoy entertainment by Jacksonville musician Gene Nordan at this special holiday luncheon on Wednesday, Dec. 3, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Parkway. Features a special holiday menu, trivia, Champagne toast, and prizes. Cost is \$25. Reservations required by Nov. 28 at [bartshar@comcast.net](mailto:bartshar@comcast.net). Open to members, guests and the community.

**Dec. 4**

**"Christmas Photos"**

Get a complimentary 4x6" holiday photo with our decorated Christmas tree. Photographer Scott Adkins available. Thursday, December 4 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at COA's THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach.

**Dec. 5**

**"Bus Trip - Jacksonville Symphony"**

Bus trip to the Jacksonville Symphony's "Holiday Pops" concert. Includes coffee and cookies at the concert hall before the hour-long performance. Friday, December 5 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fee \$40. Call COA's THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center at (904) 209-3659 for information.

**Dec. 6**

**Auditions for "Godspell"**

The Creative Academy at Christ Episcopal Church is holding auditions for their February production of Godspell. Saturday, December 6 at 9 a.m. at Christ Episcopal Church, 400 San Juan Drive in the music room of the Formation Arts building. Wear comfortable clothes. Email [Barbiekroberts@gmail.com](mailto:Barbiekroberts@gmail.com) for questions.

**Dec. 6**

**Paws for Claus Holiday Clean-Up**

Join Beaches Go Green for a beach clean-up. Dress in holiday spirit for prizes for people and pets. Enjoy a holiday bake sale and shop dune plants for sale. Saturday, December 6 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at 0 Atlantic Blvd., Neptune Beach, FL. All proceeds benefit Beaches Go Green and their environmental education efforts.

**Dec. 7 and 14**

**'Angels of Light'**

North Florida Women's Chorale presents a concert celebrating the season through beautiful choral music. Directed by Kerry Fradley. Two performances: Sunday, Dec. 7, at 4 p.m. at Community Presbyterian Church, 150 Sherry Drive, Atlantic Beach; and Sunday, Dec. 14, at 4 p.m. at Trinity Parish Church, 215 St. George St., St. Augustine. Free and open to the public. Visit [www.womenschorale.org](http://www.womenschorale.org).

**Dec. 9**

**"Holiday Traditions with Toastmasters"**

Share holiday memories and traditions with members of the Ponte Vedra Beach Toastmasters Club. Enjoy holiday cookies, hot chocolate and warm cider. Tuesday, December 9 from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at COA's THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach.

**Dec. 16**

**"A Christmas Story Reading"**

Our own George Richardson continues the holiday spirit with an excerpt from Charles Dickens famous holiday classic! Pianist Ivan Smith will also be here providing sounds of the season. Tuesday, December 16 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at COA's THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach.

**Dec. 17**

**St. Augustine Film Society: "Deaf Santa"**

Documentary following Charles Graves as he pursues his dream of becoming a professional Deaf Santa Claus. Doors open 6:30 p.m., film begins 7 p.m., Wednesday, December 17 at the Limelight Theatre, 11 Old Mission Ave, St. Augustine. Director Anthony Mowl will lead Q&A following the film.

**Dec. 19**

**Ponte Vedra Writers Open Mic**

Annual Open Mic gathering where writers share excerpts of present or past work. Saturday, December 19 at 11 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Contact Vic DiGenti at [vidig@mac.com](mailto:vidig@mac.com) if interested in participating.

**Dec. 19**

**St. Augustine Film Society: Holiday Party!**

St. Augustine Film Society Holiday Party! Friday December 19th at The Waterworks, 184 San Marco Ave, St. Augustine FL 32084. Doors Open at 6:30PM. Party Begins at 7:00PM. Holiday themed shorts from around the world plus games, gifts and prizes. Members Free, Guests \$20.00.

**Dec. 19-21**

**Apex Theatre Studio Presents: A Christmas Carol**

This charming adaptation of Dickens' classic tells the story of Scrooge's redemption through spirits and visions. Features six actors with a fiddler, traditional carols and English folk tunes. December 19 at 7 p.m., December 20 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., December 21 at 2 p.m. at Ponte Vedra Concert Hall. Tickets \$25-\$75. For tickets, call (904) 209-0399.

**Dec. 20**

**Nocatee Farmers Market: Winterfest**

Nocatee Farmers Market: Winterfest at Nocatee Station Field on Saturday, December 20th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Dec. 31**

**Noon Year's Eve**

Noon Year's Eve at Nocatee Station Field on Wednesday, December 31st from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

**Holiday Shoppes at First Coast Cultural Center**

Shop local, national and international holiday items from local and handmade vendors. Featuring wood carvings, jewelry, accessories, clothing, shoes, glasswork and more. Private Preview Night Friday 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. (\$35 Members/\$45 Future-members) includes complimentary Bundt cakes, champagne and live music. For dates and hours, visit [firstcoastculturalcenter.org](http://firstcoastculturalcenter.org) or call (904) 280-0614.

**Ongoing Activities**

**Council on Aging programs**

Council on Aging offers interest groups at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach, and the COA Center at UF Health Nocatee. Programs include lunch programs, duplicate bridge, tap dance, painting classes, chair exercise, tai chi, canasta, bingo and board games. Most activities are weekly beginning Dec. 2. THE PLAYERS Center is closed Dec. 24-26. Call (904) 209-3659 or visit [www.coasjc.org/ponte-vedra-center](http://www.coasjc.org/ponte-vedra-center). For Nocatee programs, email [pbrunell@Stjohnscoa.com](mailto:pbrunell@Stjohnscoa.com) or call (904) 814-9407.

**Palm Valley Market**

Palm Valley Market will be held at Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Blvd., every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The market offers organic produce, pasture-raised meats, local honey, baked goods and local crafts. Email [info@PalmValleyMarket.com](mailto:info@PalmValleyMarket.com).

**Ponte Vedra Beach Ruck Club**

Free beach ruck every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. Meet on the top floor of the parking garage at Christ Episcopal Church, 400 San Juan Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach. Rucking is carrying weight in a backpack while walking. The rucks are 3-3.5 miles. All fitness levels welcome.

**Ponte Vedra Friday Farmers Market**

Ponte Vedra Friday Farmers Market is held every Friday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Peace of Heart Community Farm. The market features organic produce, grass-fed beef, local honey, breads and local crafts.





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

**Q: What are the primary academic achievements and recognitions in St. Johns County schools this semester?**

A: The school year is off to a successful start across the district. A major highlight is the district's continued commitment to the Character Counts! program since 1998, which has earned the exemplary district distinction. In October, several area middle school students were recognized, including Leon Folladori, Shalev Azulay and Leila Agee from Valley Ridge Academy; Connor Broome, Christian Kelly and Keiran Logan from Palm Valley Academy; Georgia Ronay, Camryn Dove and Elizabeth Teplova from Pine Island Academy; and Clarie Bingham, Avery Rose and Jack McLeod from Alice B. Landrum Middle School.

Additionally, several students qualified as National Merit semifinalists, placing in the top 1 percent nationwide on the PSAT. Honorees from Allen D. Nease High School include Paxton Beidle, Manogna Chandra, Nigel Kondabrolu, Logan Kupka, Alecia Lu, Jackson Pentz, Nathan Shah, Chinmay Shandilya, Maggie Yan and Alvin Yuan. The students recognized from Ponte Vedra High School were Star Binyamin, John Chung, Anya Dorairaj, Zoe Epstein, Samuel Evans, Hadley Frey, Matthew Jones, Zane Swierz and Evan Weinroth.

**Q: How are St. Johns County schools ensuring positive culture and supporting military families?**

A: Schools are focused on creating a positive environment through two key initiatives.

First, military family support is a priority through the Purple Star School program, which includes military liaisons and specialized services to ease transitions. This year, Landrum Middle School earned the Purple



Kelly Barrera

Star designation.

Second, the district promotes positive behavior through the PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) program. Valley Ridge Academy and Palm Valley Academy were honored with the Bronze Star award for successfully implementing the initial tier of the PBIS framework schoolwide.

**Q: What community-focused events and communications have taken place recently?**

A: Throughout November, schools celebrated veterans with various activities, including musical concerts, veterans breakfasts and flag ceremonies. Additionally, schools organized Thanksgiving food drives to support students and families in the community.

For community members looking for school highlights, both Ocean Palms Elementary and Alice B. Landrum Middle School were featured on the video series "All Access with Dr. Asplen." These 2-minute videos are available on the school district website.

**Q: What is the status of the new schools opening in the Nocatee and Silverleaf communities?**

A: New principals have been appointed for the upcoming schools in the Nocatee and Silverleaf communities. These principals are now starting the process of proposing school names, mascots and establishing the foundational school culture. The public is encouraged to regularly check the district's website, Parent Square and social media for updates.

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

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

Mark your calendar: Key 2026 dates for property owners

By Eddie Creamer, St. Johns County Property Appraiser

As we say goodbye to 2025 and welcome 2026, I'd like to share key dates for the upcoming year that are important for St. Johns County property owners to know and add to their calendars.



Eddie Creamer

or other income-producing venture, such as machinery, furniture and computers. This return needs to be filed yearly unless a TPP exemption has been approved and the TPP value is less than \$25,000. Visit [www.sjcpa.gov/tangible-personal-property](http://www.sjcpa.gov/tangible-personal-property) for additional information.

**January 1**

All properties are appraised each year as of January 1. The status and condition of a property on this date determines the property's value for the upcoming assessment year.

**March 2**

For 2026, the deadline to file personal exemptions, including homestead exemption, is March 2. This deadline is always March 1 unless it falls on a weekend, which happens in 2026. Property owners are eligible to file for personal exemptions for the current tax year if they owned the property as of January 1 of that year. Once a homeowner has applied for homestead exemption, then they do not need to reapply unless there has been a change in marital status, property ownership or title. Visit [www.sjcpa.gov/exemptions](http://www.sjcpa.gov/exemptions) to file for exemptions.

**April 1**

For businesses, the deadline to file a Tangible Personal Property (TPP) return is April 1. TPP is property used in the operation of a business

**August 11**

The 2026 Truth in Millage (TRIM) notice will be mailed on August 11. This exact date changes each year but always occurs during mid-August. The TRIM notice provides property owners with their proposed property taxes for the upcoming tax year before the tax bill is mailed. Property owners have 25 days from the date of the TRIM mailing to request changes to their property value and to also file a petition with the Value Adjustment Board. Visit [www.sjcpa.gov/TRIM](http://www.sjcpa.gov/TRIM) for additional information.

**November 1**

Tax bills are mailed to property owners by November 1 by the St. Johns County Tax Collector's Office. Also on this date, tax bills are available to view at [www.sjcpa.gov](http://www.sjcpa.gov).

I'm available to answer questions or provide additional information at [Eddie@sjcpa.gov](mailto:Eddie@sjcpa.gov) or 904-827-5500.

Visit us online!  
[www.floridanewsline.com](http://www.floridanewsline.com)



Q&A with St. Johns County Commissioner Krista Joseph District 4

St. Johns County Commissioner Krista Joseph (District 4) is encouraging constituents to stay current on local government activities and understand its procedures.

**Q: Can you share a few recent matters the County Commission has addressed?**

A: The commission has addressed several timely matters recently. Most importantly, the conservation impact fee received a 5-0 vote to move forward with plans to increase it up to 100% over four years. This is significant because it will allow the county to save more trees and walking areas as new homes are built. We also hosted a meeting with Congressman Randy Fine



Krista Joseph

and promoted a proclamation aimed at preventing harassment within the community. Additionally, the board recently addressed a measure supporting local veterans.

**Q: Could you detail the procedure regarding the County Commission Chair position, and what happened at the last meeting?**

A: The role of the Chair of the County Commission rotates annually among the commissioners, following a defined procedure. The last meeting was my final session as the acting chair. The transition involved a vote by the commission members to select the next chair, ensuring a consistent change in leadership each year.

**Q: What is the most effective way for**

**St. Johns County residents to stay informed about local government activities?**

A: Commissioner Joseph encourages constituents to utilize the county's online resources, specifically the official St. Johns County website. She noted this platform serves as the most com-

plete source for tracking legislation, meeting minutes, and the specific initiatives coming before her office.

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

A: Readers can email me at [bcc4kjo-seph@sjcfl.us](mailto:bcc4kjo-seph@sjcfl.us) or call me at (904) 679-2620.

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Travel

John Brown: Harpers Ferry and the spark toward war

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Few places in America weave so many layers of history into such a small area as Fredericksburg, Virginia. Nestled along the Rappahannock River between Washington, D.C., and Richmond, the town feels like a living timeline—one where the colonial era, Revolutionary War, Civil War and Civil Rights movement all left lasting marks. Walking its brick streets, visitors sense the weight of the nation’s past amid a lively mix of shops, galleries and cafes.

The Washington family legacy: Fredericksburg proudly calls itself the boyhood home of George Washington. The story begins at Ferry Farm , where George lived from ages 6 to 16. After his father Augustine’s death, his mother, Mary Ball Washington, guided the family through lean years, shaping her son’s resilience and sense of duty. The reconstructed farmhouse and museum displays reveal what daily colonial life looked like for the future president.

Downtown, the Mary Washington House preserves the home George bought for his mother in 1772. She lived there for the rest of her life, tending her gardens and welcoming visitors, including her famous son. Nearby stands the Rising Sun Tavern, built in 1760 by George’s younger brother Charles. Costumed interpreters recreate the atmo-



Debi Lander

sphere of an 18th-century tavern, where politics and gossip mingled over tankards of ale.

The family story continues at Kenmore, the Georgian mansion of George’s sister Betty Washington Lewis and her husband Fielding Lewis. Fielding sacrificed his fortune to fund supplies for the Revolutionary army,

a powerful reminder of the personal cost of independence. The home dazzles with ornate plaster ceilings and exhibits honoring the enslaved community who maintained it.

Don’t miss the Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop , owned by Washington’s friend and fellow patriot Dr. Mercer. The 18th-century pharmacy displays the remedies of its day including herbs, tinctures and even leeches. The guides offer a fascinating glimpse into colonial medicine.

The Civil War crossroads: If Washington’s Fredericksburg represents America’s beginning, its battlefields capture the nation’s near collapse. the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park encompasses four major battlefields— Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House— forming one of the country’s most extensive Civil War landscapes.

At Marye’s Heights, visitors walk the ground where Union troops suffered



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
The Confluence and Gap at Harper’s Ferry.

staggering losses in December 1862. Chancellorsville, just west of town, saw Gen. Robert E. Lee’s audacious victory but also the death of his trusted lieutenant, “Stonewall” Jackson. The 1864 battles of Wilderness and Spotsylvania marked the relentless Union drive toward Richmond under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Trails, exhibits and ranger programs bring these harrowing moments to life.

The Civil Rights trail: Fredericksburg’s story doesn’t end with muskets and monuments. the city also plays a key role on Virginia’s U.S. Civil Rights Trail. the Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) served as a center of faith and activism for African Americans from the Civil War era through the modern Civil Rights movement.

Modern Fredericksburg: Though steeped in history, Fredericksburg thrives as a vibrant modern community. Its downtown brims with galleries, boutiques and eateries, while farmers’ markets, carriage rides and festivals enliven the streets.

A place that holds it all: Fredericksburg is where the American story converges—

where a young George Washington grew under his mother’s watchful eye, where patriots risked everything for independence, where a divided nation fought for survival and where freedom continued to advance.

For travelers, it’s a chance to stand where so many chapters of the American experience overlap.

If you go: Fredericksburg lies about an hour south of Washington, D.C., via I-95 or Amtrak. Allow at least two days to explore the Washington family homes, nearby battlefields and Civil Rights landmarks.

*Debi Lander is an award-winning travel writer and photographer who blends her passion for history, culture, food, and personal discovery into captivating stories. Through her website Bylandersea.com and her long-running travel column for Florida Newslines, she explores destinations from small U.S. towns to iconic global landmarks. She hopes her storytelling and practical insights inspire readers to experience the world with curiosity, appreciation, and a sense of adventure. Debi can be reached by email to mail@floridanewslines.com.*



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# Get to Know . . . Cindey Nordman

By Kate Kimmel  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Spend even a few minutes with Cindey Nordman, and her energy fills the room—stylish, lively, confident, and genuinely excited to learn about the people around her. Cindey is a real estate professional, an Army veteran, an artist at heart, and the projects manager for the Ponte Vedra Woman’s Club. But ask her what drives her, and she’ll tell you plainly: “We were put on this world to meet and love each other.”

Cindey has lived in many places—Germany, Iowa, and now Ponte Vedra among them. Her years in the U.S. Army stationed in Germany set the foundation for her love of culture and travel. She attended the Defense Information School for Journalism, Photojournalism, and Public Affairs, covering events both overseas and throughout the United States. After her military service, she studied English Literature at Fontbonne University in St. Louis, later contributing to a book about veterans and writing a book on U.S. Army history.

Travel remains one of her great passions. When she visits a country, she often flies in and then chooses to drive or take a train until she finds



an interesting town. She’ll stay for several days, immersing herself in local life—meeting people, exploring small businesses and restaurants, and discovering community spaces that don’t appear in guidebooks.

And yet, despite her love of seeing the world, Cindey says Ponte Vedra is one of the few places that tempers

her impulse to leave. “It attracts visitors from all over the world,” she says, which makes staying put feel just as enriching as exploring.

Cindey’s creative spirit shows up in more than just her photography and writing. Over the years, she has restored between 25 and 30 Victorian homes. She takes care to preserve each home’s original character, focusing on “polishing what’s already there” rather than replacing it. She also loves wandering through art museums—another way she feeds her artistic side.

As a real estate professional, Cindey approaches her work with the same relationship-centered philosophy that guides her travels. She says she sees her clients more as family than as customers. She shared one example of a young woman who was considering renting in downtown Jacksonville Beach. Cindey encouraged her to purchase a home in Ponte Vedra instead. That move led the woman to meet the young man who lived next door—and eventually, the two married and had two children. Stories like that reaffirm for Cindey that real estate can have lasting, life-shaping impact.

Cindey serves as project manager for the Ponte Vedra Woman’s Club (PVWC), a 501(c)(3) organization run entirely by volunteers. The club raises funds throughout its yearly cycle, distributing scholarships and donations to selected charities each spring. Members also donate needed items throughout the year—everything from holiday gifts for children to school supplies and clothing.

For the June 2024–May 2026 cycle, the club is supporting five local charities:

Cindey says the most impactful work she’s done through the club has involved at-risk youth aging out of the foster care system, as well as students at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind. Being part of the PVWC, she says, allows her to make a tangible difference right in her own community.

Cindey enjoys writing and plans to work on a book centered around a child affected by trauma—another project that blends her creativity with her desire to understand and uplift others.

Ponte Vedra may be just one stop in Cindey Nordman’s global journey, but it’s a place where all of her paths—military service, art, travel, restoration, and community work—come together. And for the community members who meet her, it’s clear she brings a world of experience and a heart for connection to everything she does.

## Get to Know . . .

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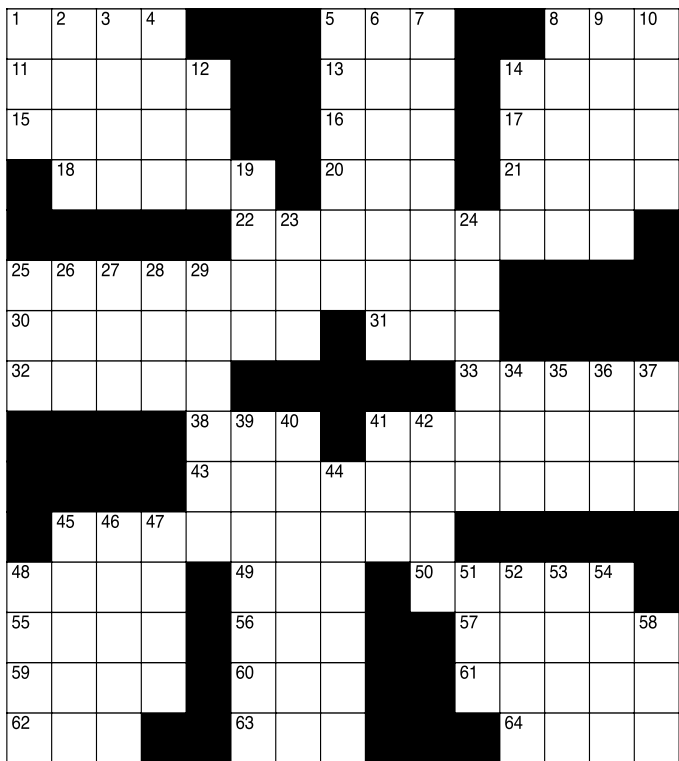
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# Puzzles

Answers on page 3  
Provided by MetroCreative



## CLUES ACROSS

1. Paddles
5. Sunscreen rating
8. Very fast airplane
11. Immune responses
13. "Partner" to feather
14. New England river
15. Longest river in New Guinea
16. Midway between east and southeast
17. Israeli politician
18. Back bones
20. Consumed
21. One you can rely on
22. Dressed up gaudily
25. Representatives
30. Dog breed
31. Pitching statistic
32. Manpower
33. S. Korean entertainer
38. Outsourcing firm
41. Viceroy of Egypt under Turkish rule
43. One who removes antlers from a flower
45. Potluck dish
48. Discount
49. Airborne (abbr.)
50. Cavalry sword
55. Basics
56. Hollywood director Howard
57. Afflicted in mind or body
59. Horsley and Majors are two
60. Midway between northeast and east
61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
62. Malaysian isthmus
63. Fall back
64. Cheek

## CLUES DOWN

1. Former CIA
2. Baseball's best pitchers
3. \_\_ Nui, Easter Island
4. Invests in little enterprises
5. Constant
6. Hobby
7. A place to store food
8. Short-tail marten
9. Burn with a hot liquid
10. Left his heart in San Francisco
12. Swedish krona
14. Legendary actor Connery
19. French cleric
23. Former measure of length for  
textiles
24. Opaque glassy substance
25. Residue of burned item
26. A place to unwind
27. Japanese honorific
28. Terminus
29. Fails to make a shot
34. Journalist Tarbell
35. College hoops tournament
36. Monetary unit of Macao
37. Of she
39. Spoke ill of
40. Elements
41. Kilo-calorie (abbr.)
42. Shades
44. Poem of fourteen lines
45. Pole used in Scottish sport
46. Hollyhocks genus
47. Street name for marijuana
48. Polio vaccine developer
51. Swiss river
52. Prejudice
53. Actor Idris
54. Confederate soldiers
58. Criticize

# SHOPPING WORD SEARCH



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

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

## WORDS

- AISLE  
 BAG  
 BARCODE  
 BOUTIQUE  
 BUDGET  
 CART  
 CASHIER  
 CHECKOUT  
 CLEARANCE  
 COUPON  
 DELIVERY  
 DISCOUNT  
 INVENTORY  
 MALL  
 MERCHANDISE  
 ONLINE  
 PRICE  
 PURCHASE  
 RECEIPT  
 REFUND  
 RETAIL  
 SALE  
 SHOPPER  
 STOREFRONT



Solve the code to discover words related to food service.  
Each number corresponds to a letter.  
(Hint: 26 = E)

- A.**     **22   26   17   4   26   17**  
*Clue: Waiter/waitress*
- B.**     **24   23   13   19   25   26   11**  
*Clue: Cooking room*
- C.**     **17   26   22   13   9   12   17   9   11   13**  
*Clue: Place to dine*
- D.**     **19   25   26   19   24**  
*Clue: Restaurant bill*



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# Sing-alongs and celebration at Newcomers holiday luncheon

By Michele Oliver

Newcomers of North Saint Johns (NNSJ) invites members and their guests to its December luncheon on Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 11 a.m. at Club Continental, 2143 Astor St., Orange Park.

The event features lunch and entertainment by Roger Dodd, who will be singing traditional holiday favorites.

"The very talented Roger Dodd does not disappoint! We're looking forward to celebrating the holiday season with our members and lots of fun sing-alongs," said Michele Oliver, co-president of NNSJ. "The cost of the event is partially subsidized for our members by the club."

Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. Cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests and non-members. All reservations must be received by Dec. 8. For further information about the luncheon and membership, visit [newcomersofnorthstjohns.org](http://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org). Raffles for gift baskets and a 50/50

drawing will also be held. Entree choices include Tuscan chicken served with a squash medley and roasted potatoes; pan-seared mahi accompanied by a squash medley and roasted potatoes; or pasta primavera. Beverages include coffee and tea. Dessert is chef's choice and all entrees come with a mixed tossed salad and rolls and butter. A cash bar is also available.

Dodd was an Air Force pilot for 22 years and Northwest Airlines pilot for 18 more. He won the Air Force talent contest in 1978 and entertained on layovers in Paris, Rome, London and Frankfurt. He currently performs in the band Shades of Gray as keyboardist and vocalist.

NNSJ offers a variety of activities for St. Johns County and surrounding area residents including wine socials, golf, book club, walking group, Mah Jongg, card groups, bunco and a weekly golf outing.

"We also have December trips to the



Newcomers of North Saint Johns members dressed in Western attire and pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month at a past luncheon featuring line dancing at Club Continental.

Jacksonville Symphony to enjoy a holiday pops concert and annual Red Train ride around St. Augustine to celebrate the holidays and enjoy the fabulous Night of Lights event," said co-president

Charlene Lim, adding NNSJ members are also headed to The Alhambra Theatre in January to see "Menopause the Musical."

# Landrum Lions hit the lanes

By Lisa Farese

The Landrum Middle School PTO hosted its students for two nights of

camaraderie and fun at Beach Bowl this fall. In an effort to build its "lion community," the PTO organized inaugural bowling nights for both sixth

and seventh graders to bring students together outside of school. About 60 students attended each of the separate grade-level nights, where they enjoyed

rolling for strikes, sharing pizza, and visiting with friends. The event was a success and is expected to become an annual tradition for the school.

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Students from Landrum Middle School gather on the lanes at Beach Bowl during the school's inaugural bowling night this fall, an event organized by the PTO.



A sixth-grade student prepares to roll a ball down the lane during Landrum Middle School's first-ever bowling night hosted by the PTO.



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# Local firm wins client award

Newsline staff

Upper Deck Wealth Management, LLC, a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial, Inc. in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, has earned the Ameriprise Client Experience Award for 2024.

The firm was honored because of the ability of Chris Thompson, Todd Perkins and Sarah Blackley to consistently deliver personalized, goal-based advice and exceptional client service. This marks the fourth consecutive year Chris Thompson, CFP®, CRPC®, CMFA®, has received the award and the second year for Todd Perkins.

The award is reserved for an elite group of Ameriprise advisors and is based on a practice's overall performance in client service. Recipients earned an overall client satisfaction rating equal to or greater than 4.9 out of 5.0 and maintained stellar business results.

The award is earned by a practice based on four measurable statistics reflecting the value of goal-based advice: Client Experience Rating; percentage of clients over a certain asset level in Advice Relationships; percentage of clients over a certain asset level with regular contact; and, once the practice has exceeded a minimum amount of Net Flows, the percentage of Net Flows derived from Assets Under Management.

As a private wealth advisory practice, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Perkins and Ms. Blackley provide financial advice anchored in a solid understanding of client needs and expectations and delivered in one-on-one relationships with their clients.

Ameriprise Financial has been helping people feel confident about their financial future for more than 130 years, tracing its founding back to June 29, 1894. The company has a nationwide network of approximately 10,000 financial advisors, offering extensive investment



Photo courtesy Upper Deck Wealth Management, LLC  
From left, Todd Perkins, Sarah Blackley and Chris Thompson of Upper Deck Wealth Management, LLC. The private wealth advisory practice earned the 2024 Ameriprise Client Experience Award.

advice, asset management and insurance capabilities.

For more information, the Ameriprise office is located at 818 A1A N Suite 301, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082. Chris Thompson can be reached at 904-380-2290, Todd Perkins at 904-380-2322, and Sarah Blackley at 904-380-2302.



# Fishing

## Creek fishing offers winter refuge, scenic beauty

Jimmy Tomazinis  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Hello again and happy holidays. I hope we all have plenty of time to get out to enjoy the water in between the hustle and bustle of the season. It is a beautiful time to be outside.

Lots of the deciduous trees along the creeks are dropping their leaves, allowing us to look far back into the flood plains where deer and turkeys still have some refuge. Birds abound, and the sound of wood ducks fill the air as they spook out of isolated holes and creek bends. This is still a fishing column, but for so many of us, the fish is just what gets us out there to enjoy the natural world, and that's a special thing.

This time of year, there are fewer and fewer reasons to venture out in the main river. Quite frankly, there are a lot fewer fish out there right now. So where do we go then? We go to the creeks — the tributaries of the river where the freshwater fish are in higher concentrations than the main river. They don't mind the cold, and they are beautiful: specks, bluegill, warmouth, bass, pickerel, bowfins, etc. Creek fish are prettier than river fish — that's all I'm going to say.

The two most popular freshwater fish we have are bass and specks. Specks are also called speckled perch or crappie. If you see a boat fishing this time of year, it's

for one or the other most likely.

My bass fishing is far simpler than a lot of folks make it. If I can catch shrimp, I'll take them to creek mouths or sheltered coves in the river where you'd think the bass might stage for spawning in a month or two. If I can't get shrimp, shiners work too. Fish them under floats near lily pads or some other cover. Don't feel that you have to anchor and stay in one spot. If you have a trolling motor, you can slowly troll the baits on the edges to find fish.

Specks can be in various places, from docks in the main river to submerged lay-downs far up the creeks. Minnows on slip floats and jigs are the two main methods



Jimmy Tomazinis

for them, which I'll discuss in more detail next month. Until then, get out there and enjoy the scenery and catch a few fish while you're at it. Tight lines.

*Jimmy Tomazinis is a Jacksonville area native who has fished the St. Johns River his entire life. His passion for fish led him to study coastal biology at the University of North Florida. He has since participated in multiple fishery studies in Northeast Florida, continues to implement fish habitat and water quality improvement projects, fishes as much as he can, and has a monthly podcast called North Florida Fishing and Outdoors where the fishing conversation continues. Jimmy can be reached by email to mail@floridanewslines.com.*

# Gardening

## The Good Earth: Poinsettias are the holiday star of the season

By Connie Doyle, Master Gardener UF/IFAS

No plant says "holidays" quite like the poinsettia. With its bright, cheerful colors and festive flair, it's no wonder this beautiful plant has become a seasonal favorite in homes, churches and offices alike. But behind its brilliant bracts lies a fascinating story - and a few helpful care tips to keep yours glowing all season long.

The poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) has deep roots in Mexican tradition, where it was cherished for centuries before making its way to the United States in 1828. We have Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, to thank for introducing this iconic plant to American holiday decor.

Think those vibrant red "petals" are flowers? Not quite! The colorful part of the poinsettia is actually its bracts - modified leaves designed by nature to attract pollinators to the plant's tiny yellow flowers nestled at the center. These bracts are what give poinsettias



Connie Doyle, Master Gardener UF/IFAS

their signature look, from classic crimson to creamy white and even soft pink or bold purple hues.

To help your poinsettia thrive, place it in bright, indirect light and keep it comfortably warm - ideally between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Water only when the top inch of soil feels dry, and be sure the pot drains well.

Whether you're decorating your mantel, gifting a plant to a friend, or simply bringing a bit of cheer indoors, the poinsettia continues to symbolize the warmth, hope, and beauty of the holiday season.

Happy holidays everyone! Thank you for allowing me to share my love of plants and nature with you every month. I look forward to our adventures next year.

*Connie Doyle writes The Good Earth, a gardening column inspired by a life-long passion for plants, nature, and the peaceful rhythm of the garden. With more time in retirement, she has been*



*inspired to take that passion to the next level — learning, growing, and sharing with others in our community by way of*

*earning her Master Gardener Certification. Connie can be reached by email to mail@floridanewslines.com.*

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