

Mandarin NewsLine

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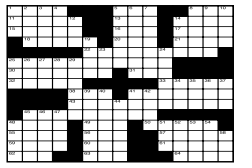
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Riverbed Echoes



Photo courtesy of Michele Alex

The Mandarin Garden Club's annual plant sale features a variety of locally grown plants and garden art.

Mandarin Garden Club to host annual plant sale, friendship tea

By Michele Alex

The Mandarin Garden Club's annual plant sale returns Friday, May 1, and Saturday, May 2, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily at 2892 Loretto Road. The sale features a wide variety of high-quality plants, hanging baskets, lawn ornaments and garden art.

Florida-Friendly Landscaping will provide public education, and Master Gardener volunteers are available for consultations. Visitors can browse stands from the Jacksonville Rose Society, the Orchid Society, the African Violet Society and the Bonsai Club. The club also invites attendees to participate in educational programs or shop for unique gifts for Mother's Day, graduations and birthdays. The event includes rare plants, handmade items from the club's "Crafty Ladies," local vendors, a food truck and baked goods.

The club also announced its annual "Butterfly and Blossom" Friendship Tea will take place



Photo courtesy of Michele Alex

The "Butterfly and Blossom" Friendship Tea transforms the clubhouse into an elegant tea room.

Garden Club cont. on pg. 2



Photo courtesy Museum of Florida History, Traveling Exhibit Program

An illustration depicts the Maple Leaf as a luxury passenger liner in service before the Civil War.

Original dive team returns to Mandarin Museum to share the secrets of a Civil War shipwreck

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewsline.com

Before the first light of April 1, 1864, an explosion shattered the predawn silence over Mandarin Point. The Maple Leaf, a luxury passenger liner pressed into service as a Union transport sidewheel steamship in 1862, became a casualty of the Civil War. It sank more than 20 feet into the St. Johns River after striking a submerged Confederate mine. For 130 years, the ship and its vast cargo lay entombed in river silt, forgotten by time but perfectly preserved by the mud.

Today, that history is no longer submerged. As the community marks 162 years since the sinking, the Mandarin Museum is bringing the men who re-discovered the wreck back to the shore to share their stories.



Photo courtesy Martie Thompson

The bow of the Maple Leaf is now on permanent display at the Mandarin Museum.

Riverbed Echoes cont. on pg. 2

Garden Club cont. from pg.1

Saturday, May 9, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. This community event transforms the clubhouse into an elegant tea room where caterers serve assorted teas, finger sandwiches, pastries, hot scones and fruit tarts.

The club invites residents to bring a friend or celebrate Mother's Day with family while enjoying the beauty of butterflies and spring blossoms. The entry fee is \$42 and can be paid at the door.

For more information on these events, visit mandaringardenclub.org.



Photo courtesy of Michele Alex

Rare plants and unique containers will be available at the Mandarin Garden Club plant sale on May 1 and May 2.

Riverbed Echoes cont. from pg.1

A strategic strike

The U.S. Civil War had raged for three years by the spring of 1864, and Florida was essential to the Confederates' war effort as a primary supplier of beef, pork, salt and cotton. Union incursions into the state were specifically aimed at cutting off these vital supply lines. By February 1864, the Union permanently occupied Jacksonville, using the city as a home base from which to control the St. Johns River, recruit Black men as soldiers and launch westward advances into the interior.

Confederate soldiers attached to the 2nd Battalion, Florida Infantry had deployed a series of 12 mines floating just below the surface across the narrow channel at Mandarin Point. Despite a Union defeat at the Battle of Olustee in Baker County, the United States

remained committed to its Florida campaign, occupying Palatka in addition to Jacksonville. On March 31, 1864, the Maple Leaf docked in Palatka to offload 87 cavalymen and their horses. Later that night, the steamer started its return to Jacksonville to deliver the contents of its cargo hold: the personal belongings and military equipment of several Union regiments.

The ship's pilot, Romeo Murray, a formerly enslaved man from the Kingsley Plantation, recalled the moment the riverbed claimed the vessel. "The river was still and perfectly smooth and I could see the shore well and make the channel easy," Murray later recounted. "There was a loud noise right under the boat and the pilot house lifted right up. I was raised up and my head struck the top of the pilot house and I fell down and lost my cap. The floor sunk right down. When I got up, the wire had

stretched and set the whistle blowing. I went out the starboard door and ran up the hog brace. I saw the second engineer forward and started for him supposing he went to let go the anchor. He said, 'get water.'... The whole deck, the main deck and the hurricane deck were settled right down and the pilot house fell forward... The boat went right down head first."

Murray was one of 62 survivors of the blast that killed four free Black crewmen. The ship became a total loss, and its cargo remained a ghost story of the river until the 1980s.

Bringing history to light

The modern chapter of the Maple Leaf began in the 1980s when Jacksonville dentist and adventurer Dr. Keith Holland assembled a team of amateur and professional marine archaeologists from St. Johns Archaeological Expeditions, Inc. to dive the wreckage. Braving the dark, low visibility waters of the St. Johns, the team recovered nearly 3,000 objects. These artifacts provide a glimpse into the daily lives of soldiers during the war that is unmatched in archaeological circles.

The site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994, the first shipwreck site in Duval County to receive the honor. The museum's expanded Maple Leaf Shipwreck Gallery now serves as the permanent home for these treasures on long term loan from the State of Florida. Visitors can examine the actual lead diving suit worn by lead diver Lee Manley and study a detailed model of the steamer. One of the more unique exhibits allows guests to listen

to original audio recordings of Manley and Holland communicating with each other during one of the earliest expeditions on the shipwreck site.

Meet the explorers

On the first Saturday of each month, the museum offers a unique opportunity to connect with this history firsthand. From 10 a.m. to noon, Dr. Holland and members of his original dive team are present in the gallery to personally discuss the shipwreck and the archaeological expedition. A red and white diver's flag posted outside the museum serves as the community's invitation to enter and ask questions of the men who explored the dark waters and touched every piece of history retrieved from the river.

The sessions also highlight the return of the definitive record of the wreck: "Maple Leaf: An Extraordinary American Civil War Shipwreck." This is the only book written about the ship, the dives and the cultural material. It was out of print for 20 years, but Dr. Holland has allowed the Mandarin Museum to reprint it as a 150th anniversary edition. Visitors can purchase a copy and have it autographed by the very men featured in the book.

The Mandarin Museum is located in Walter Jones Historical Park at 11964 Mandarin Road. The exhibit is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission to the museum and the "Meet the Divers" event is free, though donations are accepted.

For more information, visit mandarin-museum.org.



Photo courtesy of Mandarin Museum

Dr. Keith Holland (front left) and his team of divers will be at the Mandarin Museum on the first Saturday of each month to discuss the recovery of artifacts from the Maple Leaf.

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GAME DATES: April 11th, May 16th

For more information, contact Vinny Terlizzi at 904.742.8777 or vaterlizzi@gmail.com



Photo courtesy Mandarin Museum

A museum patron explores the artifacts recovered from the St. Johns River.

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Simba!

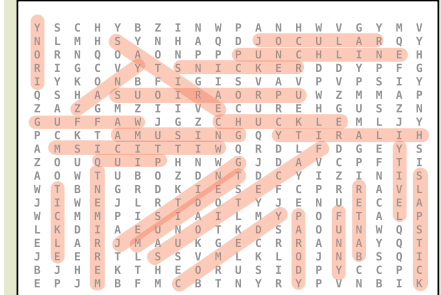
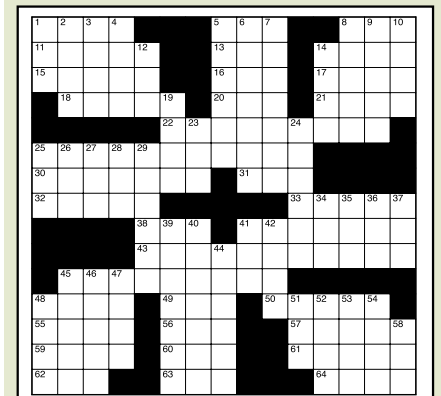


- Breed:**
Siamese/Snowshoe Siamese mix
- Favorite Activity:**
Snuggling with family
- Favorite Food:**
Kitty treats
- Favorite Friends:**
His brother, Duke
- How did your BFF get their name:**
He looked like a baby lion as a kitten

Do you have a cute pet? Send us your pet's picture and the answer to the five questions above before the 10th of the month. Also tell us you saw the BFF contest in Mandarin NewsLine. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in Mandarin NewsLine! Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet.



Answers to our Puzzles PG 9



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wbu.com/jacksonville

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April

Community Calendar What's Happening in Mandarin

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

April 7

GriefShare seminar

A 13-week GriefShare seminar begins Tuesday, April 7, at the Cody Enrichment Center, 4152 Loretto Road. Each two-hour session runs from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

April 7

Honeybee Quilters Guild

The Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet Tuesday, April 7, at 6:30 p.m. at the Mandarin Church of Christ, 12791 Old St. Augustine Road. Doors open at 6 p.m. The program features "Quilt Finishes for Borders." New members and guests are welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

April 8 – May 13

Elementary Art Exhibition

The annual Elementary Art Exhibition, honoring the work of student artists from Duval County Public Schools, will be on display at both the Mandarin and South Mandarin libraries.

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 11

North Florida Genealogical Society meeting

The North Florida Genealogical Society

will host "Roots and Branches," an informal and interactive basic genealogy program for beginners and those needing a refresher, Saturday, April 11, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The program features speaker Alana Master and will be held at a new location: the NFGS Library, 6215 Sauterne Drive. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, call 904-778-1000 or visit sgesjax.org.

April 16, 30

Turn Up for Tech

Families are invited to explore STEM-based challenges including robots, circuits and coding from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the South Mandarin Library.

April 18

AIA Jacksonville Society Lecture

The Archaeological Institute of America—Jacksonville Society will meet Saturday, April 18, at noon in Building 51 at the University of North Florida. Dr. Zachery Dunseth will present "Dung and Copper: Environmental archaeology at the macro- and microscale." The lecture is free and open to the public. Contact Melva Price at 904-241-9411 for details.

April 23

Mandarin Women's Club's Annual Fashion Show

The Mandarin Women's Club will host its annual luncheon and fashion show at the Ramada Inn Mandarin, 3130 Hartley Road. Doors open at 10:15 a.m. Attendees must make reservations by April 13. For more information or to RSVP, contact Barbara Metallo at 904-612-6494 or email barbara.metallo@outlook.com.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Mondays – Youth Fandom Events

Mandarin Library hosts free events for youth ages 9 and older every Monday at 4 p.m. Activities include games and themes inspired by popular characters and books like Fortnite, Captain Underpants and Avatar the Last Airbender.

Third Thursdays – Friends of Mandarin South Library meeting and programs

The Friends Group meets at 1 p.m. the third Thursday of each month in the foyer meeting room. The group sponsors chair yoga, Young Artists, Critter Visits by the Zoo and board games for teens. Programs are funded by donations and sales of books, records, CDs and puzzles.

Second Thursdays – American Legion Post 372 Mandarin "Fallen Heroes"

The group meets the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. on the second floor of the Williams YMCA, 10415 San Jose Blvd. All veterans and spouses are welcome. Visit alpost372fl.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.

Sprout – Science through Gardening

Sprout program, Science through Gardening is offered for homeschoolers

ages 9 to 12. They meet at the Mandarin Garden Club on second and fourth Mondays of the month from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. For more information, contact katprov5@gmail.com or visit mandarin-gardenclub.org/sprouts.

Mandarin Parkinson's Support Group

Men and women of all ages and stages of Parkinson's are welcome. Support group meets monthly on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Church of Eleven22, 4911 Losco Road. For more information, contact Katheryn Donaldson at serving4_him@yahoo.com or 904-710-1449.

Little Readers

Storytime for infants and toddlers (ages birth to five) with stories, music and movement. Storytimes run from 2 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Mondays and 10:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. on Thursdays at South Mandarin Library. Or join us from 10:15 a.m. 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 and fellowship. Meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. RSVP to Ruth Saunders at 904-401-3291 or FloridaSaunders974@gmail.com.

Toast of Jax Toastmasters

Meets every Saturday (except holiday weekends) at 8:30 a.m. at Baha'i Community Center, 5034 Greenland Road. Visit toastofjax.toastmastersclubs.org.

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A Unified Voice for Mandarin: Inside the Mandarin Area Preservation Project

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
 editor@floridanewslines.com

The unique character and quality of life that define the Mandarin community are the central focus of a new foundational initiative known as the Mandarin Area Preservation (MAP) project. While the term "preservation" often brings to mind historic buildings, Jacksonville City Council Member Michael Boylan, who represents District 6, describes a broader mission: protecting the very essence of what makes the Mandarin area a unique place to live.



Michael Boyland

How does a project like this move from a concept to a functioning entity? The Mandarin NewsLine spoke with Boylan to explain the vision, the funding and the process, so residents can understand how they might be affected.

The vision and funding

The project began approximately 18 months ago when Boylan secured \$175,000 in strategic funding to hire a consultant. The goal was to create a "coalescing force" that could speak with a single, effective voice for the diverse communities within District 6.

Unlike more concentrated preservation groups such as Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) or Springfield Preservation and Restoration (SPAR), MAP is designed to address an expansive and varied district. This ranges from the Mandarin Road peninsula to newer developments along the St. Augustine Road and Greenland Road corridors.

"The focus is not meant to be about paving streets or fixing a broken sidewalk," Boylan said. "The focus is beautification, fostering the ability to make sure our main thoroughfares look nice and creating an entity that champions the area."

The process and implementation

After a year-long Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the city awarded the contract to HALFF, a group specializing in organizing such entities. The consultant's role is to determine if the community is willing to support a new organization.

The proposed structure for MAP includes three full-time positions: an executive director, a development director and an outreach coordinator. Boylan indicated that while initial funding came from council strategic funds, the first year of operations could potentially be jumpstarted by the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), which allotted up to \$1 million to each council person for district-specific use.

The next steps in the process involve significant public input:

- **Neighborhood Assessment:** Consultants recently toured the district to gain an on-site appreciation for the diversity of its various neighborhoods.
- **Citizen Participation:** A public survey is currently in development and is expected to be released by early summer to gauge interest and gather feedback from residents.
- **Stakeholder Outreach:** Plans are underway to host small group meetings with leadership from the approximately 40 homeowners associations in District 6, as well as major commercial investors.

Potential challenges and alternatives

The creation of a new preservation entity is not without potential controversy. While existing community organizations have historically played a role in neighborhood advocacy, Boylan acknowl-

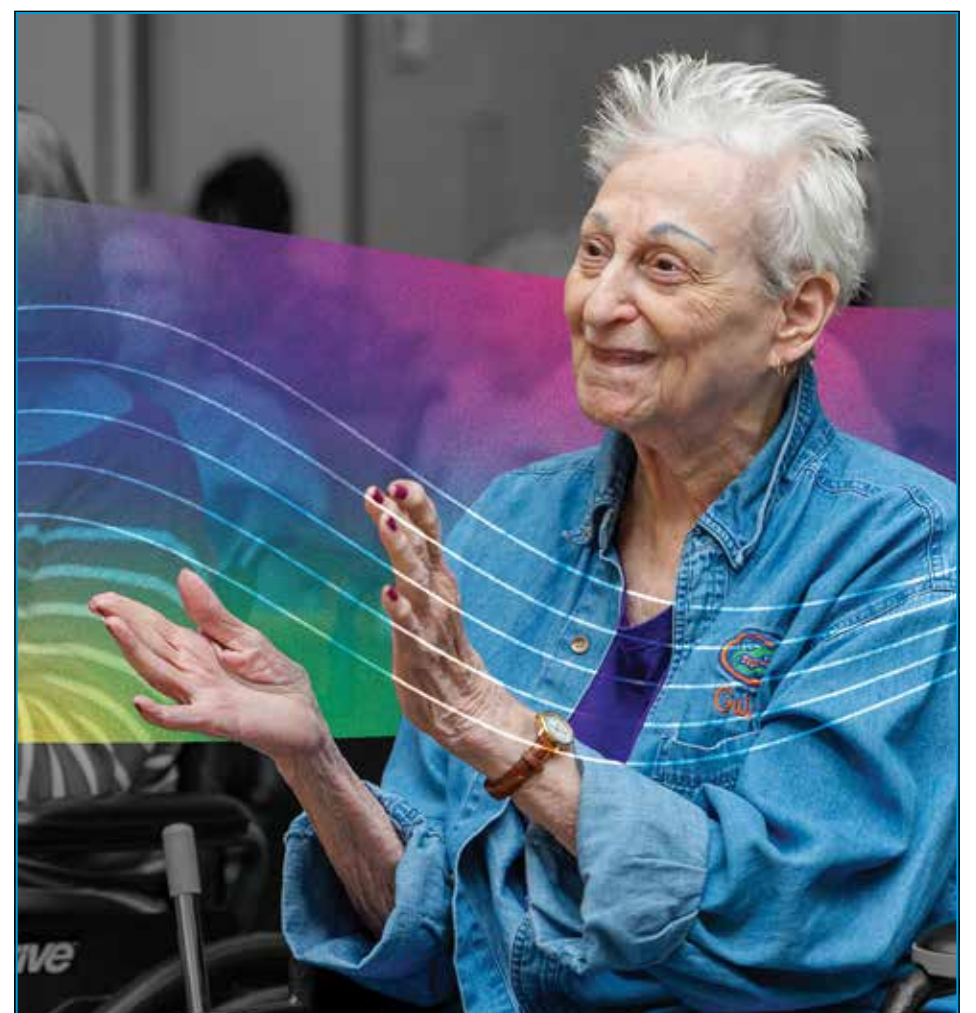
edged that there may be pushback from established groups that feel they already handle these responsibilities. He noted, however, that MAP is intended to offer a more far-reaching and professionally staffed approach to modern rezoning and development challenges.

The project is also being framed as a proactive alternative to a "Neighborhood Bill of Rights," a separate movement that seeks to codify the voice of neighborhoods opposing specific developments. MAP's goal is to provide

a neutral site for developers, the city and neighbors to understand the planning process and find compromises before projects reach the Land Use and Zoning Committee.

Ultimately, the goal is to produce a business plan that leads to either a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit or the adoption of the project under an existing organization's umbrella.

Mandarin Area cont. on pg. 6



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Photo courtesy of Council Member Michael Boylan
 A current rendering of the Alberts Field Expansion.

A not-for-profit agency sponsored by the organized Jacksonville Jewish community.

NEWS BRIEFS

ElderSource offers resources for seniors

NewsLine staff

ElderSource is providing two free resources designed to support the health, safety and well-being of older adults and caregivers in Northeast Florida. The initiatives include Scent Preservation Kits and the BetterAge health self-assessment tool.

The Scent Preservation Kits are designed for families caring for individuals at risk of wandering, such as those living with dementia. The scientifically tested kits allow caregivers to store a loved one's unique scent in a sealed container, providing K9 responders with an uncontaminated scent article to begin searches quickly if the individual goes missing.

Caregivers can schedule an appointment to receive a free kit by calling ElderSource at 904-892-6606. Appointments

take place at the ElderSource office, 10688 Old St. Augustine Road, and the person living with dementia must be present. The initiative is funded by a grant from Baptist Health.

Additionally, adults age 50 and older can access a free and confidential health self-assessment through a partnership with BetterAge. The assessment takes approximately 10 minutes to complete, and participants receive a personalized health report with tailored recommendations. The data collected also helps ElderSource identify community needs to strengthen its programs and services.

ElderSource serves more than 12,000 people annually across a seven-county service area as the state-designated Area Agency on Aging and Aging & Disability Resource Center. For more information, visit myeldersource.org.

Archaeological Society to host lecture on ancient Negev settlement

NewsLine staff

The Archaeological Institute of America—Jacksonville Society will meet at noon Saturday, April 18, in Building 51 at the University of North Florida. The guest speaker is Dr. Zachery Dunseth, Associate Professor of Anthropology and the Kershaw Chair of the Archaeology of Ancient Israel and Neighboring Lands at the University of California at San Diego.

Dunseth's lecture, "Dung and Copper: Environmental archaeology at the macro- and microscale," focuses on the earliest waves of large-scale settlement in the Negev during the Early and Intermediate Bronze Ages. The talk spans the rise and fall of urban cities to the north and the "megadrought" 4,500 years ago. He will report on investigations into subsistence, animal rearing and the copper industry across Negev sites.

The lecture is free and open to the public. The society will serve complimentary refreshments in the Anthropology Lab following the presentation. Parking



Photo courtesy of AIA - Jacksonville Society
Zachery Dunseth, Associate Professor at UC San Diego, will present a lecture on environmental archaeology in the Negev on April 18.

is free on Saturdays, and staff, faculty and vendor spaces are available to all visitors.

For more information, contact Melva Price at 904-241-9411 or email aiajax-soc@gmail.com.

Annual Plant Sale

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Bakers sought for Mandarin Art Festival bake sale

NewsLine staff

The Mandarin Community Club is seeking donations of homemade treats for its long-standing Mandarin Art Festival bake sale. Members and residents are encouraged to contribute their favorite baked goods to continue the tradition of providing sweets for festival guests.

The most popular items for the sale include cookies, brownies, homemade candies and quick breads. Cakes and

pies may be donated whole. All items should be packaged in clear bags and clearly labeled with their contents, specifically noting the inclusion of common allergens such as nuts or coconut.

Donations can be dropped off Friday, April 3, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Mandarin Community Club, 12447 Mandarin Road. Deliveries should be taken to the kitchen in the main hall.

For more information, contact Wanda Bosworth at **904-654-6945**.

Mandarin Area cont. from pg. 5

Update on the Alberts Field Expansion

In addition to the MAP project, Boylan provided an update on the Alberts Field expansion. Construction is currently underway, with crews installing sidewalks leading to the area and paving the entranceway.

The project includes separate areas for small and large dogs. Despite some delays caused by design modifications intended to preserve the existing playground for families, the park is expected to be completed within the next two months.

For more information on the MAP project or to view updates on district initiatives, contact Council Member Boylan at mboylan@coj.net or 904-255-5206.

Visit us online

FloridaNewsLine.com

Art, technology and reading contests highlight April library schedule

By Jeremy Yates

The annual Elementary Art Exhibition is back at 16 participating public libraries. Honoring the fantastic work of student artists and their teachers from Duval County Public Schools, the show runs April 8 through May 13 at both the

Mandarin and South Mandarin libraries.

Creative kids and teens: Win \$100 in cash for writing the most persuasive book review! The annual Celebrate Reading Week Book Review Writing Contest is open to Duval County



A library patron browses the collection at a local library. Mandarin and South Mandarin libraries are hosting several events in April, including a book review contest and the annual Elementary Art Exhibition.

students in public, private and home-school, grades K-12. Four prizes will be awarded, one for each age group (grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12). Book reviews may include text or drawings but should not exceed 300 words. Email entries to ilovebooks@coj.net or fill out an entry form at your library. Submissions due April 12. Winners will be announced at our annual Family Reading Day on April 25 at the Main Library.

Hear great stories, mixed with music and movement, for a fun learning and bonding experience for parents and little ones. Storytimes run weekly from 2 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Mondays and 10:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. Thursdays at the South Mandarin Library. Or join us at 10:15 a.m. or 11 a.m. on Fridays at the Mandarin Library.

Got an emerging reader who needs a boost in confidence? Drop in and give your child the opportunity to practice their reading skills with a trained therapy dog at the South Mandarin Library! Yona, the Newfoundland dog, visits from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on

Saturday, April 11. The yellow Labrador retriever, JC, stops by from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 22. Kids can also read to Yona at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 25, at the Mandarin Library.

Kids can hone their skills as a Pokémon trainer at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 9, at the Mandarin Library. They'll start by creating their own card and brushing up on the basics. Then, using official playing cards, they'll battle other trainers. They can also join us at 4 p.m. every Monday at the Mandarin Library for free "fandom" events with themed games and activities inspired by popular characters, books or games.

Families: "Turn Up for Tech" and fun, STEM-based challenges from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 16 and 30, at the South Mandarin Library. Suitable for all ages, kids, teens and their parents are welcome to explore and interact with everything from robots to circuits, animation and coding.

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

Simple Easter Bunny cookie recipe

Mandarin Community Club

This trendy new cookie design has been "hopping" all across social media and for good reason! Take your favorite chocolate chip cookie recipe and, with some minor tweaks, you have a delicious treat any "bunny" would love!

Ingredients:

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, soften to room temp
- 1 1/4 cups packed brown sugar (Light or Dark)
- 1/2 cup granulated white sugar
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
- 3 large egg yolks
- 4 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon of baking soda

- 1 teaspoon of kosher salt
- 1 cup of Pastel M&M's
- 1 cup Whoppers Robin Eggs Malted Milk Balls

Directions:

1. **Preheat oven to 350°F.** Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. **Cream the butter and sugars:** In a large bowl, combine the softened butter, brown sugar, and white sugar. Smoosh and stir vigorously (by hand with a spatula/wooden spoon or mixer) for 2-4 minutes until light, fluffy, and well combined—really press against the bowl sides like in the original for that tender, gooey base.
3. **Add wet ingredients:** Mix in the vanilla and the 3 egg yolks until smooth and fully incorporated.

4. **Add dry ingredients:** Stir in the flour, baking soda, and salt until just combined (don't overmix to keep them tender).

5. **Fold in M&Ms:** Gently fold in the 1 cup pastel M&Ms. Dough will be thick and scoopable.

6. **Optional chill:** Refrigerate dough for 15-30 minutes if you want thicker cookies with less spread and super gooey centers.

7. **Scoop and shape:** Divide into your preferred size. Place 2-3 inches apart on sheets.

8. **Bake: 10-14 minutes.** Until edges golden and set, centers soft and just set (gooey inside, not raw). Giants closer to 12-14 min; smaller 10-12 min. Avoid residual heat by removing from cookie sheet to cool off on counter.



Photo courtesy Mandarin Community Club

9. **Prepare M&Ms:** While cookies in oven, take two of the same color M&Ms and cut one in half. This will form the "ears" of the Easter Bunny.

10. **Decorate:** While cookies are still warm and cooling off, press one M&M into the top off cookie and then take the 1/2 cut M&M and place it above to form the Easter Bunny. Take a Whoppers Robin Egg and press into the cookie. Make sure they are both pressed down in the cookie or else they will fall off. Allow cookies to finish cooling off.



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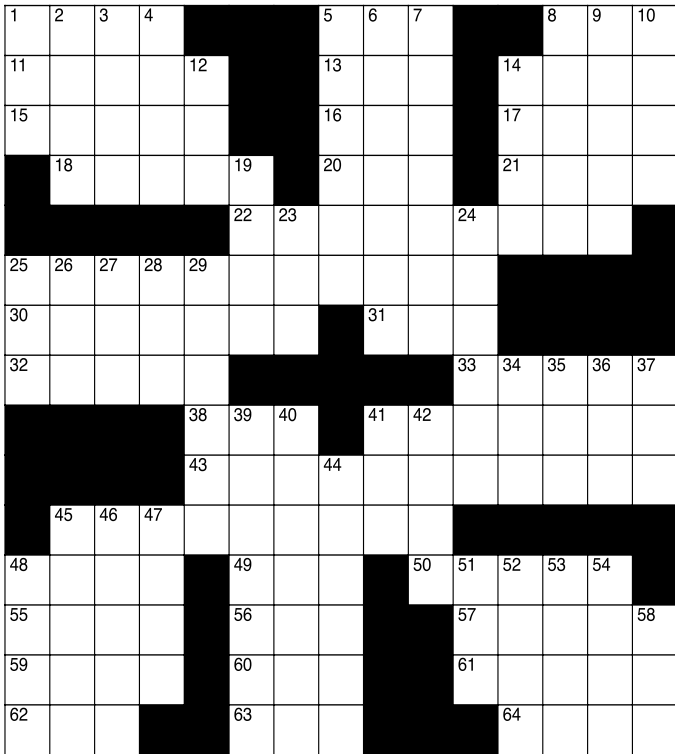
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Puzzles

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
38. Promotional materials
41. A forgetful state
43. One who beheads
45. Photographers
48. Small, rich sponge cake
49. Clergy's vestment
50. Expressed pleasure
55. Abba __, Israeli politician
56. Zero
57. Ancient Greek word for "earless"
59. Nigerian governmental area
60. Mild expression of surprise
61. Places to hang things
62. Keyboard key
63. Make a mistake
64. One-time president of Republic of Korea

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

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Y S C H Y B Z I N W P A N H W 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
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 R I G C V Y T S N I C K E R D D Y P S 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 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 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 J 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.



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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



Gardening

By Connie Doyle,
Master Gardener
UF/IFAS

The Good Earth: Small seeds, big rewards

April is one of the most rewarding months to be a gardener in North-east Florida. The days are warming, the threat of frost has passed, and garden centers are bursting with colorful plants. But before filling a cart with plants, consider another option: starting plants from seed.



Connie Doyle

While gardeners in colder parts of the country must start seeds indoors months before spring arrives, those gardening in Zone 9B have the advantage of warm soil and a long growing season. According to planting guidance from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and UF/IFAS Extension, April is an excellent time to sow many seeds directly into the garden.

The Good Earth cont. on pg. 9

Spring styles take center stage at Mandarin Women's Club luncheon

By Gail Packard

The Mandarin Women's Club is cruising into spring with its annual spring fashion show! On Thursday, April 23, the Mandarin Women's Club will hold its luncheon and annual fashion show at the Ramada Inn Mandarin, 3130 Hartley Road. Club members will model outfits provided by The Petunia Patch. A Petunia Patch representative will assist the models in selecting the clothing that is just right for each of them. Join the club at the fashion show to enjoy a delicious lunch, cheer on the models and find that perfect outfit. The fashion show begins at 10:45 a.m. followed by lunch.

Doors open at 10:15 a.m. and reservations for the luncheon are required.

The luncheon cost is \$25 and must be received by Monday, April 13. To make reservations and obtain payment instructions, call Barbara at 904-612-6494 or email her at barbara.metallo@outlook.com. For more information on events, photos and membership forms, visit mandarinwomensclub.com.



Photo courtesy of Judy Baier
Several Mandarin Women's Club members enjoyed an afternoon of bowling at Bowlero Mandarin.

The Good Earth cont. from pg. 8

Starting from seed has several advantages. First, it is economical. A single packet of seeds often costs only a few dollars and can produce dozens of plants. Second, seeds offer a much wider variety than what is typically available as starter plants. Finally, there is a deep satisfaction in watching a plant grow from a tiny seed into a thriving part of the garden.

Many warm-season vegetables germinate quickly in spring soil. Gardeners can successfully plant beans, cucumbers, squash, corn, melons and okra directly in the garden this month. Herbs such as basil also grow easily from seed once nighttime temperatures remain warm.

April is also an excellent time to sow seeds for summer flowers. Bright, heat-loving blooms such as zinnias, cosmos and sunflowers germinate quickly and will begin flowering in early summer.

There are a few simple tips to ensure



success when growing from seed in this coastal environment. Because Ponte Vedra's soil can be sandy, seeds can dry out quickly. Keep the seedbed lightly moist until seedlings emerge, but avoid overwatering. Incorporating compost or other organic matter into the soil before plant-

ing can help improve moisture retention and provide nutrients for young plants. It is also helpful to follow the planting depth listed on the seed packet.

Once seedlings emerge, thinning them may be necessary so each plant has enough room to grow. While it can be difficult to remove healthy seedlings, proper spacing results in stronger plants and a better harvest.

Starting plants from seed requires a little patience, but the reward is well worth the effort. In just a few weeks, these tiny seeds will transform into flourishing vegetables

and colorful flowers, proving that one of the greatest joys of gardening is watching life grow from the very beginning.

Grow joy, one seed at a time.

Connie Doyle writes The Good Earth, a gardening column inspired by a lifelong 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@floridanewline.com.

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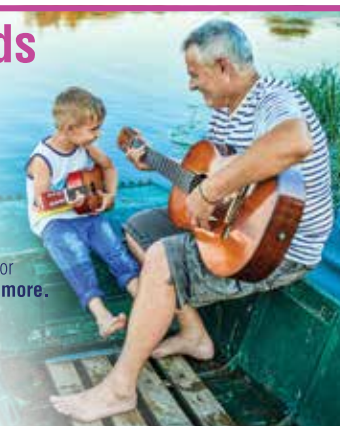
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Travel

Think You Know Kissimmee? Think Again

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

Everyone knows Kissimmee because of Orlando. It's the place you stay when you're going to the theme parks. The name appears on hotel confirmations and rental car directions. But ask most travelers what there is to see in Kissimmee itself and you will likely get a pause.



Debi Lander

That's a mistake.

Beyond Disney and Universal lies a Florida that surprises. Kissimmee offers lakeside sunsets, airboat rides through wild marsh, Old Florida ranchlands and a walkable historic downtown that feels worlds away from roller coaster crowds. It also offers one of its best-kept secrets: luxury vacation homes designed for gathering, relaxing and spreading out in comfort.

I settled into one of these spacious homes, complete with a private pool, game room and theater, and room to unwind after busy days. It was easy to see why these properties have become a signature draw. For families, multi-generational groups or friends traveling together, the space and privacy feel like a retreat, yet everything remains close at hand.

My first stop was Gatorland, where I expected gators and got far more. Yes, enormous reptiles sunned along the banks and thrilling demonstrations showcased their power. But the real surprise came when I clipped into a harness and soared above them on the Screamin' Gator Zip Line. Suspended high over the breeding marsh, I had a bird's-eye view of dozens of alligators below. It was exhilarating for sure.

If Gatorland brought adrenaline, a Boggy Creek Airboat ride revealed the region's wild soul. Skimming across the headwaters of the Everglades, wind whipping past, we sped through tall grasses and shallow water stretching toward the horizon. Birds lifted from the reeds, alligators rested along the banks and, unexpectedly, cattle grazed in the wetlands. Ranch life and untamed marshland share the same landscape, a

reminder of Florida's frontier roots.

Evenings offered a different rhythm. At the Columbia Restaurant in nearby Celebration, I lingered over Spanish-Cuban classics, including the famed 1905 Salad, in a festive yet relaxed setting. Celebration's tidy streets and lakeside paths provided a charming counterpoint to the day's wilderness.

For theatrical flair, I cheered at Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament, where knights on horseback clashed in spirited competition. The night delighted the crowd and proved that Kissimmee embraces spectacle as easily as serenity.

In winter, Kissimmee's Gaylord Palms Resort draws visitors with its frosty twist. The annual "ICE" exhibition transforms 2 million pounds of hand-carved ice into dazzling sculptures and immersive scenes kept at 9 degrees. Donning a blue parka, last December I wandered through glowing corridors of frozen artistry that felt worlds away from central Florida sunshine.



Photo by Debi Lander

Luxury vacation homes in Kissimmee offer private pools and ample space for families to relax and unwind.



Photo by Debi Lander

Alligators are a common sight during airboat excursions through the wild marshlands of Kissimmee.

Back in downtown Kissimmee, I slowed the pace again with brunch at Susana's Café. The cozy spot buzzed with locals lingering over strong Cuban coffee and plates piled high with breakfast favorites. The friendly service and unhurried atmosphere made it easy to relax.

After brunch, I strolled brick-lined streets toward the broad sweep of Lake

Tohopekaliga. Local shops, shaded benches and a gentle waterfront breeze create a relaxed setting that feels distinctly Floridian. As sunset later washed the sky in pink and gold, I understood something important: Kissimmee is not competing with Orlando. It complements it.

In a single trip, I zipped above alligators, skimmed wetlands where cattle grazed beside wild birds, dined on Spanish cuisine, cheered for armored knights and returned each night to a spacious vacation home that felt like my own Florida retreat.

Orlando may draw the crowds. Kissimmee rewards those who linger. And once you do, you discover a destination with an identity all its own.

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@floridanewslines.com.



Photo by Debi Lander

An airboat skims through the headwaters of the Everglades during a Boggy Creek Airboat ride.



Photo by Debi Lander

Knights on horseback clash in spirited competition at the Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament.

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