

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meet Kodak!
Best Furry Friend
of the Month
Page 3



Community
Calendar for
St. Johns County
Page 4



Puzzle Page:
Crossword
& More
Page 7

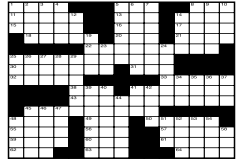


Photo courtesy of Palencia Elementary School PTO

The hybrid event features both an in-person live auction and an online bidding platform to support school enhancements.

License to Give: Palencia Elementary PTO hosts Casino Royale gala

By Sara Seifert

Palencia Elementary School's PTO is betting on a full house when it hosts a Casino Royale-themed live auction gala on Saturday, April 11, at The Palencia Club. After a two-year hiatus, the PTO is returning to an in-person event to bring the school community together for an evening designed to support ongoing efforts to enhance the school experience for students and faculty.

Live auction items include stays at luxurious vacation homes, a VIP parking space at the school, luxury handbags, jewelry and signed memorabilia. The night will also feature the popular "Heads or Tails" game, where guests can compete for bragging rights. Game necklaces are

Casino Royale cont. on pg. 3

Power on the Path



Photo courtesy St. Johns County Sheriff's Office

Cpl. Michael Ettl displays the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office e-bike safety card, which outlines the differences between electric bicycle classes and illegal e-motos.

SJSO leads education-first initiative to bridge the gap between technology and traffic law

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewslines.com

Following a rapid increase in electric vehicle use across St. Johns County

neighborhoods, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office is shifting its focus toward a comprehensive "education-first" model to address growing safety concerns. Director Russ Martin of the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office says the initiative is designed to clarify the

legal boundaries between standard e-bikes and high-powered "e-motos," or electric motorcycles.

"We saw a rapid increase in the use of electric vehicles throughout the com-

Power on the Path cont. on pg. 2

Support our Advertisers!

Power on the Path cont. from pg. 1

munity,” Martin said. “Unlike traditional pedal bikes and human-powered scooters everyone was accustomed to, these presented immediate safety concerns on sidewalks and at intersections and crosswalks.”

Martin said the surge prompted the agency to take a hard look at the laws and create internal tools to track the problem. “We were playing catch-up,” he said.

Tracking the data

One of the first steps was creating a disposition code, an internal tracking category in the Sheriff’s Office computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, specifically for e-bike violations and crashes.

“Prior to May, we didn’t have an e-bike specific or e-bike crash specific disposition code,” Martin said. “We had a bunch of crashes and it was going through a plethora of CAD notes... really trying to decipher, finding a needle in a haystack to see where do I hone in on the problem.”

With better data in hand, the agency launched a multi-pronged approach built around education, enforcement and community partnerships.

A partnership for safety

Central to that effort was a close working relationship with the St. Johns County School District and Superintendent Dr. Brennan Asplen.

“That partnership is super, super close,” Martin said. “We’re doing this thing together. And we’re trying to leverage each other for the benefit of our citizens that we serve.”

Youth resource deputies were trained on the new e-bike classifications and equipped with safety flyers featuring a QR code linking to educational materials. Before the 2025 Christmas break, deputies had completed safety presentations to sixth, seventh and eighth graders at every school in the district.

“The school district, they saw the importance of it, and they gave us a slot of time,” Martin said. “They really rolled the carpet out for us to not only give us a platform, but to be joined at the hip with us, side by side, preaching this message.”

Deputies also provided helmets to students who didn’t have them during daily encounters at the 44 schools in the district where the Sheriff’s Office provides youth resource deputies.

“Not only are we telling you about it, we’re trying to meet you a little farther than halfway in providing some of the equipment if necessary,” Martin said.

Enforcement and the Task Force

The agency also established an e-bike task force, deploying bicycle and motor units into high-volume areas including Fruit Cove, Durbin Crossing, Rivertown, Aberdeen, Nocatee and World Golf Village. Martin said the approach put officers on the same devices as the



Photo courtesy St. Johns County Sheriff's Office
St. Johns County Sheriff's Office deputies inspect a high-powered electric vehicle. Officials warn that certain "e-motos" are not street legal and are classified as motorcycles.

riders, including e-bikes and, for more challenging situations, e-motos.

“We’ve matched them with the same devices,” he said, describing how deputies trained on e-motos to patrol areas where riders were evading traditional patrol vehicles. “Word spreads overnight. Hey, they’ve got the e-motos, too.”

Martin emphasized that the enforcement model leads with education.

“The enforcement effort is one piece of a massive piece to try to come up with a solution,” he said. “You can’t write so many tickets out of an issue that’s going on through the county.”

Knowing the law

A key part of the message has been directed at the hardware itself. Martin said devices classified as Class 3 e-bikes can travel up to 28 mph under state law, but some devices sold legally go even faster.

Under Florida law, e-bikes are classified into three categories. Classes 1 and 2 do not exceed 20 mph; Class 3 does not exceed 28 mph. E-motos, motorized devices without pedals that resemble electric dirt bikes, are not street legal and cannot be ridden on roads, sidewalks or crosswalks unless properly licensed as a motorcycle.

“Just because it’s an electronic bike doesn’t mean it’s exempt from any of the rules of the road,” Martin said. “They all still apply.”

Call to action for parents

Martin’s call to parents is direct: get involved. He urges parents to consider their child’s behavior, knowledge and experience level when matching them with a device. He drew a parallel to the responsibility of a cell phone.

Martin drew a direct parallel to the responsibility of a cell phone. “It can bring great joy, but if you’re not actively involved in what your child is doing, it is not always age-appropriate,” he said. “They may not understand how finite some of those decisions can be.”

The effort has extended beyond the Sheriff’s Office. Martin said the St. Johns County Commission created a resolution to seek e-bike legislation at the state level, and the agency has been meeting with multiple counties to explore effective changes.

“We can’t legislate ourselves from a problem in our community,” Martin said. “All of us play a role, and if we play our role really well and stay in the role that we are called to, I know that we will continue to make positive strides.”

Image courtesy St. Johns County Sheriff's Office

The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office e-bike safety card provides a detailed breakdown of electric vehicle classifications, speed limits and safety regulations.

Casino Royale cont. from pg. 1

available for presale at \$15 each or two for \$25 and may also be purchased the night of the event.

The Casino Royale theme will transport guests to a Monte Carlo atmosphere featuring blackjack and roulette tables. Winnings from these games can be



Photo courtesy of Palencia Elementary School PTO

Palencia Elementary School's PTO will host its Casino Royale-themed gala and auction on April 11.

cashied out for tickets to win curated gift baskets or used for additional Heads or Tails necklaces.

The April 11 live auction gala will complement an online auction that will be active on a digital platform from April 10 to April 12. The online format, introduced over the past two years, has allowed more families to participate and bid from any location. Both the in-person and online auctions will feature exclusive items, and families are encouraged to take part in both to maximize their opportunities to win packages donated by local businesses and friends of the school.

This year’s auction festivities are being co-chaired by PTO members Brooke Paarlberg and Allison Tucker. Paarlberg, a veteran of PTO event organization, said the hybrid model is a key feature of this year’s efforts.

“We are excited for a hybrid of online and in-person auction events,” Paarlberg said. “It will be a great way

to include our whole community and bring back a fun gala to come together and celebrate our incredible school community.”

Dinner tickets are \$60 per person. Sponsorship opportunities are available for individuals, families or businesses wishing to provide additional support for the school. Companies can promote their brand logo on guest auction paddles for a \$600 sponsorship. Two game table sponsorships are also available for \$600 each and include branding on the blackjack and roulette tables. Additionally, businesses may donate Heads or Tails prizes for the winners.

The auction aims to raise money for the school while driving traffic to local businesses through donations and sponsorships.

For tickets and more information, visit www.palenciapiratespto.com/auction-weekend.

450 State Road 13 North
Suite 106 PMB 101
St. Johns, FL 32259
(904) 886-4919
www.FloridaNewsLine.com

Publisher

Mark Pettus

Publisher@FloridaNewsLine.com

Editor

Tracy Dishman

Editor@FloridaNewsLine.com

Bookkeeper

Emily Whitehead

Accounting@FloridaNewsLine.com

Social Media

SocialMedia@FloridaNewsLine.com

Advertising Sales

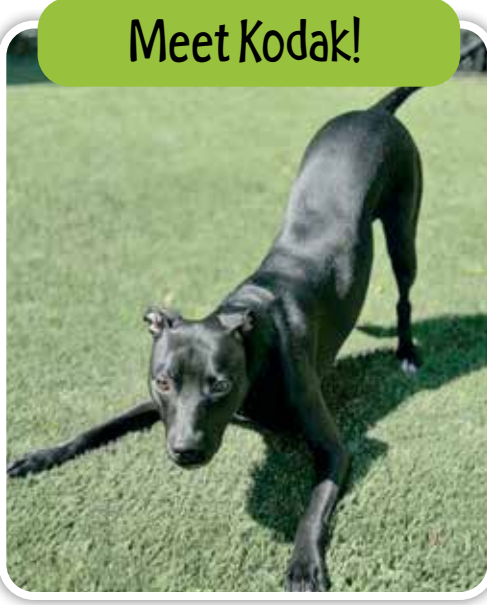
Haley Cook

haley.cook@newslinedigital.com

First Coast NewsLine community newspaper is a free monthly publication delivered to all addresses in Zip Codes 32081 and 32082. Submission of articles and photographs are received by mail or email, although email to editor@FloridaNewsLine.com is preferred. The writers' opinions do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Florida NewsLine. Advertising Rates are available by request. Florida NewsLine is not responsible for advertisement content or accuracy of information provided by its advertisers. Nor does Florida NewsLine endorse any of the products or services included in this publication. Florida NewsLine reserves the right to refuse advertisement or copy from any advertiser. All rights are reserved and no portion of this publication may be copied without the express written consent of the publisher. ©2025.



BFF Best Furry Friend of the month



Meet Kodak!

- Breed:**
Italian Greyador
- Favorite activity:**
Walking at the beach at Sawgrass and hiking in Guana
- Favorite food:**
Whipped cream
- Favorite friend:**
All of his buddies at doggy day camp
- How did your BFF get his name:**
He's picture perfect!

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



Answers to our Puzzles PG 8

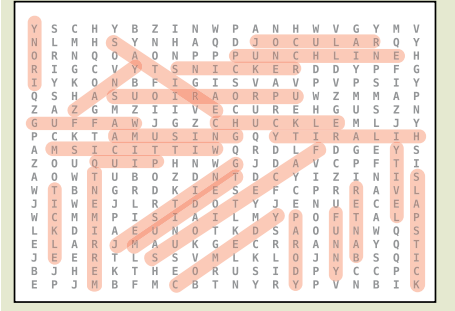
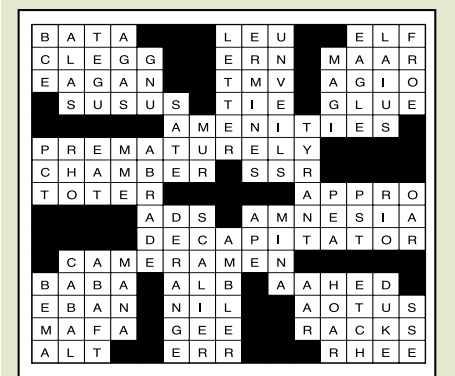


Table of Contents

- 4 Community Calendar
- 5 Q&A with Elected Officials
- 7 Guest Columnist
- 7 Puzzles

Planet Granite Countertops

Free Estimate for Kitchen, Baths and Outdoor Kitchen countertops

Installing countertops since 2007.

Contact Today:
Sam Martin 904-483-6153
planetgranite@aol.com
planetgranitejax.com

AFFORDABLE WATER

CONDITIONING • SOFTENING • PURIFICATION

Residential Commercial Family Owned and Operated since 1989

CLEAN WATER FOR YOUR HOME

Affordable Water solutions for your home with the best customer service in the industry.

- Water Softeners & Filtration Systems
- Service on most makes and models
- Delivery of Salt & Potassium for your system

Call today 904-262-0197 for your Complimentary Water Test & Analysis.

3760 Kori Road • www.affordablewaterjax.com

WATSON Construction Group, Inc.

BUILDINGS • PLUMBING
ELECTRICAL • HVAC
RENOVATION & MAINTENANCE
NEW CONSTRUCTION
(RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL)

CALL TODAY 904.737.6337

WatsonConstructionGroup.com

Building Services: CBC1263732 • Electric: EC13013382
HVAC: CAC1816040 • Plumbing: CFC057343

Contact us today to discover available offers & exclusive discounts.

April

Community Calendar What's Happening in St. Johns

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

**April 1
Coastal Friends Luncheon**
Coastal Friends will host Dr. Jeff Ettl, president and CEO of the Jacksonville Zoo and Botanical Gardens, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club. Dr. Ettl will discuss the new VyStar Skyscape entrance and Manatee River Habitat. Cost is \$25. Reservations are required by March 25 by contacting barshar@comcast.net.

**April 2
Maundy Thursday Service**
St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, 1222 State Road 13, will hold a Maundy Thursday service including foot washing at 6 p.m.

**April 2
THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center Highlights**
The St. Johns County Council on Aging (COA) will host several special programs this month at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach. Highlights include: **April 2**, "Sounds of the Season" Easter celebration with Rodney Mathews (10:30 a.m.); **April 14**, Mobile Office Hours for Senator Rick Scott's staff (10 a.m.); **April 23**, a bus trip to Fantasy Farms (9:45 a.m., registration required by March 26); and **April 30**, a "Rights of a Debtor" presentation by St. Johns County Legal Aid (11 a.m.). For more information, call 904-209-3659 or visit coasjc.org/ponte-vedra-center.

**April 3
Good Friday Service**
St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, 1222 State Road 13, will hold a Good Friday service at noon.

**April 5
Easter Service**
St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, 1222 State

Road 13, will hold an Easter service at 10 a.m.

**April 7
Vicar's Landing Boutique and Cottage Sale**
Vicar's Landing will host its monthly boutique and cottage sale Tuesday, April 7, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the main Vicar's Landing-Sawgrass Community Building. The boutique sale features jewelry, including 14k gold, sterling silver, costume and designer pieces; "knick-knacks" starting at \$1; and framed/unframed art in the hall. The Art Gallery currently features a show by Ellen Diamond and her students. Cash or checks only. All proceeds benefit the Vicar's Employee Scholarship Fund. For more information, call Nancy Martin at 941-830-2141.

**April 9
Whiskers and Wheels**
The fourth annual Whiskers and Wheels event will be held Thursday, April 9, from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Deerwood Castle, home of the Jacksonville Sports Car museum. A cocktail reception and car museum tour begins at 6 p.m. The evening supports local pets and features dinner, live music and auctions. Visit gotrnef.org for details.

**April 10
Friday Night Lights: Movie and Moonlit Golf**
The Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra will host a free community event Friday, April 10, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Palm Valley Golf Course, 1075 Palm Valley Road in Nocatee. The evening features a screening of the original "Lion King" movie on the driving range and a glow-in-the-dark golf tournament on the course. Raffle prizes will be available. Visit events.golfstatus.com/event/ponte-vedra-rotary-friday-night-lights for details.

**April 11
First Coast Essential Tremor: Meet, Greet & Educate**
Baptist HealthPlace in Nocatee, 400 Colonnade Drive, Suite 130, Ponte Vedra, will host a "Meet, Greet & Educate" session Tuesday, April 11, at 11 a.m. Physical therapist Kiera Miller, PT, DPT, will discuss how physical therapy can help mitigate the impact of essential tremor.

**April 11
Second Saturday Arts & Farmers Market**
The Second Saturday Arts & Farmers Market will take place Saturday, April 11, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. The market features more than 50 vendors and supports the church's outreach programs.

**April 14
Bartram Trail Newcomers Club Luncheon**
The Bartram Trail Newcomers Club will host its April luncheon Tuesday, April 14, at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club in St. Augustine. Attendees have a choice of fire-grilled flat iron steak, rosemary roasted chicken breast or grilled cauliflower steak. Cost is \$32 (cash or check). Visit facebook.com/BTNC.1 for details.

**April 18
Earth Day Community Cleanup**
Beaches Go Green will host its annual Earth Day community cleanup Saturday, April 18, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Jacksonville Beach and St. Augustine Beach. The event is open to the public and supplies are provided. Visit beachesgogreen.org for details.

**April 18
Rotary Club Mineral City Celebration**
The Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach will host its annual Mineral City Celebration Saturday, April 18, at the Hilton Jacksonville

Mayo Clinic. The gala features a "Palm Royale" theme with refreshments, entertainment and a silent auction. Tickets for the club's luxury trip raffle are also available for \$100 each or five for \$400, with the winner announced live at the event. Visit mineralcitycelebration.com for more information.

**April 25
Ponte Vedra Writers Meeting**
The Ponte Vedra Writers will meet Saturday, April 25, at 11 a.m. in the Media Room of Ocean Grove Condominiums, 1 Arbor Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach. Guest speaker Rhonda Goodall will present "Secrets to Writing & Marketing a Successful Children's Book Series."

**April 27
Memory Cafe**
The Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library and the St. Johns County Dementia Care and Cure Initiative (DCCI) Task Force will host a Memory Cafe from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the library. This social gathering is for those experiencing cognitive challenges and their caregivers. RSVP by calling 904-827-6950 or visiting sjcpls.org.

**April 28
RE/MAX Welcome Home Tradeshow**
RE/MAX Welcome Home will host a tradeshow Tuesday, April 28, at the St. Augustine St. Johns County Airport, 4796 US Hwy. 1 N, St. Augustine.

**April 29
Encore Entrepreneurship Workshop**
SCORE Jacksonville and Fifth Third Bank will host a workshop Wednesday, April 29, at 5:30 p.m. at the Etown branch, 11332 Apex Trail. The session, "Encore Entrepreneurship: Turning Life Experiences into a Business," is designed for those looking to start a business post-retirement. Contact Shelly Thompson at Shelly.Thompson@53.com to register.

Property Appraiser's Office honored with 2026 Top Workplaces Awards

By Eddie Creamer
St. Johns County Property Appraiser

I am pleased to announce that the St. Johns County Property Appraiser's Office has been honored with the 2026 Jacksonville Top Workplaces Award, presented by The Florida Times-Union in partnership with Energage, an employee engagement technology company. Our office also received two additional awards: one for ranking in the top three organizations in our

category and a special award for the benefits provided to employees.

At our office, we are a people-first organization. Our team makes all the difference in the important work we do to support the St. Johns County community, and I am thankful to each and every one of our employees for their tremendous work and dedication to our organization.



Eddie Creamer

The Top Workplaces Award honors organizations in the Metro Jacksonville area that participated in the Top Workplaces survey. The confidential survey, administered by Energage, is emailed to all employees in each organization to receive feedback. The survey measures themes such as engagement, level of respect and support, growth opportunities and more.

Our office is one of 49 organizations in the region to receive the award. In the small organization category of fewer than 150 employees, we ranked third of the 16 organizations to receive the award. This was the first year our office applied for the award, and only 40 percent of companies that apply in their first year receive it. The special awards were presented based on specific topics, and our office was the only organization to receive the award for the benefits provided to employees.

Based on the survey results, the following key insights were identified about our office:

- The overall workplace experience score was 92 percent, seven points above the benchmark.
- 100 percent of employees believe their manager cares about their concerns.
- Our office is in the top 1 percent within the industry for communication and keeping employees informed.
- Our office is in the top 1 percent within the industry for prioritizing the well-being of employees.
- Our office is in the top 1 percent within the industry for offering fair compensation.

I am available to answer questions or provide information at Eddie@sjcpa.gov or 904-827-5500.

PRESSURE WASHING SERVICE

PROOF IS IN THE WORK

SERVICES

♦ EXTERIOR CLEANING

♦ EXTERIOR PAINTING & RESTORATION

♦ HOT WASH & SOFT WASH

♦ ROOF CLEANING

♦ POOL ENCLOSURES

♦ DOCKS & WALKWAY

CALL US TODAY: 904-622-3000

www.powwashjax.com



Q&A with St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller Brandon J. Patty

Q: Will your office hold a driver license reinstatement event again this year?

A: Yes. Between April 11 and April 25, our office will participate in Operation Green Light, a statewide initiative to help individuals with outstanding traffic tickets and court fines get back on the road. Drivers can make payments online at stjohnsclerk.com/UGL or by calling (904) 819-3600. To check the status of your driver license, visit services.flhsmv.gov/dlcheck.

Q: How does Operation Green Light help drivers?

A: More than 5,000 residents in St. Johns County currently have suspended licenses due to unpaid fines and court fees. During Operation Green Light, our Customer Care clerks help participants save up to 40 percent on collection agency surcharges. Drivers with suspended licenses due to an

expired payment plan may also be eligible to reinstate their license by updating their payment plan if all requirements are met. Statutory fees, late charges and DMV reinstatement fees may still apply.

Q: What other types of issues can the Customer Care team help residents with?

A: Our Customer Care clerks are highly skilled and cross-trained to provide both phone and in-person support across a wide range of services. They provide information related to court cases; assist with filings in civil and family cases; answer jury duty questions; provide details on marriage licenses and passport services; and explain payment options for traffic tickets and fines.

Q: Why is customer service such a priority for your office?



Q&A with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Q: What are the requirements to be a poll worker in St. Johns County?

A: To serve as a poll worker, you must be a U.S. citizen and a registered or pre-registered voter in St. Johns County. This includes 16- and 17-year-olds who are pre-registered to vote. Due to the responsibilities of the position, poll workers must be able to work up to a 14-hour day, which may include extended periods of standing or bending, and must be able to lift up to 30 pounds. Workers must be available to begin at 6 a.m., have reliable transportation, be able to read and write in English, and complete mandatory training prior to each election.

Q: What type of training do poll workers need?

A: Per Florida Statutes, poll workers must complete training prior to each election. In St. Johns County, this includes an initial orientation and online pre-training covering election law, voter eligibility, ballot handling

and security. Following the online portion, workers attend in-person, hands-on training that covers voting equipment, polling place procedures and accessibility.

Q: Where can registered voters apply to be a poll worker?

A: Interested voters can visit votesjc.gov to learn more and complete an application.

Q: Are you recruiting poll workers for the 2026 election cycle?

A: The Supervisor of Elections Office accepts applications on a rolling basis. While there is currently a strong roster of returning workers, Poll Worker Coordinator Amanda Sims recently completed five mandatory introductory orientations. For those interested in learning more about the process, the office is offering four public office tours throughout April and May.

To register, visit votesjc.gov or call 904-823-2238.

A: Customer service remains a cornerstone of the Clerk's Office because it ensures residents and visitors receive timely, accurate and personal support — without the frustration of navigating automated phone systems. Our Customer Care clerks handle nearly 8,000 calls each month and are available during regular business hours to provide direct, personal assistance — whether you reach out by phone or visit our office in person.

Q: How can people get in touch with you with questions?

A: For questions about Operation Green Light, or any of the services we provide at the Clerk's Office, our Customer Care Call Center is available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at (904) 819-3600, and by email at clerk@stjohnsclerk.com. I can also be reached directly on my cell at (904) 599-8688 or by email at BPatty@stjohnsclerk.com.



Your Carefree Oasis of Luxury

Did you know that Starling operates four luxury senior living communities in the Jacksonville area? Our communities offer maintenance-free living with exquisite amenities, including gourmet dining, a state-of-the-art fitness center, and a serene heated pool. With meals and transportation included in your rent, you can focus on living your best life while we handle the rest. Call us today to learn more and set up your personalized 1-on-1 tour!



STARLING
AT PONTE VEDRA
ASSISTED LIVING
and MEMORY CARE
904-686-3700
ALF#12734

STARLING
AT NOCATEE
ASSISTED LIVING
and MEMORY CARE
904-834-4199
ALF#13109

STARLING
AT NOCATEE
INDEPENDENT
LIVING
904-834-4511

STARLING
AT SAN JOSE
ASSISTED LIVING
and MEMORY CARE
904-337-6350
ALF#12887

WELLNESS • ENGAGEMENT • CULINARY • SERVICE

Call today to learn about current specials!



THE TAILORED CLOSET™



Over 13,000 Installations since 2005

- CUSTOM CLOSETS
- GARAGE CABINETS
- FLOOR COATINGS

Request a FREE Consultation (904) 645-0885

FINANCING AVAILABLE

Volunteers build hope at Habitat's annual Women Build event

By Kim Brown

Habitat for Humanity of St. Johns County held its annual Women Build event March 6 and 7 at Volusia Woods, the nonprofit's newest neighborhood.

A total of 90 women participated over the two-day event, performing tasks such as painting and caulking. The global initiative is designed to empower women to address housing issues for themselves and their neighbors. The annual event coincides with International Women's Day and was inspired by the first all-women-built Habitat for Humanity house completed in 1991.

"Seeing nearly 90 women come together to build hope and opportunity for a local family was truly inspiring," said Malinda Everson, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of St. Johns County. "Women Build is about more than construction. It is about empowerment, leadership and neighbors lifting each other up."

On Friday, March 6, 49 volunteers were

welcomed with remarks from St. Johns County Commissioner Ann Taylor. On Saturday, March 7, founding board member Deltra Long met with 41 volunteers and toured the Volusia Woods model home.

Participants included groups from Alpha Kappa Alpha, UF Health St. Johns Care Connect, Costco and Anastasia Fitness, as well as representatives from Westminster of St. Augustine and City of St. Augustine Vice Mayor Barbara Blonder. Four members of the Habitat St. Johns board of directors also joined the teams, with two serving as site supervisors.

Lindsey Rodea, who serves as the vice chair of the Habitat St. Johns board of directors and works for UF Health St. Johns, returned to the organization where she began her career.

"Working in healthcare, we're used to giving back every day, but this is a whole new way," Rodea said. "It also gets their minds thinking about who



Photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity of St. Johns County

A large group of volunteers gathered at Volusia Woods for the Habitat for Humanity of St. Johns County annual Women Build event held March 6 and 7.

they might know that could use a hand up when it comes to finding a path to home ownership."

The event was supported by sponsors including Ameris Bank, Florida Power & Light, Publix Supermarkets, Skinny Lizard Screen Printing and UF Health Flagler Hospital.

Habitat for Humanity of St. Johns County is a nonprofit housing organization that builds housing solutions through community partnerships and volunteer involvement. The local office is located at 7 Hopkins St. in St. Augustine. For more information, visit www.habitatstjohns.org.

St. Johns County schools celebrate outstanding achievements across all levels

By Dr. Brennan W. Asplen

Schools across the St. Johns County School District are celebrating an extraordinary season of academic, artistic and athletic success, highlighted by record-breaking accomplishments, state recognitions and powerful community engagement initiatives.

St. Augustine High School: Rising achievement and state-level honors

St. Augustine High School continues to demonstrate excellence across academics, arts and athletics.

This year, the AICE program expanded from 1,600 to 2,000 exams administered, an impressive milestone following last year's 20% growth. Several Yellow Jackets earned national distinctions, including Gracie Flaherty (Class of 2025), who achieved the highest AICE Psychology score in the nation, and Anna Kerllenevich (Class of 2027), who earned Top in USA recognition for her combined AICE scores.

The SAHS JROTC unit was named an Honor Unit of Distinction and is advancing to state championships. On the athletic front, Avery Miller captured state weightlifting titles in both Olympic and Traditional events, while Taylor Pelchat earned acceptance to West Point and finished second in state girls wrestling.

The arts also shone, with the SJCCA Wind Ensemble earning a state berth for the fourth consecutive year, SJCCA Theatre's *The Actor's Nightmare* receiving Mainstage Designation, and Visual Arts students capturing top regional Scholastic Awards, scholarships and national adjudication honors.

SAHS students also excelled in the SJEA MLK Poster and Essay Competi-

tion, earning multiple first-, second- and third-place awards.

Ponte Vedra High School: Academic excellence and statewide recognition

Ponte Vedra High School celebrated exceptional achievements across academic programs, extracurricular activities and student leadership.

The National Honor Society led major service initiatives this year — including supporting HUGS, providing holiday assistance to local families and organizing a Veterans Honor Wall — while the Aspire Talks speaker series reached new heights.

In major academic news, Anya Dorairaj was selected as a prestigious Jefferson Scholar at the University of Virginia, one of about 30 students nationwide to receive the full-ride award. PVHS students also dominated regional academic competitions, including the District Appellate Court Brief Writing and Moot Court Competition, the Middle District of Florida Essay Contest and the Environmental Science DUCKS certification exam with a 94% passing rate.

World language instruction saw innovation through "Spanish Mondays," a full-immersion learning initiative in Spanish 2 that resulted in students achieving 85% comprehension and increased interest in advanced coursework.

The theater, arts and music programs also thrived. Multiple students were selected for the Florida State Thespian Festival, with several accepted into top-tier college theater programs. The band program earned straight superiors across all MPAs for the first time in school history, and the marching band finished as state runner-up, winning top honors in music and visual performance.

Career and technical education programs expanded hands-on learning through DECA, marketing academy experiences and extensive field-based career exploration. DECA students again achieved Gold Certification for the Shark Shack, maintaining a perfect record since its founding.

The annual Mr. Fintastic philanthropy event raised more than \$10,000 for local charities.

Landrum Middle School: Celebrating student life and school improvements

Landrum Middle School is preparing for several major student events, including the return of the eighth grade dance and eighth grade graduation and awards ceremony — traditions being revived for the first time since 2014.

Athletically, Landrum celebrated district championships in both boys and girls basketball. The school is also slated for significant facility upgrades this summer, including new gym bleachers and a complete auditorium renovation featuring a new floor and seating.

PVPV/Rawlins Elementary: Academic leadership and a thriving school community

PVPV/Rawlins Elementary sustained its strong academic reputation — students in grades 3, 4 and 5 once again ranked at the top of the district in FAST Reading and Math proficiency.

The school's STEM Night was a major success, featuring student-designed engineering challenges, interactive STEM stations, community presenters and contributions from Landrum Middle School and PVHS musicians.

The school will soon launch its annual Kindness Week, promoting empathy,



Dr. Brennan W. Asplen III

inclusivity and character development through schoolwide activities. Families are also looking forward to the third annual Night of the Arts, showcasing student artwork, performances and interactive activities.

In collaboration with the Tristyn Bailey Foundation and the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, PVPV/Rawlins, Ocean Palms Elementary, Landrum Middle and Ponte Vedra High will co-host "Empowering Families. Protecting Children," a community forum on internet safety to be held April 1 at Landrum Middle School.

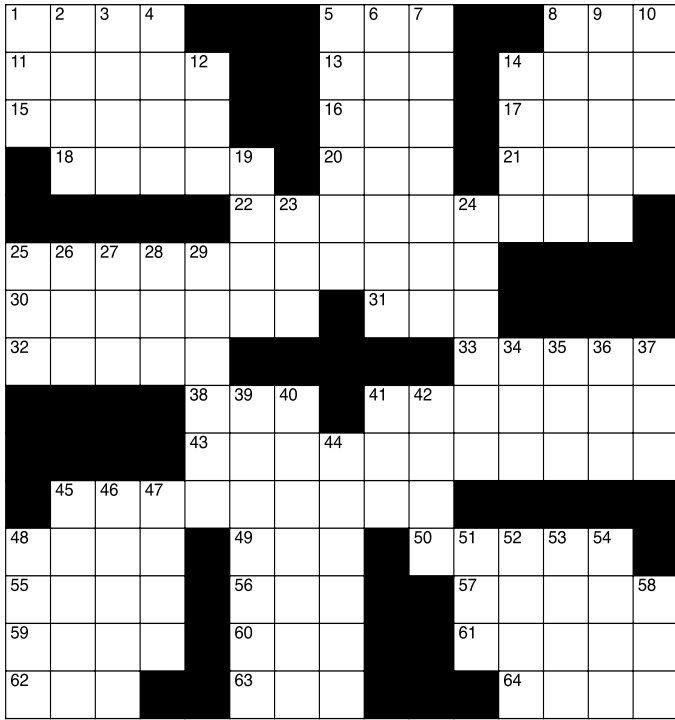
A district united in excellence

From elementary enrichment nights to high school national award winners, St. Johns County schools continue to deliver exceptional experiences and opportunities for all students. This recent collection of accomplishments highlights not only academic achievement, but also character, creativity and community — cornerstones of education across the district.

Dr. Brennan W. Asplen III is the Superintendent of St. Johns County School District.

Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. Egyptian bull-god
5. Romanian monetary unit
8. Will Ferrell holiday film
11. "It Ain't Half Hot Mum" actor
13. Error-related negativity
14. Volcanic crater
15. Boston Herald columnist Margery
16. True market value
17. Italian term for exchange rate
18. Informal loan clubs
20. Men's fashion accessory
21. Children's craft supply
22. Extra benefits
25. In an early way
30. A judge has one
31. Soviet Socialist Republic
32. Tractor unit
33. Defunct supercomputer developer

CLUES DOWN

1. Bridge building degree
2. Expression of sorrow or pity
3. Large, stocky lizard
4. Romanian river
5. Communication
6. Stoats
7. Showcases
8. Bird of prey
9. King of Thebes
10. Cleaving tool
12. Large African antelope
14. Three are particularly notable
19. Meet one's needs
23. C. European river
24. Dictator
25. Indicates how much out of 100 (abbr.)
26. The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet
27. Consume food
28. Woman (French)
29. Scrape a surface
34. Green vegetable
35. Pacific Standard Time
36. Capital of Brazilian city
37. Paddle
39. Cause to become insane
40. Drier and flakier
41. Mimic
42. ESPN personality Kimes
44. One who moves slowly
45. Secret political clique
46. Behind the stern of a ship
47. Supernatural force
48. Sanctuary
51. Swiss river
52. Grayish white
53. Engrave by coating
54. North Carolina university
58. Midway between south and southeast

LOTS OF LAUGHS WORD SEARCH

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

WORDS

- AMUSING
- BANTER
- CHUCKLE
- COMEDY
- FACETIOUS
- FUNNY
- GUFFAW
- HILARITY
- IRONY
- JESTING
- JOCULAR
- LEVITY
- MERRIMENT
- PARODY
- PUNCHLINE
- QUIP
- SATIRE
- SLAPSTICK
- SNICKER
- TEDIUM
- TICKLE
- UPROARIOUS
- WITTICISM
- ZANY

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



Solve the code to discover words related to fishing.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 1 = A)

- A. 15 21 1 4**
Clue: Rides on water
- B. 9 1 4 9 7**
Clue: Nab
- C. 15 1 3 4**
Clue: Lures in
- D. 2 3 18 19 20 5**
Clue: Heavy item

YMCA of Florida's First Coast names Darryl Head as new President and CEO

NewsLine staff

The YMCA of Florida's First Coast has appointed Darryl Head as its next president and CEO, effective early May 2026. Head brings 38 years of YMCA experience to Northeast Florida, where he will lead the organization's mission focused on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

Head succeeds Eric Mann, who is retiring at the end of June after a 40-year career with the YMCA, including 14 years at the helm of the First Coast association. The two will work together through June to ensure a seamless leadership transition.

"Darryl is a proven leader and faithful steward of the association's values," said Pam

Smith, chair of the board of directors for the YMCA of Florida's First Coast. "He is well-positioned to deepen the YMCA's life-changing impact for children, families and communities across Northeast Florida."

Most recently, Head served as president and CEO of the YMCA of Northwest North Carolina, overseeing 1,425 employees and 14 branches serving more than 78,000 members. During his tenure, he led the opening of the YMCA REACH Center in East Winston-Salem, established major medical partnerships and achieved record-breaking fundraising performances.

"I am so honored to join the First Coast YMCA and to become part of this vibrant and growing community," Head said. "I look forward to building upon the associa-

tion's solid foundation and powerful legacy of service."

Beyond his professional leadership, Head is an avid runner and a dedicated youth sports coach, having coached more than 720 children in basketball, football and soccer.

He and his wife, Karin, have two children, Reed and Hayden. For nearly 120 years, the YMCA of Florida's First Coast has provided opportunities for residents of all ages to build stronger bonds and live healthier lives. For more information, visit fcmymca.org.

Give Birds a Place to Call

Home

Eastern Bluebirds
Ecological Bird Box

20% OFF
One Non-Food Item
Become a Daily Savings Club member and save 15% on food every day!

Valid in store or on line at participating stores listed below. Offer not valid on previous purchases, gift cards, FOOD ITEMS, optics, Camera Feeders, Camera Nesting Boxes, DSC memberships or sale items.
Offer expires 04/30/26
CODE:BL1

St Johns
450 SR13 at Racetrack Rd
(next to Publix)
904.230.3242
wbu.com/jacksonville

Jax Beach
4138 Third Street South
(between Trader Joes & Staples)
904.246.6832
wbu.com/jacksonvillebeach

World Golf Village
180 Capulet Drive #5
(At Murabella)
904.209.5754
wbu.com/staugustine

SHOP. SIP. STROLL.

A UNIQUE BLEND OF UPSCALE SHOPPING, DINING, AND WELLNESS.

WWW.SAWGRASSVILLAGEJAX.COM

215 TOURSIDE DRIVE
PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL 32082

PLAN YOUR VISIT THIS WEEKEND!

VICAR'S LANDING

Live Exceptionally!



Vicar's Landing at Sawgrass



Vicar's Landing at Oak Bridge

You've Earned It. Now Enjoy It.



Discover a double dose of luxury retirement living at our two premiere neighborhoods in beautiful Ponte Vedra Beach.

Come home to our elegant residences, matchless amenities, and warm community. From gourmet dining, fitness centers, culture, and continuing education to on-site care for every stage of aging, Vicar's Landing will enrich your mind, body, and soul.

Reach out today, and let us show you just how golden these years can be.



Life Choice Community™

904.285.6000 | VicarsLanding.com