

**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE**

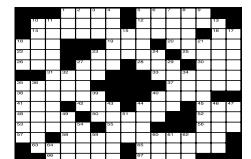
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Duval County class of 2025 hits historic high

NewsLine staff

The Class of 2025 has achieved a new, historically high graduation rate for Duval County Public Schools, according to a district release issued Jan. 13.

Among traditional high schools, the graduation rate rose to 97.6%, an increase of more than 2 percentage points from the previous year, the release stated. The district's comprehensive graduation rate, which includes charter schools, also saw significant gains, rising from 90.9% in 2024 to 94.3% in 2025, according to the release.

These gains outpace the state's growth, which has increased by 11.5 percentage points over the last 10 years, the release noted.

"Consistent, steady growth doesn't happen by accident," Superintendent Christopher Bernier said in the release. "These results reflect intentional, dedicated work from all of Team Duval—from our pre-kindergarten teachers to our high school counselors. It's the daily, patient, behind-the-scenes efforts of our teachers, counselors, administrators, students, and families that lead to big results."

For the first time in district history, students from every subgroup across all Duval high schools surpassed a 90% graduation rate,

Class of 2025 hits historic high cont. on pg. 2



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Old Glory Retires



Members of the Sons of the American Revolution Jacksonville chapter dress in period costumes for a historical commemoration event. The chapter hosts several events throughout the year to promote patriotism and preserve American history.

Jacksonville chapter of Sons of the American Revolution plans flag retirement ceremony

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewsline.com

The Jacksonville chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution will host a flag retirement ceremony Feb. 15 at 3 p.m. at the Mandarin Community Club, 12447 Mandarin Road in Jacksonville.

The ceremony will be conducted in conjunction with a local Scout troop to properly retire worn or tattered American flags.

"Flags that are tattered and worn or just time to retire them are gathered," said Chuck Salestrom, public information officer for the Jacksonville chapter. "The ceremony will talk about the history of the U.S. flag. We'll present the number of flags and then retire them."

The U.S. flag's design was established July 14, 1777, when Congress resolved to have 13 stripes, alternating red and white, with the union featuring 13 stars in a blue background. As new states were added, a new star was added to the flag. Florida was the 14th state added to the union on March 3, 1845.

On April 4, 1818, Congress enacted that the flag would display stars representing all states but maintain only 13 stripes. Today's flag has 50 stars and 13 stripes.



Boy Scouts participate in a flag retirement ceremony with the Jacksonville chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. The chapter will host a flag retirement ceremony Feb. 15 at 3 p.m. at the Mandarin Community Club.

Salestrom is new to the organization himself, having been inducted just a few months ago. His connection to the American Revolution came through extensive genealogical research that traced his lineage back seven generations to Elijah Harlow, who served in the Continental Army from 1775 until his death in 1777.

"Elijah came into the Revolutionary War in 1775 and became a member of a number of different groups," Salestrom said. "By this point, the organizations

were real fluid, and so he served under two or three different colonels, ultimately ending up in the Continental Army."

The search for revolutionary ancestors often proves challenging, according to Salestrom. Records before 1850 become increasingly difficult to verify.

"Getting that verifiable proof is kind of tricky actually," Salestrom said. "Anything below 1850, it gets a lot more

Old Glory Retires cont. on pg. 2

Class of 2025 hits historic high cont. from pg.1

the release said. The district reported that Asian students led with 98.2%, followed by White students at 94.7%, Hispanic students at 94.1% and African American students at 93.6%, according to the release. English Language Learners achieved a 93.2% rate, while students with disabilities and those receiving free and reduced lunch graduated at rates of 91.7% and 91.5%, respectively, the release stated.

Districtwide success was reflected at the school level, with all 21 traditional high schools earning a graduation rate of 90% or higher, according to the release.

Baldwin Middle-Senior High School, Paxon School for Advanced Studies, Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, Darnell-Cookman School of the Medical Arts, Stanton College Preparatory School and Samuel W. Wolfson

High School each achieved 100% graduation rates, the release noted.

Westside High School and Englewood High School recorded the largest year-over-year increases, rising by 6.35 and 5.59 percentage points, respectively, according to the release.

To earn a standard high school diploma, the state of Florida requires students to meet assessment requirements by passing the Grade 10 ELA FAST assessment and the Algebra 1 end-of-course exam, or by earning approved comparative scores, the release stated.

Students must also earn a minimum 2.0 GPA and complete 24 credits, including four in English/language arts, four in mathematics, three in science, three in social studies and one in fine arts, according to the release.

For more information about graduation rates for Duval County Public



Photo courtesy Duval County Public Schools

For the first time in district history, students from every subgroup across all Duval high schools surpassed a 90% graduation rate.

Schools, the release noted that residents can visit the Florida Depart-

ment of Education's graduation data webpage.

Old Glory Retires cont. from pg.1

murky in terms of being able to verify the generational changes back and forth because the records were not kept that well."

Salestrom's research was aided by Daughters of the American Revolution, DAR, records. His wife, Christie, had already traced her family's connection to the American Revolution and became a DAR member.

"We had traveled back to Geneseo, Illinois, where her family founded that town," Salestrom said. "We were able to connect with a very distant relative who took us out to a cemetery in the town and we found headstones of Christie's ancestors and within that there was a DAR plaque on one of the headstones."

The Sons of the American Revolution was founded in 1889 and is headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky. The



Photos courtesy Anwita Iyengar
Members of the Sons of the American Revolution Jacksonville chapter dress in period costumes for a historical commemoration event.

nonprofit, nonpartisan organization is dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American history and promoting education to future generations, according to Salestrom.

"It is completely volunteer," Salestrom said. "It's not like anything I've ever belonged to as far as a group. They're real

passionate about preserving that history and telling the stories, especially to the next generation."

The Jacksonville chapter was started in 1926 and chartered by the Society in 1932, making it the third oldest chapter in Florida and the longest continuously operating chapter in the state.

Membership is open to males 18 years old and older who have verifiable proof that they had a patriot who served in the American Revolution.

The chapter has several additional events planned for spring and summer, including a Thomas Creek battle commemoration March 28, an Alligator Bridge commemoration at the Callahan Fairgrounds and a Liberty Tree dedication April 4 at Jesse Ball DuPont Park in downtown Jacksonville. The Liberty Tree dedication, conducted jointly with the Jacksonville chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, will honor the Treaty Oak, estimated to be 250 to 400 years old.

For information about the Sons of the American Revolution Jacksonville chapter, contact Chuck Salestrom at chuck-salestrom02@gmail.com.

Mandarin American Legion Post 372 seeks support for permanent home

By Mark Shelton

After nearly two years of working through zoning, navigating permits and regulatory requirements, Mandarin American Legion Post 372 is finally nearing a long-awaited milestone: the groundbreaking of its permanent post home.

As the project approaches the construction phase, members are turning to the community for help to make that vision a reality.

The American Legion, founded in 1919, is one of the largest and most influential veterans' organizations in the United States. For years, Post 372 has served local veterans and their families with-

out a permanent facility to call its own. Despite that challenge, the post has remained active in the Mandarin community, supporting veterans' programs, youth initiatives, patriotic events and charitable causes.

A permanent home would allow the post to expand those efforts.

"This building represents more than bricks and mortar," a post representative said. "It will be a gathering place for veterans, a resource for families and a space where the community can come together."

Old Glory Retires cont. on pg. 9



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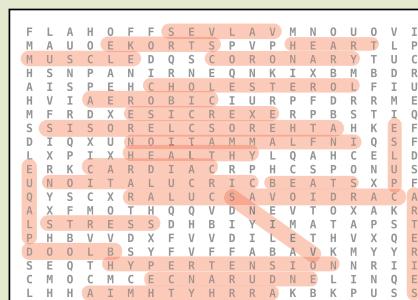
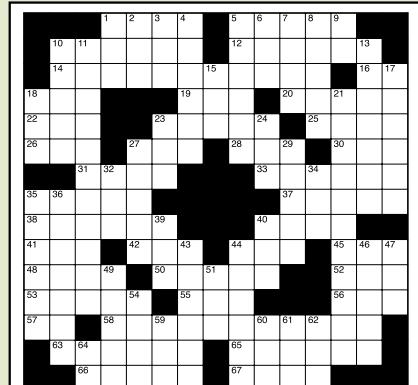
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Answers to our Puzzles PG 9



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February

Community Calendar What's Happening in Mandarin

To submit items for the Community Calendar, email editor@floridanewslines.com.

Feb. 1

Music Under the Oaks

Music Under the Oaks presented by Mandarin Museum and North Florida Folk Network will be held Sunday, Feb. 1, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on the Mandarin Museum's front lawn. Bring a chair or blanket for this community jam session. Mandarin Museum and the 1898 Schoolhouse will be open. This is a free event; donations support the museum. For information, call 904-268-0784 or visit www.mandarinmuseum.org.

Feb. 3

Honeybee Quilters Guild

Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet Tuesday, Feb. 3, at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Church of Christ, 12791 Old St. Augustine Rd. (entrance to the right of the playground in the back). Doors open at 6 p.m. The program is TBA; members should bring their "Sew and Tell." New members and guests are welcome. Visit honeybee-quilters.org for more information.

Feb. 7

Historic Buildings Open

All historic buildings in Walter Jones Historical Park will be open Saturday, Feb. 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Stroll through the park and step inside the 1898 St. Joseph's Mission Schoolhouse, the 1875 Webb Jones Farmhouse, the 1876 Barn and the Losco Winery. The Historic Mandarin Store & Post Office at 12471 Mandarin Road will also be open. Museum volunteers will provide guided tours. Admission is free. For information, call 904-268-0784 or visit www.mandarinmuseum.org.

Feb. 7

Mandarin Frog Painting

Purchase, paint and take home your very own Mandarin Frog (or sea turtle) at Mandarin Museum on Saturday, Feb. 7, at 10 a.m. The cost is \$22 plus tax per person and advanced registration is required. To register, email info@mandarinmuseum.org.

Feb. 7

Meet the Maple Leaf Divers

Meet the men who dove the Maple Leaf Shipwreck at Mandarin Museum's brand-new Maple Leaf Gallery on Saturday, Feb. 7, from 10 a.m. to noon. This is an informal, conversational-style event. Drop in to chat with Dr. Keith

Holland and his team and view the expanded exhibit. Admission is free. For information, call 904-268-0784 or visit www.mandarinmuseum.org.

Feb. 12

Fresh Flower Arrangements

Mandarin Garden Club will have a presentation on how to arrange fresh flowers given by Susan Doane during the Magnolia circle meeting on Feb. 12 at 10 a.m. The public is invited to this free event. Visit www.mandaringardenclub.org for more information.

Feb. 12

American Legion Post 372 Mandarin "Fallen Heroes" Meeting

The February meeting of the American Legion Post 372 Mandarin "Fallen Heroes" will be held Thursday, Feb. 12, at 7 p.m. at Williams YMCA, 2nd floor, 10415 San Jose Blvd. For more information, visit www.alpost372fl.org.

Feb. 15

Flag Retirement Ceremony

A Flag Retirement Ceremony will be held Sunday, Feb. 15, at 3 p.m. at the Mandarin Community Center. This ceremony is conducted to provide a dignified procedure for the disposal of U.S. flags that have been soiled, faded, tattered or torn and are no longer serviceable for further display or use.

Feb. 17

Flowers: The Language of Love

Mandarin Garden Club Dogwood circle will have a presentation on how you can "say it with flowers." The speaker will be Sandra Varner, 1st vice president of the club, on Feb. 17 at 10 a.m. as part of the Dogwood circle monthly meeting. This is a free event and the public is invited. Visit www.mandaringardenclub.org.

Feb. 19

Camellias: Bells of the South

On Feb. 19 at 10 a.m., Mandarin Garden Club will have Master Gardener Walter Bryant as guest speaker about camellias during the Cherokee Rose monthly meeting. The public is invited to this event. Visit www.mandaringardenclub.org.

Feb. 26

Mandarin Women's Club Celebrates Women's Heart Month

Mandarin Women's Club will celebrate Women's Heart Month on Thursday, Feb. 26. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. at Ramada Inn Mandarin,

3130 Hartley Road. Reservations are required by Feb. 16. Contact barbara.metallo@outlook.com or call 904-612-6494.

Feb. 26

Mandarin Republican Club

The Mandarin Republican Club will meet Thursday, Feb. 26, at St. Mary's Seafood, 11290 Old St. Augustine Rd. Social time begins at 6 p.m., and the meeting with a speaker starts at 6:30 p.m.

Feb. 26

Medicinal Plants in Your Garden

On Feb. 26 at 7 p.m., the Mandarin Garden Club Live Oak Circle meeting will host a learning session on how to grow and use medicinal plants from your garden. The speakers are Master Gardeners Diane Openbrier and Janine Smith. The public is invited to this free event. For more information visit www.mandaringardenclub.org.

Upcoming Events

March 6 - 7

Mandarin Garden Club Clothing and Jewelry \$1 Sale

Gently used clothing items and accessories for women, men and children are offered for \$1; boutique items and jewelry priced slightly higher. Pop up plants will be offered at bargain prices on the grounds of Mandarin Garden Club on March 6 and March 7 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. both days.

Ongoing Activities

Shuffleboard

Shuffleboard is played on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. at Tommy Hazouri Park. The courts are located at the park entrance next to the tennis courts. Beginners are welcome. Arrive a few minutes early for court assignments. Just show up, unless it rains.

Sprout - Science through Gardening

Sprout program, Science through Gardening is offered for homeschooled ages 9 to 12. They meet at the Mandarin Garden Club on second and fourth Mondays of the month from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. For more information or to register, contact katprov5@gmail.com or visit mandaringardenclub.org/sprouts.

Mandarin Parkinson's Support Group

Men and women of all ages and stages of Parkinson's are welcome. Group/Classes are free. A meeting place to do life together. Learn from

one another and live out real life. Hear from speakers, play games, enjoy activities and more. Support group meets monthly on Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. at Church of Eleven22, 4911 Losco Rd. For more information, contact Katheryn Donaldson at serving4_him@yahoo.com or (904) 710-1449.

Mandarin Parkinson's Exercise Classes

Exercise classes for those with Parkinson's meet Wednesdays from 6 to 7 p.m. at Christ Church, 6045 Greenland Rd., and Thursdays from 6 to 7 p.m. at FBC Church, 210 N. Ridgecrest Ln. Classes are free. For more information, contact Katheryn Donaldson at serving4_him@yahoo.com or (904) 710-1449.

Parkinson's Caregiver Group

Parkinson's Caregiver Group meets the fourth Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon at 11480 Pine St. Group leader is Marylane Fitzsimons. For more information, contact fitzspjmj@comcast.net.

Little Readers

Storytime for infants and toddlers (ages birth to five) with stories, music and movement. Storytimes run from 2 to 2:30 p.m. on Mondays and 10:15 to 10:45 a.m. on Thursdays at South Mandarin Library. Or join us from 10:15 or 11 a.m. on Fridays at Mandarin Library. Visit jaxlibrary.org/events for more information.

Willows - A Local Social Group for Widows

A social group for widows of all ages to share conversation, fellowship and light refreshments. Meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. Not a grief counseling group. RSVP to Ruth Saunders at (904) 401-3291 or FloridaSaunders974@gmail.com.

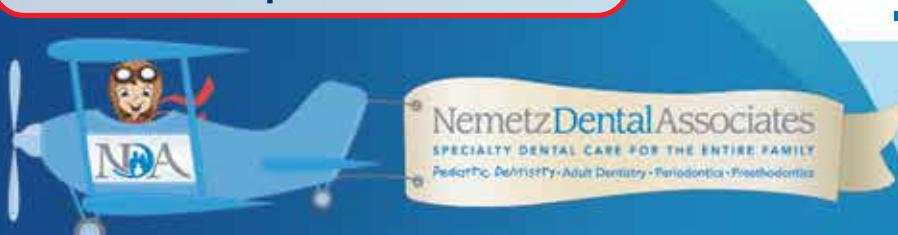
Toast of Jax Toastmasters

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

Shuffleboard

Shuffleboard is played on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. at Tommy Hazouri Park. The courts are located at the park entrance next to the tennis courts. Beginners are welcome. Arrive a few minutes early for court assignments. Just show up, unless it rains.

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Mandarin Women's club celebrates Heart Month

By Gail Packard

On Thursday, Feb. 26, the Mandarin Women's Club is pleased to welcome Jessie Roush, vice president of health strategies with the American Heart Association.

Roush will provide women's heart health and CPR education as well as share more about the American Heart Association's work in the community. The First Coast American Heart Association collaborates with local safety net clinics, food pantries and community organizations to provide funding, education and other resources. These efforts focus on blood pressure, CPR, maternal health,

nutrition security and tobacco cessation.

Since it is National Heart Health Month, attendees are encouraged to wear red to show support.

Doors open at 10:30 a.m. at the Ramada Inn, 3130 Hartley Road, and reservations for the luncheon are required. The luncheon cost is \$25, and checks must be received by Monday, Feb. 16.

To make reservations and obtain payment instructions, call Barbara at 904-612-6494 or email Barbara.metallo@outlook.com. For more information on events, photos and membership forms, visit mandarinwomensclub.com.



Members of the Mandarin Women's Club prepare for their upcoming luncheon, which will celebrate Women's Heart Month and feature a speaker from the American Heart Association.



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Mandarin Garden Club announces semiannual sale

By Michele Alex

Spring is just around the corner in Jacksonville, and members of the Mandarin Garden Club are getting ready to invite the community to their semiannual clothing and jewelry sale.

The club will host the clothing, jewelry and plant sale from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 6-7.

Gently used clothing for men, women and children will be on sale for \$1. Items from the boutique and jewelry section will be priced separately.

In addition, a pop-up plant sale in the gardens will offer additional bargains for local gardeners. Master gardeners and club enthusiasts will be available to answer questions about plants and gardening.

The club's circles continue their monthly meetings at 2892 Loretto Road, featur-



Photo courtesy Mandarin Garden Club

Mandarin Garden Club members prepare for the upcoming semiannual sale, which will feature clothing, jewelry and plants.

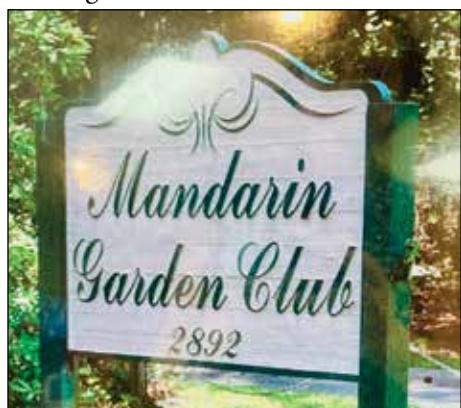


Photo courtesy Mandarin Garden Club
The Mandarin Garden Club is located at 2892 Loretto Road.

ing educational presentations cultivating a love for nature and environmental conservation. Check the monthly community calendar for more details.

The Mandarin Garden Club is a non-

profit organization that relies on fund-raising to support the club. The gardens have been designated a Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

The gardens are open to the public to

enjoy and learn about the beauty of nature from dawn to dusk, except during special events or rentals.

Visit mandaringardenclub.org to take a virtual tour or for more information.



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Archaeological Institute to host lecture on Cretan warriors

NewsLine staff

The Archaeological Institute of America—Jacksonville Society invites the public to a free lecture by ancient metals specialist Jesse Obert at noon, Feb. 21.

Obert, a professor at the University of South Florida, will discuss “The Archae-

ology of Cretan Warriorhood, 700-300 BCE,” followed by refreshments in the Anthropology Lab. Parking is free in all faculty, staff and vendor spaces.

For details, contact Melva Price at 904-241-9411 or aiajaxsoc@gmail.com



Jesse Obert, a professor at the University of South Florida and specialist in ancient metals and weapons, will speak to the Archaeological Institute of America-Jacksonville Society on Feb. 21.



Q&A with District 6 Council Member Michael Boylan

Q: What is the latest on tree planting efforts in District 6?

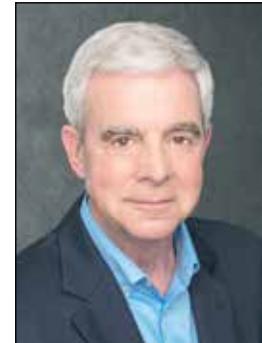
A: Given the tree giveaway event Greenscape of Jacksonville hosted on Jan. 17, I thought it was an appropriate time to share that during my tenure on City Council, nearly 750 trees of all varieties have been planted in the district by the City's Public Works Department.

That figure does not include the countless others planted by Parks and Recreation in area parks and by the Florida Department of Transportation on the medians of San Jose Boulevard, as well as the interstate interchanges on San Jose and Old St. Augustine Road.

Q: What is the status of the dog parks at Alberts Field?

A: While this has been a long time coming, probably five years since we announced the prospect of the dog parks, I have been advised that the bidding process has begun. The work should tentatively begin in March.

After meeting with some constituents in the area, the director of Parks and Recreation made modifications to the original plan to address their interest in seeing the existing playground facilities in that area kept in place. This would be in addition to the new playground facilities that will be located on the south end of the park. The revised plans also include an additional 50 parking spaces.



Q: Can you explain the Mandarin Area Preservation project?

A: I am pleased to report that the consulting company to be retained to assist me with the development of the Mandarin Area Preservation, Beautification, Visioning and Community Engagement project has been identified. A draft of the contract is in the hands of the Office of the General Counsel.

I am hopeful I will be meeting with the consultants soon to map our timeline. The goal is to create an entity similar to Riverside Avondale Preservation and the Springfield Area Preservation organizations to serve the neighborhoods and thoroughfares in District 6.

Q: What Public Works projects are underway in the district?

A: The recent report our office received did not offer any significant updates to the many projects taking place throughout the district, except that they are in the process of installing bike lanes on Old St. Augustine Road between San Jose Boulevard and Losco Road.

Contact Council Member Boylan at MBoylan@coj.net or (904) 255-5206.

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Mandarin resident arranges for \$1.3 million donation to Boy Scouts

By Marsha Peacock

Mandarin resident, Eagle Scout and Rotarian Byron Peacock coordinated a donation of \$1,396,000 to the North Florida Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Peacock was recognized in a surprise visit from the CEO of the North Florida Council, Kelvin Williams, and by council attorney Rob Heekin at his Satellite Evening Club of Southpoint Rotary meeting, which he chairs. The Scouts presented him and his wife Marsha, who had coordinated the surprise visit, with a large Eagle statue.

Heekin also shared the story of Peacock's writing "What Scouting Means To Me" in the Boy Scout Golden Book written 50 years earlier when he earned his Eagle Scout award.

Peacock is the president of Peacock Consulting Group, LLC, an environmental consulting firm specializing in



Photo courtesy Southpoint Rotary
From left, Council attorney Rob Heekin, Mandarin resident Byron Peacock, Marsha Peacock and North Florida Council CEO Kelvin Williams are pictured at the presentation recognizing the Peacocks for coordinating a \$1.3 million donation to the Boy Scouts.

wetland science. He volunteered his services to evaluate the wetland property on Black Creek that had been donated to the Scouts. Because of his efforts, the wetlands were designated as Regionally Significant by the St. Johns River Water Management District for mitigation purposes.

He then coordinated with developer Rise Properties to use the Scout's property as mitigation to offset wetland impacts for a development in the same drainage basin.

Peacock had done a similar coordination in 2018 with adjacent wetlands owned by the Scouts. That coordination resulted in \$298,200 to the Scouts (for a grand total of \$1,694,200) and an additional \$625,265 to the YMCA of Orange County.

The Scouts are now in the process of donating the land to Clay County for a new county park.



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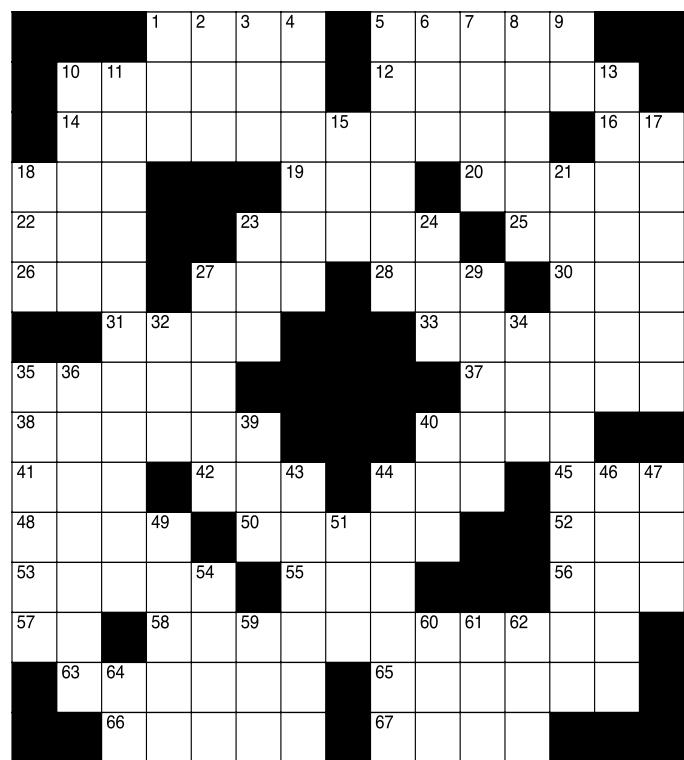
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- Native American group of N. California
- Geological times (Brit. sp.)
- Tool to remove
- Rods
- One who renews
- They precede C
- Chatter incessantly
- King Cole, musician
- Insect parts
- One from Utah
- The world of the dead
- Singer Redding
- NBA legend Nelson
- Indicates wrongly
- Unhappy
- Anger
- Dark brown
- Some are in kitchens
- Made a mistake
- Damp
- Type of fuel
- Actor Damon
- What thespians do
- One's mother
- Disallow
- Swiss river
- A banana has one
- Philippines lake and volcano are two
- Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- Agave
- Journalist Tarbell
- One-time tech giant
- Indicates upon
- Intestinal bacteria
- Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
- It goes with nook
- A fashion
- Very eager to hear or see

CLUES DOWN

- Witch
- Utilize
- Writing utensil
- Where rockers go to work
- Subsides
- Consume
- Greek mythological figures
- California mountain town
- Tin
- Muse of lyric and love poetry
- Animates anew
- Humorous criticisms
- Cool!
- Worst
- Wet dirt
- Designed to be useful
- Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- High schoolers' test
- Computer device
- Indian territory ___ and Diu
- A place to sleep
- AI tool
- Pass or go by
- Indicates a purchase
- A digital tape recording of sound
- More (Spanish)
- Disfigured
- White (Spanish)
- Church building
- Georgia rockers
- Type of surgery
- Much ___ about nothing
- Make by braiding
- Local area network
- Unit of work or energy
- Member of indigenous people of Thailand
- Liquefied natural gas
- Distance to top

WORD SEARCH



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

WORDS

AEROBIC
ARRHYTHMIA
ARTERIES
ATHEROSCLEROSIS
BEATS
BLOOD
CARDIAC
CARDIOVASCULAR
CHOLESTEROL
CIRCULATION
CORONARY
ENDURANCE
EXERCISE
HEALTHY
HEART
HYPERTENSION
INFLAMMATION
MUSCLE
PLAQUE
PULSE
STRESS
STROKE
VALVES
VEINS



Solve the code to discover words related to Valentine's Day.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 19 = E)

A. 24 7 19 14 19 12 9

Clue: Gift

B. 21 11 25 21 25 26 3 9 19

Clue: Confection

C. 7 25 5 3 12 21 19

Clue: Feelings of affection

D. 11 19 3 7 9 14

Clue: Love symbols

5

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Mandarin Museum honors potter Charlie Moses Brown

NewLine staff

The Mandarin Museum has unveiled its latest exhibition, "When the Kiln is Opened: The Art of Charlie Moses Brown."

Running through March 21, the exhibit honors the life and artistry of one of Northeast Florida's most influential ceramicists, whose work and legacy have left an indelible mark on the regional and national craft landscape.

Born in Mayport in 1904 and raised in Mandarin from the age of 3, Charles Moses "Charlie" Brown (1904–1987) discovered his passion for clay later in life. Originally trained as a painter, Brown began working with pottery after attending a class encouraged by his close friend, fellow artist Memphis Wood, in the early 1950s.

By the 1960s he had embraced the ancient Japanese raku firing technique, pulling pieces red-hot from the kiln and allowing organic materials like sawdust to create striking, unpredictable surface effects.

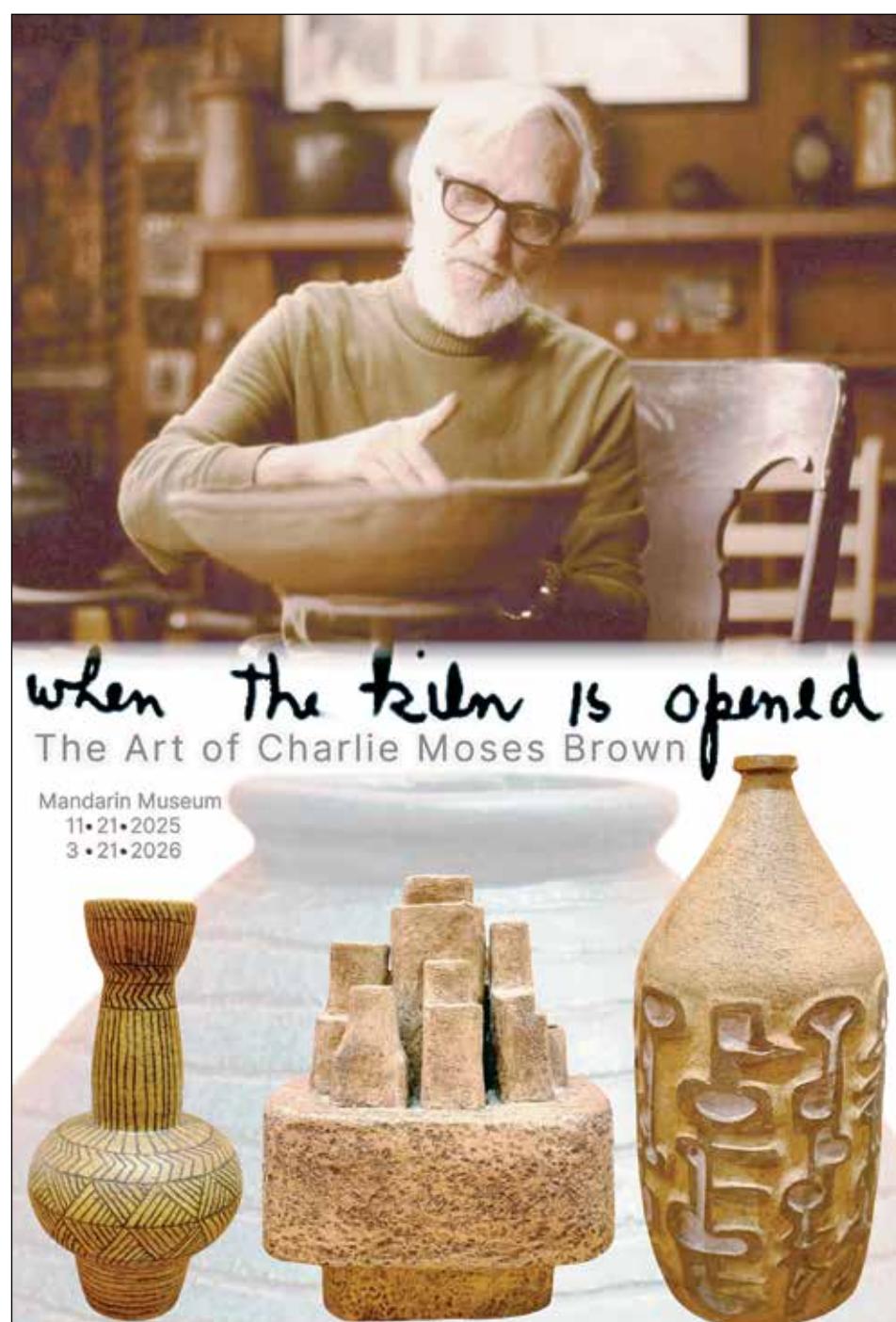
The Mandarin Museum's exhibition brings together a remarkable selection of Brown's pottery, including hand-built

vessels, raku-fired forms, wall hangings and other creations that illustrate his deep connection to his craft. Unlike many ceramic artists who turn to the potter's wheel, Brown preferred to shape his works by hand, believing the inherent irregularities and spontaneity of the firing process reflected the true spirit of the clay.

Visitors will also find photographs, archival materials and personal stories from those who knew him, offering insight into both the artist's creative process and the community that supported and inspired him.

Special thanks to MOCA Jacksonville, UNF College of Arts and Sciences, Vina and Amy Schemer, Kyle and Bruce Musser, Tracey and Sandy Arpen, Dr. Bruce and Mrs. Cathy Yergin, and Ken and Cate McCauley for contributing pieces on loan for the duration of the exhibit.

"When the Kiln is Opened" is free of charge during regular museum hours, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. The Mandarin Museum is located at Walter Jones Historical Park, 11964 Mandarin Road.



The Mandarin Museum's new exhibit, "When the Kiln is Opened: The Art of Charlie Moses Brown," features hand-built vessels and raku-fired forms by the influential Northeast Florida ceramicist.

Old Glory Retires cont. from pg. 2

Community members, veterans, businesses and organizations interested in supporting the project are encouraged to get involved. Donations of materials or labor are especially valuable, helping stretch limited funds while building strong local partnerships.

Post 372 is seeking community support in many forms, including monetary donations to help fund construction costs, as well as construction materials such as lumber, concrete, fixtures and supplies. Additionally, the post needs skilled and unskilled labor, including contractors, tradespeople and volunteers willing to donate time and expertise.

According to the post, all contributions



Mandarin American Legion Post 372 is raising funds and seeking material donations as it nears the groundbreaking of its permanent post home.

— large or small — will directly support the construction of the permanent home and help accelerate completion.

As groundbreaking approaches, Post 372 hopes this project will reflect the spirit of service that defines the American Legion — neighbors helping neighbors and a community honoring its veterans in a meaningful, lasting way.

Those interested in becoming a Platinum Sponsor or learning more about how to help should contact Mandarin American Legion Post 372 directly at postcdr@alpost372fl.org for donation and volunteer information.

The post is a nonprofit 501(c)(19) organization, and all donations are tax-deductible.

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Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation appoints Caitlin Brunell as president

The Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Ascension St. Vincent's health care system, has appointed Caitlin Brunell as its new president, effective Jan. 1, according to a recent release.

Brunell brings almost a decade of nonprofit leadership experience to the role, the release stated. Most recently, she served as the executive director of the American Heart Association in Jacksonville, leading operations and initiatives across the First Coast market. She previously held roles as development vice president for the organization and worked with the Tim Tebow Foundation.

"I am deeply honored to step into this

role and energized by the opportunities that lie ahead," Brunell said in the release. "In meaningful partnership with dedicated individuals and organizations that stand alongside us, we will continue to serve our beloved community with compassion and explore new ways to expand access to quality care for everyone we serve."

Her commitment to serving others began in childhood, volunteering for a foundation that supported critically ill children and their families in Northeast Florida, according to the release. In 2006, she founded the nonprofit Caitlin's Closet, which provides young women without resources the opportunity to outfit themselves in donated clothes for proms,

dances, academic ceremonies and sports banquets.

"Caitlin's proven track record in nonprofit leadership and her deep commitment to serving others align perfectly with Ascension's mission to help those most in need," Scott Kashman, president and CEO of Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside, said in the release. "Her experience building meaningful partnerships will strengthen our foundation's ability to support our community."

The Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in 1982 that raises funds to support spiritually centered, holistic care for all people, with special attention to those who are



Caitlin Brunell

underinsured or uninsured, the release stated.

For more information, the release noted residents can visit GiveStVincents.org.

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Friends of Mandarin Library hosts book sale, author talk in February

By Jeremy Yates

The Friends of the Mandarin Library is hosting another book sale at 3330 Kori Road. You'll find a wide selection of items for every age, including books, CDs, DVDs and puzzles. Fill up a bag with books for just \$10 (the Friends supply the bags). Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 6, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 7. Please note: This sale is cash only.

The Friends also invite you to a Lit Chat Interview with Terah Shelton Harris from 2 to 3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19, at the Mandarin Library. The author of "One Summer in Savannah," "Long After We're Gone" and other "upmarket fiction with bittersweet endings," Shelton Harris is set to release her third book, "Where the Wildflowers Grow," just days before the event. An audience Q&A and book signing will follow the author talk. Copies of her books will be available for sale at the event by a local bookstore (if you don't already own a copy). Save your seat at jaxlibrary.org/LitChat. This event is sponsored by the Friends of the Mandarin Library.

Speaking of friends ... Do you have an infant or toddler (ages birth to 5)? Make friends with other families and read great books at Little Readers. Each program includes a story you and your child will love plus music and movement for a fun learning and bonding experience. Storytimes run weekly from 2 to 2:30 p.m. Mondays and 10:15 to 10:45 a.m. Thursdays at South Mandarin Library. Or visit us at 10:15 or 11 a.m. Fridays at Mandarin Library.

More fun for the whole family: All young Jedi are being called to "Padawan Training" at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 12, at Mandarin Library – where they'll play Star Wars-themed games to discover if they have what it takes to channel the Force!

Turn Up for Tech from 4 to 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19, at South Mandarin Library, where you'll interact with everything from robots to circuits, animation and coding.

Youth (ages 9 and older): Join us at 4 p.m. every Monday at Mandarin Library for more free "fandom" events with games and activities inspired by popular characters, books or series like "Steven Universe," "Spy School" and more.



Photo courtesy Friends of Mandarin Library

The Friends of the Mandarin Library will host a book sale Feb. 6-7 at the library on Kori Road, where shoppers can fill a provided bag with books for \$10.

Please note: All Jacksonville Public Library locations will be closed Monday, Feb. 16, for Presidents' Day.

Add these activities (and more) to your calendar at jaxlibrary.org/ events.

Visit mandaringardenclub.org to take a virtual tour or for more information.

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Travel

Viterbo: Where the Papal Conclave was born

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslne.com

I recently took an hour-and-a-half train trip north from Rome to the medieval city of Viterbo. This predominantly stone-built region once stood at the very center of the Catholic world. Viterbo is not just another beautiful hill town. Known as The City of Popes, it is the place where the modern papal conclave was forged, born from frustration, faith, and a roof quite literally torn away.

Last year, when the world once again watched white smoke curl into the Roman sky with the election of Pope Leo, Viterbo's story felt newly alive. The ancient process that guided the Church through that transition began here more than seven centuries ago.

A city of popes and power

During the 13th century, Rome was often unstable, unhealthy, and racked by political conflict and violence. Viterbo, loyal to the papacy and protected by strong medieval walls, became a favored refuge for popes. Several lived and governed here, transforming the city into a temporary seat of Christendom.

The Palazzo dei Papi, with its commanding loggia and austere Gothic lines, still dominates Viterbo's skyline. Standing in its shadow, I could easily



Debi Lander

imagine the urgency and tension that once filled its chambers, for this is where one of the most significant events in Church history unfolded.

The election that changed everything

Viterbo's pivotal role began in 1261, when Pope Alexander IV died within the city walls. The cardinals gathered there to elect his successor, establishing Viterbo as a trusted stage for papal decision-making.

But it was after the death of Pope Clement IV in 1268 that Viterbo would truly change history.

The cardinals met again in the palace, but months turned into years. Yes, nearly three years passed, 1,003 days exactly, the longest papal election in history. The people of Viterbo, exhausted by the stalemate and fearing divine displeasure, finally took action. In those days it was customary for the city to host the cardinals, but after such a long time, supplies were running low. The citizens locked the cardinals inside the palace, restricted their meals, and eventually removed the roof, exposing them to sun, rain, and winter winds. (They slept in tents and the room still bears the post holes.)

In 1271, the cardinals finally elected



Photo by Debi Lander

The medieval city of Viterbo, Italy, is known as The City of Popes and was the site where the modern papal conclave was born in the 13th century.

Teobaldo Visconti, who became Pope Gregory X. Deeply affected by the ordeal, Gregory later issued formal rules for future elections: the cardinals would henceforth meet cum clave, in strict seclusion until a pope was chosen.

The conclave was born.

From medieval crisis to modern ritual

When the cardinals assembled last year to elect Pope Leo, they followed procedures that trace directly back to Gregory X's decree, procedures shaped by that long winter in Viterbo.

The locked doors of the Sistine Chapel, the oath of secrecy, the daily ballots, the white smoke rising above St. Peter's, all of it carries the imprint of this small hill town.

Walking through living history

Today, visitors to Viterbo step into a remarkably preserved medieval world. The stark interior of San Lorenzo Cathedral stands beside the Papal Palace. The former conclave hall houses relics and a rare parchment bearing the original

balloting tags of the cardinals. The old quarter unfolds in narrow stone lanes and arches that seem little changed since the Middle Ages.

Viterbo is not a museum city. It breathes. It lives. And its stones remember.

Viterbo taught the Church that even sacred decisions require structure and that faith sometimes needs the firm nudge. The rules born there continue to guide the world's largest Christian institution, including the election of Pope Leo in our own time.

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 Newsline, 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@floridanewslne.com.



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