

Mandarin NewsLine

May 2026 Volume 21 Issue 5

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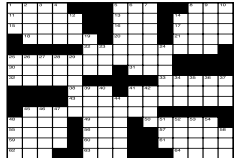


Photo courtesy Mandarin Garden Club

Members of the Mandarin Garden Club enjoy a previous Friendship Tea social. The club will host its annual "Butterfly and Blossom" Friendship Tea on May 9.

Mandarin Garden Club prepares for annual plant sale, friendship tea

By Michele Alex

Spring has arrived in Mandarin, and members of the Mandarin Garden Club are active with seasonal maintenance in preparation for a busy schedule of May events and community outreach.

The club's primary seasonal event, the Annual Plant Sale, is scheduled for Friday, May 1 and Saturday, May 2 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Held at the club grounds, the sale will feature a wide variety of plants, hanging baskets, lawn ornaments and garden art. Following the sale, the club will host its annual "Butterfly and Blossom" Friendship Tea on Saturday, May 9 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The event transforms the clubhouse into a tea room where attendees are served assorted teas and catered finger sandwiches, pastries and fruit tarts.

In addition to public events, the club has launched a new "Foster Seeds" program through its Green

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VIBRANT VILLAGE



Submitted photo

Jacksonville acrylic artist Carolyn Veros holds smaller versions of some of her works.

Mandarin Art Festival continues long-standing tradition

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewslines.com

The 2026 Mandarin Art Festival returned to the heart of the community in April, bringing artists and residents together under the canopy of the Patriarch Oaks for a showcase of national talent and local tradition.

Established in 1968, the festival has evolved into a multi-generational event for residents and visitors alike. This year, the venue was shaded by the Patriarch Oaks of Mandarin Road, which are hundreds of years old. The event hosted



From left, John Cheer, the 2026 Best of Show winner, is pictured with Show Chair Susie Scott and Show Manager Noel Michael. The annual festival featured more than 100 juried artists.

Art Festival cont. on pg. 2

SUMMER SAFARI

Williams Family YMCA hosts wellness retreat, opens summer registration

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewslines.com

The Williams Family YMCA recently hosted the "Safari to Self" Women's Wellness Retreat, a community event focused on health, connection and education for women ages 45 to 60.

The retreat featured a variety of sessions aimed at supporting physical, mental and emotional well-being. A keynote presentation from Mary Beth of Baptist Health highlighted topics surrounding perimenopause and menopause, provid-

YMCA cont. on pg. 2



Staff members welcome participants to the "Safari to Self" Women's Wellness Retreat at the Williams Family YMCA. The event provided health resources and community connection for local women.

Art Festival cont. from pg. 1

more than 100 juried artists. Exhibited works spanned a wide range of mediums, including painting, photography, sculpture, mixed media, jewelry and functional fine craft.

In addition to the professional artist displays, the event featured a Green Market with locally produced consumables, a dedicated Food Court and live enter-



Joshua Steele (center) displays his Photography Judges Choice award alongside Show Chair Susie Scott and Show Manager Noel Michael. The festival returned to the heart of historic Mandarin under the shade of the community's ancient oak trees.

tainment. The Children's Art Show remained a highlight of the weekend, with 15 area schools represented in this year's exhibition.

"The 2026 Mandarin Art Festival was graced with fantastic weather, fabulous artwork and big crowds to enjoy it all," said Susie Scott, past president and festival supervising board member.

Scott offered her congratulations to the artists recognized at this year's event. "Congratulations to the winning exhibitors at the 2026 Mandarin Art Festival," she said. "The winners are from six categories: painting, mixed media, functional, photography, jewelry and sculpture/glass, plus best of show, best booth and best reclaimed/recycled."

Proceeds from the festival benefit the nonprofit Mandarin Community Club. The organization's mission focuses on the preservation and beautification of the Mandarin community, while also maintaining the historic structures and property owned by the club.

2026 Mandarin Art Festival Winners' Circle

Top Honors Best of Show: John Cheer; **Best Booth Display:** Heather Cohen; **Reclaimed/Recycled:** Robin Holt.

Judges Choice Painting: Emma Greenhill; **Mixed Media:** Kristina Hoover; **Functional:** Tim Bullard; **Photography:** Joshua Steele; **Jewelry:** Chris Massina; **Sculpture/Glass:** Don McCullough.



Photography Award of Merit winner Jesse Kraker (center) is joined by Show Chair Susie Scott (left) and Show Manager Noel Michael (right) at his display booth during the Easter weekend event.

Award of Merit Painting: Noel Smith; **Mixed Media:** Laura Wallin; **Functional:** Pauletta Berger; **Photography:** Jesse Kraker; **Jewelry:** Mary Lee; **Sculpture/Glass:** Ben Peterson.

Susie Scott is a past president, Art Fest supervising board member and serves on the 2026 Mandarin Community Club board of directors.

YMCA cont. from pg. 1

ing resources for women navigating that stage of life. Attendees also participated in interactive fitness sessions, including a "Strength Safari" led by group exercise instructor Georgette Butler and a "BodyBalance" session guided by Jen DeCamp.

Additional components of the retreat included a "Nutrition Oasis" session held under the oak trees with First Coast YMCA dietitian Kerri Napoleon. Participants also received hands-on recovery experiences, including muscle



Photo courtesy William Family YMCA
A keynote presentation from Mary Beth of Baptist Health provides insights on perimenopause and menopause during the wellness retreat held in the YMCA gymnasium.

release massages provided by Miskell Physical Therapy and a self-care experience supported by Amy Kadlubowski of Elase Med Spa. Throughout the morning, guests were served healthy mocktails from Backyard Bartender.

"The goal of this event was to create a space where women could connect, learn and focus on their health in a supportive community," said Melinda Lewis, healthy living director for the First Coast YMCA. "We are grateful for the team and partners who made this experience possible, and for the women who showed up for themselves and each other."

Following the conclusion of the women's retreat, the branch is now shifting its focus toward youth development with the launch of its summer program registration. The summer lineup offers a variety of programs including day camps, swim team and specialty camps.

The YMCA's Summer Day Camp remains a cornerstone of the branch's youth programming, providing an environment where children can build friendships and stay active. Each week features themed activities, outdoor play, team-building games and opportunities



Photo courtesy William Family YMCA
Staff and students gather for a group photo during a recent day camp program. The Williams Family YMCA offers various specialty camps ranging from marine science to culinary arts.



Photo courtesy William Family YMCA
Local children enjoy the playground at the Williams Family YMCA. The branch is preparing for a full schedule of summer day camps and outdoor activities.



Photo courtesy William Family YMCA
Campers show off American flags constructed during a Lego Specialty Camp session at the Williams Family YMCA. Registration is now open for the summer season.



Photo courtesy William Family YMCA
Participants engage in a group fitness session on the outdoor turf at the Williams Family YMCA as part of the "Strength Safari" and BodyBalance programming.



Photo courtesy William Family YMCA
A retreat participant displays a "Safari to Self" program and commemorative tote bag. The event featured educational resources and recovery experiences for attendees.

for personal growth led by trained staff.

For young athletes, the YMCA's swim team offers the chance to build confidence in the water, improve technique and participate in friendly competition. The branch also continues its tennis camp program. Utilizing the facility's clay courts and coaching staff, campers build fundamentals and refine their technique.

The YMCA is also featuring a lineup of specialty camps focused on specific interests. Options include Culinary Camp, where children explore the kitchen and learn basic cooking skills; Lego Camp, which focuses on construction and imaginative play; Art Camp, which encourages self-expression through various mediums; and Marine

Science Camp, where participants engage in hands-on learning about ocean life and ecosystems. Additional themed camps will be offered throughout the summer to provide various options for local families.

"Summer at the YMCA is about more than just keeping kids busy—it's about creating meaningful experiences that help them grow in spirit, mind and body," said a representative for the Williams branch.

Registration is now open and families are encouraged to secure spots early, as programs are expected to fill quickly. For more information or to register, residents can visit the Williams Family YMCA Welcome Center or the organization's website.

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Submissions

Community news and photos are due by the 10th of each month to ensure inclusion in the upcoming issue. Thank you for your support of trusted community journalism.

Mandarin NewsLine community newspaper is a free monthly publication delivered to all addresses in Zip Codes 32223, 32258, and selected neighborhoods in 32257. 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 Reggie!

Breed:

Lab pit mix

Favorite Activity:

Running

Favorite Food:

Milk Bone treats

Favorite Friends:

Her late sister Winnie, the cavalier King Charles, and Muffin, her tabby cat sister.

How did your BFF get their name:

How did your BFF get their name: Reggie was named after a character in the children's show "Rocket Power." The main character "Reggie" was the sportiest, most athletic girl around.



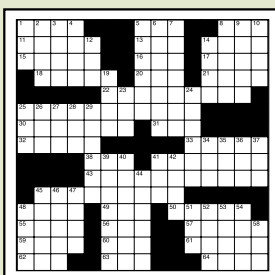
Do you have a cute pet? Send us your pet's picture and the answer to the five questions above before the 10th of the month. Also tell us you saw the BFF contest in Mandarin NewsLine. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in Mandarin NewsLine! Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your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



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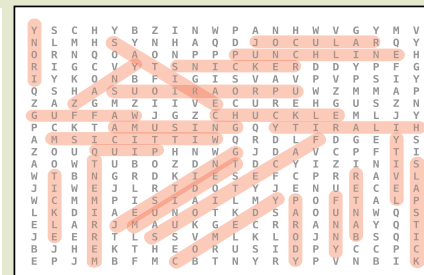
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Answers to our Puzzles PG 8



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A. resolution B. promise C. healthy D. goal



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Community Calendar

What's Happening in Mandarin

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

April 23
Mandarin Republican Club meeting
 The Mandarin Republican Club will meet Thursday, April 23, at St. Mary's Seafood, 11290 Old St. Augustine Road. Social time begins at 6 p.m. and the meeting starts at 6:30 p.m.

May 1-2
Mandarin Garden Club Annual Plant Sale
 The Mandarin Garden Club will host its annual plant sale Friday, May 1 and Saturday, May 2 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 2892 Loretto Rd. The sale will feature a wide variety of high-quality plants, hanging baskets, lawn ornaments and garden art.

May 5
Honeybee Quilters Guild meeting
 The Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet Tuesday, May 5, at the Mandarin Church of Christ, 12791 Old St. Augustine Rd. Doors open at 6 p.m. and the meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. Attendees should enter to the right of the playground in the back. The program features the annual auction of member-provided sewing items. Participants are encouraged to bring a checkbook for new treasures. New members and guests are welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

May 9
North Florida Genealogical Society meeting
 The North Florida Genealogical Society will meet Saturday, May 9, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Mandarin Branch Library, 3330 Kori Rd. Joel Warner, an experienced Family Search user, will review the basics of this free research tool and introduce new features. The event is free and open to the public.

May 9
"Butterfly and Blossom" Friendship Tea
 The Mandarin Garden Club will host its annual "Butterfly and Blossom" Friendship Tea Saturday, May 9, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The clubhouse will be transformed into an elegant tea room where caterers will serve assorted teas, finger sandwiches, pastries, hot scones and fruit tarts. Visit www.mandaringardenclub.org for more information

May 14
Mandarin Garden Club Magnolia circle meeting
 The Magnolia circle of the Mandarin Garden Club will meet Thursday, May 14, at 10 a.m. featuring a presentation on "Unimaginable Ways to Recycle" by Joyce Datz. The public is invited to this free event. Visit www.mandaringardenclub.org for more information.

May 16
Healing Through Art
 Villages of Hope and Hadassah's Hope will host "Healing Through Art: An Afternoon of Art and Hope" Saturday, May 16, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Church of Eleven22, 14286 Beach Blvd., Auditorium B. The free event features a silent auction and art sale to help women survivors of sexual exploitation find healing, housing and a path to independence. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP is required.

May 18
All Star Quilters' Guild meeting
 The All Star Quilters' Guild will meet Monday, May 18, at the First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. Socializing begins at 9:30 a.m. followed by the meeting at 10 a.m. The program features quilts made to represent Famous Women. "Sew and Tell" is a featured part of the meeting and guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

May 21
Mandarin Garden Club Cherokee Rose circle meeting
 The Cherokee Rose circle of the Mandarin Garden Club will meet Thursday, May 21, at 10 a.m. featuring an educational presentation on house plants by special guest Tonya Ashworth. The public is invited to this free event. Visit www.mandaringardenclub.org for more information.

May 21-23
Kendra Scott Shopping Day
 Shop at Kendra Scott at St. Johns Town Center, 4663 River City Drive, Saturday, May 23, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. to help raise money for Villages of Hope.

May 26
CyberSafe: Avoiding Scams in the Digital Age
 River Garden will host a free lunch and learn CyberSafe event Tuesday, May 26, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Cohen Auditorium on the River Garden Campus, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road. Alex Silverstein, former FBI agent and community security director for the Jewish Federation and Foundation of Northeast Florida, will offer seniors and their family members practical guidance on identifying fraud, reporting scams and protecting their assets. Pre-registration is required at shorturl.at/4i8G2.

May 28
Mandarin Republican Club meeting
 The Mandarin Republican Club will meet Thursday, May 28, at St. Mary's Seafood, 11290 Old St. Augustine Rd. Social time begins at 6 p.m. and the meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. The club holds monthly meetings on the

fourth Tuesday of every month.

May 28
Mandarin Women's Club celebrates Members' Day
 The Mandarin Women's Club will celebrate Members' Day with a "members only" luncheon Thursday, May 28, at the Ramada Inn in Mandarin, 3130 Hartley Road. As the final luncheon of the 2025-2026 season, the event will feature a photo booth and a trivia game featuring the 1950s and 1960s. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. and reservations are required. The cost is \$25 and must be received by Monday, May 18. To make reservations and obtain payment instructions, contact Barbara at 904-612-6494 or barbara.metallo@outlook.com. Visit mandarinwomensclub.com for more information.

June 6
6th Annual Run for Hope 5k
 Kick off the sixth annual Run for Hope 5K Saturday, June 6, at 8 a.m. in San Marco. A Fun Run follows at 9 a.m. starting at King Avenue Station, 1201 Kings Ave. The event supports survivors of sexual exploitation. Registration is available at raceroster.com.

July 16-19
Act II Players Production
 Mark your calendars for the Act II Players' production of "How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying," presented through special arrangements with Musical Theatre International (MTI) for licensing and production rights. Show dates are July 16 through 19 at the Mandarin United Methodist Church Theatre, 11270 San Jose Blvd. The production features a book by Abe Burrows, Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert with music and lyrics by Frank Loesser. Tickets are coming soon. Visit actiiplayers.org or email info@actiiplayers.org for more information.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES
Sundays
Mandarin Parkinson's Support Group
 Support group meets monthly on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Church of Eleven22, 4911 Losco Road. Contact Katheryn Donaldson at 904 710 1449.

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.

Wednesdays
North Florida Genealogical Society Library
 The NFGS library, located at 6215 Sauterne Dr., is open every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and by appointment. For more information, call 904-778-1000 or visit nfgen.org.

Shuffleboard
 Shuffleboard is played on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. at Tommy Hazouri Park in Mandarin. The courts are located at the park entrance next to the tennis courts. Beginners are welcome. Just show up a few minutes early for court assignments. 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 mandaringardenclub.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.

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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Mandarin road projects move forward as City Council honors local service



Photo courtesy City Council Member Michael Boylan's office
 City Council Member Michael Boylan (middle) speaks at the podium during a resolution presentation honoring Dr. Arthur "Buster" Browning (second from right) for his longstanding service to the Mandarin community.

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
 editor@floridanewsline.com

Recent legislative actions by the Jacksonville City Council and updates from District 6 Council Member Michael Boylan reveal a season of significant infrastructure adjustments and community milestones for the Mandarin area.

Legislative actions and public safety

During recent Council sessions, several measures were approved that impact both the local landscape and city-wide safety. Council passed Ordinance 2026-0186, appropriating \$314,900 for the installation of 14 "Infant Safety Devices"—often called baby boxes—at fire stations throughout the city. While Boylan questioned the initial scale of the rollout, suggesting a smaller pilot program first, the measure passed unanimously.

The Council also addressed street naming, including an honorary designation for Cedric Burell on 16th Street. Additionally, a controversial renaming of Confederate Street to Rose Arbor Way passed 11-8 after an amendment by Boylan to retain the historic name for the block fronting Springfield Park while changing the second block.



Michael Boyland

Local infrastructure and roadwork

Mandarin residents can expect continued activity on several key corridors as various infrastructure projects reach new phases. Along San Jose Boulevard, drivers may notice the installation of new white Multi Lane Radar Sensors (MLR) by FDOT at various intersections. These devices are designed to provide real-time traffic data, allowing for more efficient signal timing and flow.

Further into the community, improvements at the intersection of Mandarin and Loretto roads are proceeding without the addition of a traffic signal. Current plans for the site focus on adding crosswalk striping and relocating existing signage. Officials clarified that the concrete pole currently at the corner is a temporary fixture for electric service and will be removed upon project completion.

Nearby, maintenance crews are active on Mandarin Road to repair damaged guardrails on the north side while upgrading those on the south side to meet current FDOT safety standards. This work is expected to conclude in late April.

The proposed Mandarin Road sidewalk extension also remains a point of significant community interest. JTA has received six responses to its Request for Proposals (RFP) for the design phase,

and a firm recommendation is expected by June. Boylan reaffirmed that the City's Urban Forestry Manager will be intimately involved throughout the design process to ensure the preservation of the area's characteristic tree canopy.

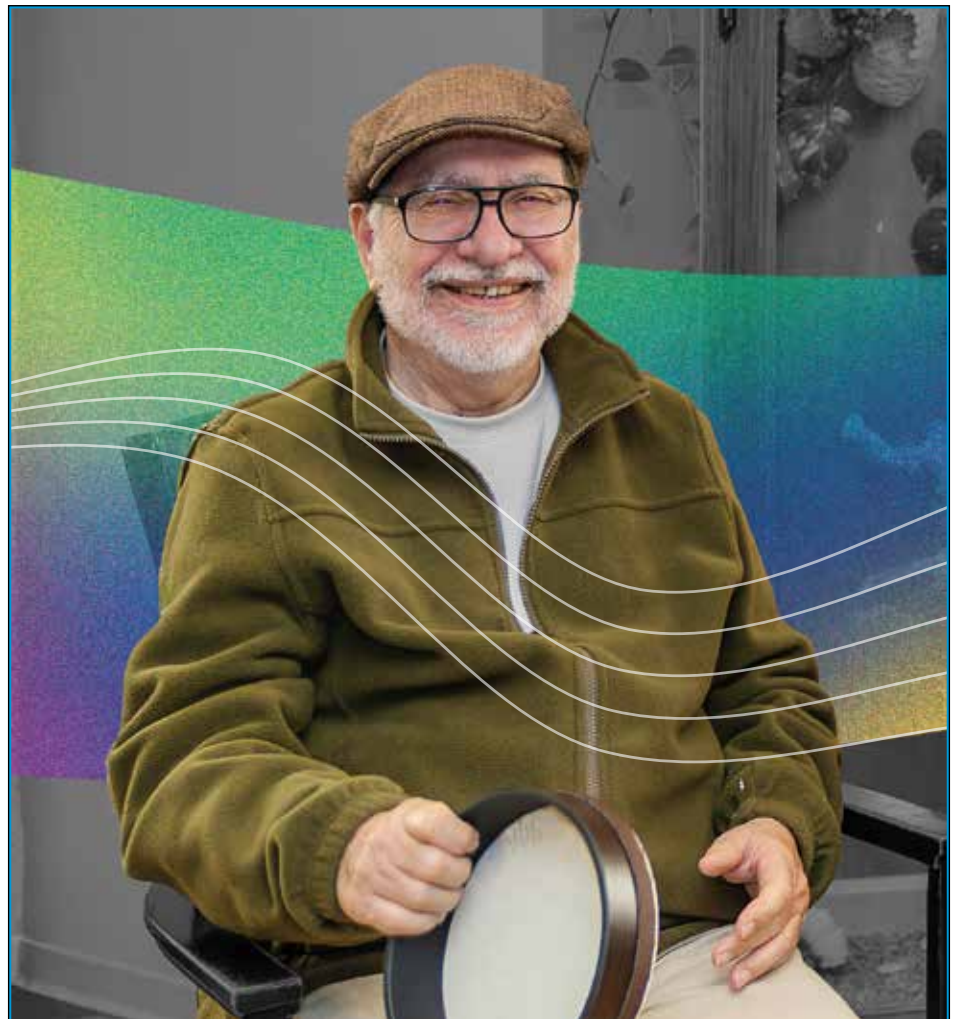
Community engagement and recognition

In community news, Boylan recently participated in Career Day at Greenland Pines Elementary School and presented a resolution to Dr. Arthur "Buster"

Browning, recognizing his decades of service.

Election season begins

As spring arrives, so does the next election cycle. While Boylan has 14 months remaining in his current term, two candidates have already filed to run for the District 6 seat. Boylan stated his focus for the remainder of his term remains on supporting the administration and advancing specific community engagement projects.



Living Forward Supporting the Rhythms of Senior Independence

River Garden's Adult Day Program strikes the perfect chord for families that are caring for loved ones with dementia at home. Older adults can live forward – enjoying engaging social and recreational activities in a safe, welcoming environment, while giving their families time to work and rest.

Our program is finely tuned to participants' varying needs and offers flexibility to their families with drop-in options and other support services.

Learn how our Adult Day Program can support your family.

904.260.1818 | rivergarden.org



Long-Term Nursing & Memory Care | Rehab & Therapy
 Senior Living | Adult Day

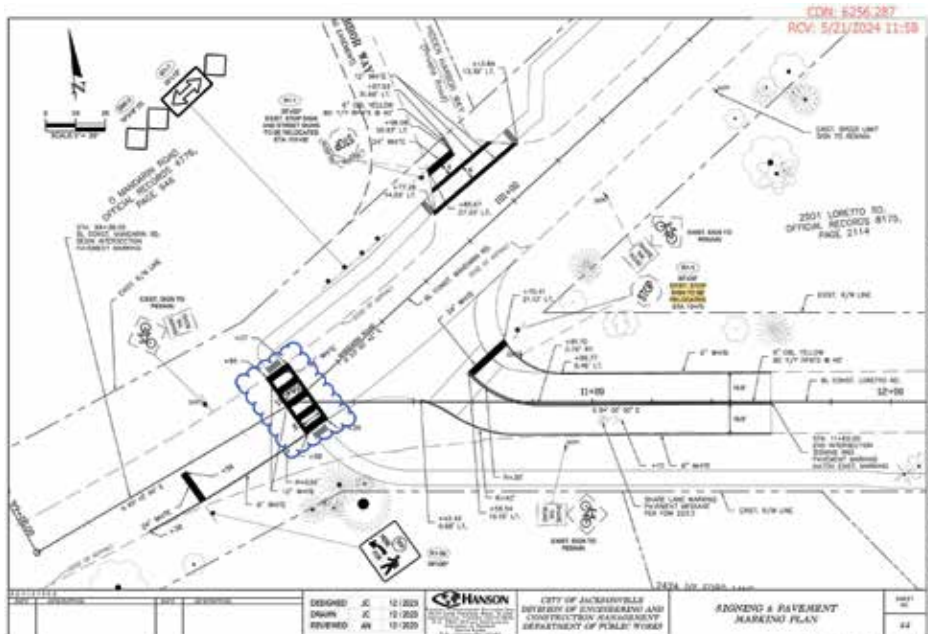


Photo courtesy City Council Member Michael Boylan's office
 A technical drawing of the Mandarin Road and Loretto Road intersection improvement plan. The project includes the addition of crosswalk striping and the relocation of a stop sign. No traffic signal is planned for the corner.

Crown Point Elementary welcomes new assistant principal

NewsLine staff

Crown Point Elementary recently welcomed Peggy Sue Heybruch as its new assistant principal, an experienced educator who has called the Mandarin community home for more than two decades.

Heybruch brings a career spanning more than 20 years in public education to the position. Her professional journey has included a variety of roles, from classroom teacher to school leadership.

"Even as a child playing school with my stuffed animals, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in education," Heybruch said. "Over the past 20 years, I've had the privilege of working in many dif-



Photo courtesy Crown Point Elementary
Peggy Sue Heybruch, the new assistant principal at Crown Point Elementary, stands in front of the school's iconic brick entrance.

ferent roles that have strengthened my commitment to helping both students and staff reach their full potential."

Heybruch's connection to the area is personal as well as professional. After graduating from Flagler College, she and her husband purchased their first home in Mandarin. Their daughter attended local neighborhood schools and is currently a student at Mandarin High School.

"What I love most about this community is the perfect blend of natural beauty, outstanding public schools, local restaurants and — most importantly — the people," Heybruch shared. "There's a unique sense of warmth and friendliness

here that makes Mandarin feel like family. It's truly the heart of Jacksonville."

As she begins her new role at Crown Point, Heybruch emphasized her focus on building community connections and supporting the growth of every student.

"I consider it an honor to be one of their 'school moms,' supporting and encouraging them throughout their educational journey," she said.

Outside of the classroom, Heybruch is a regular at local Mandarin landmarks. She encourages families and residents to say hello if they see her at Rosy's, Amaretti's, the Mandarin Library or Doughfee.

Q&A with Duval County Public Schools Police Chief Jackson Short



Duval County Public Schools Police Chief Jackson Short

Team Duval News sat down for a Q&A with Duval County Public Schools Police Chief Jackson Short. As a law enforcement professional with over 28 years of experience, he gave important advice on driver safety, road rules and a reminder about how to navigate railroad crossings near a school bus.

Q: When it comes to school buses and railroad tracks, what are the rules of the road?

A: Florida state law says that every

school bus that has children on it must stop at every railroad crossing within the range of at least 15 feet, but no more than 50 feet. What our drivers need to know is that if they are behind a school bus and approaching a railroad crossing, that school bus is going to stop regardless of whether or not the arms are down or a train is coming. Once the school bus driver stops, he or she is required to look and listen for any trains that may be coming. When they finally do think it is safe to proceed, the bus drivers are not allowed to shift gears. It is going to be a slow crossing of the railroad tracks. For our other drivers here in Duval County, they need to be aware of that and they need to be paying attention. They need to be patient with the school bus drivers.

Q: Why do school buses have to stop before the train tracks? Why not just move slowly versus coming to a full stop?

A: School buses are not the only vehicles that are required to stop. There are other commercial vehicles that are also required to stop depending on the type of cargo that they are carrying. It is because of the consequences involved. First, there are the consequences of a train striking a vehicle like that. Also, it is not as easy for some of these larger vehicles, such as a school bus, to maneuver over train tracks quickly or get out of the way as fast as a smaller sedan. The cargo involved in our case is our children, but we also have to consider the lack of ability to stop quickly with some of these larger vehicles.

Q: When the bus has to stop, that could make people impatient and they may be tempted to go around the bus. Is that legal for drivers to do?

A: Not only would that be illegal to do, but it would also be extremely dangerous for everyone involved. It would be dangerous for the driver trying to pass, the school bus and its occupants and any train that is coming. That is not something anyone should be considering. We have seen recent incidents

where a bus was stopped at a railroad track and the bus got rear ended. A reminder to all of our drivers is that our school buses are not just on the road in the morning or in the afternoon. We also have school buses throughout the day taking students on field trips, which was the case in both of these last two crashes. Any time that our drivers see our school buses out and about, we need to assume that we have students on there and we need to be driving carefully around them and obeying all of our state laws.

Q: Passing the bus at a stop is not legal to do. Does that come with consequences such as a citation, a fine or points on your license?

A: That could result in a driver getting a citation and points on their license. Any points on your license will cause your insurance to go up. More importantly, it could cause a tragedy. Nobody wants to live with that. In these situations involving very young students, just know that these are lives that can be changed drastically.

Q: If you were able to make a plea to students, parents, faculty and staff about what to be aware of when they approach a railroad crossing, what would that be?

A: Our message to all of our drivers, students and staff is to be careful. We have been successful with our Be Safe. Be Seen. campaign, which addresses our pedestrians and our students walking and biking to school. This is just another level of student safety. We would reiterate to all of our drivers that school buses are big and yellow for a reason, and we should be looking out for them. They are very visible and drivers should expect them to stop at railroad crossings. Look out for the stop arms at the bus stops, know the state law and work together to keep our students safe.

Jackson Short is the chief of police for Duval County Public Schools and has more than 28 years of law enforcement experience.

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Unearth stories at Mandarin libraries

By Jeremy Yates

Get ready! Summer at Jax Library runs June 1 to Aug. 1. This year's theme, Unearth a Story™, explores the joy of discovery that reading brings. Enjoy triceratops storytimes, DINO-mite guest performers, hands-on art and science labs, reading challenges and games that spark curiosity, imagination and learning.

Explore all the fossil-bilities: Visit jaxlibrary.org/summer or bring the whole family to a Summer Reading Kick-off Party June 1 to 6. All kids and teens in attendance receive a free book for their home library, prize trackers to log read-



Photo courtesy Kaira Rouda
International bestselling author Kaira Rouda will discuss her psychological thrillers during a Lit Chat Interview at Mandarin Library on May 12.

ing minutes and “Reading Dragons” collectible playing cards.

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

For kids, enter a real-life version of a Fortnite Battle Royale at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, May 7, at Mandarin Library. Also join us at 4 p.m. every Monday at Mandarin Library for free “fandom” events with themed activities inspired by popular characters, books or games. Or “Turn Up for Tech” and fun, STEM-based challenges from 4-5 p.m. Thursday, May 14 and 28, at South Mandarin Library.

International bestselling author Kaira Rouda sits down for a Lit Chat Interview at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 12, at Mandarin Library. Known for “Best Day Ever,” “The Next Wife” and “Beneath the Surface,” her psychological thrillers dig beneath the surface of seemingly perfect lives to keep you on the edge of your seat. A book signing follows an audience Q&A. RSVP at jaxlibrary.org/litchat. The event is sponsored by the Friends of the Mandarin Library.

Amber Warden of First Coast Romance Writers presents “Why They Can’t Be Together (Yet)” at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, May 30, at Mandarin Library. This free 90-minute workshop focuses on building romance conflict and third-act tension. Sign up at jaxlibrary.org/writerslab.

Shop and save on books, CDs, DVDs and more at the Friends of South Mandarin Book Sale Thursday, May 21 to Saturday, May 23, at 12125 San Jose Blvd. There will be a wide selection



Photo courtesy Friends of South Mandarin Library
A young reader searches for favorites among the thousands of items available during the library's semi-annual sale.



Photo courtesy Friends of South Mandarin Library
A wide selection of books, CDs and DVDs will be available at the Friends of South Mandarin Library book sale.

of items for every age with individual items priced at \$1 and up. Fill up a brown paper bag for just \$10 or a plastic bag for \$5.

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

Jeremy Yates is a Marketing Specialist with Jacksonville Public Library.



Photo courtesy Friends of South Mandarin Library
Shoppers fill their bags at a previous library book sale. This month's sale offers full paper bags for \$10 and plastic bags for \$5.

Garden Club cont. from pg. 1

Team. The initiative provides seeds for members to nurture at home for one month before returning the seedlings to the club's nursery. Meanwhile, the Crafty Ladies group continues to produce original art for garden beautification and future sales.

All of the club's circles are meeting this month to par-

ticipate in educational programs focused on gardening and environmental conservation.

The organization is also expanding its charitable reach. Members have increased donation efforts to include men's clothing for several regional organizations, including Gracie's Kitchen in Yulee, Florida, the 5 Star Veterans Center and the Fruit Cove Baptist Church foster closet.

The Mandarin Garden Club remains a community space open to the public for visits, strolls and private rentals. For more information regarding educational programs or public activities, residents can visit the club's website.

Michele Alex is publicist for the Mandarin Garden Club.



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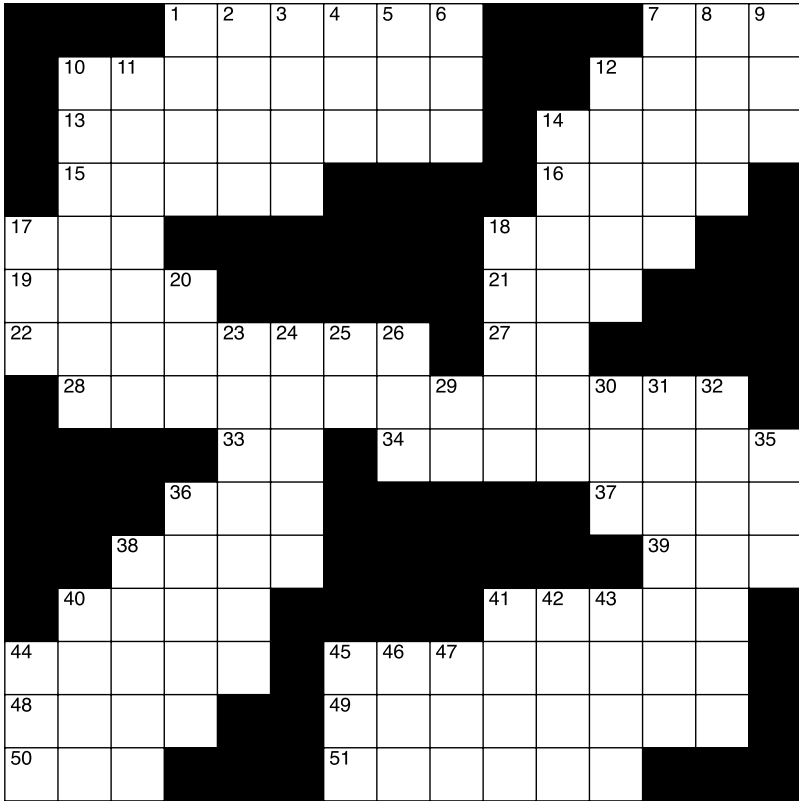
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Large dung beetle | 28. Beloved March holiday |
| 7. Gambling game __-lo | 33. 12th letter of the Greek alphabet |
| 10. Further along | 34. More impudent |
| 12. Type of tobacco | 36. Indicates center |
| 13. Looked for | 37. Young woman (French) |
| 14. Silk fabric | 38. A cause of distress |
| 15. Computer method to solve equations | 39. Santa's helper |
| 16. As fast as can be done (abbr.) | 40. Hillside |
| 17. Tear | 41. Many wombs |
| 18. Brews | 44. Is afraid of |
| 19. "Famous" cookie baker | 45. Popular baked goods ingredient |
| 21. Women's Army Corps | 48. Popular computers |
| 22. Front parts of an animal | 49. Conceiving of |
| 27. It's causing quite a stir | 50. Google certification (abbr.) |
| | 51. Sturdy |

CLUES DOWN

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Peruse quickly | 25. Trauma center |
| 2. Automobiles | 26. Habitual twitching |
| 3. Razorbill genus | 29. A place where checks are exchanged (abbr.) |
| 4. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo! | 30. Decimeter |
| 5. Consumed | 31. Hinged surface in a wing |
| 6. A place to sleep | 32. Shouting |
| 7. Small seeds | 35. Sports official |
| 8. Legendary law man Wyatt | 36. Volcanic craters |
| 9. Female sheep | 38. Supportive device |
| 10. Indigenous peoples of eastern Siberia | 40. It's part of a rosary |
| 11. A place ships dock | 41. Two-toed sloth |
| 12. Reciprocal of sine | 42. Body art |
| 14. Discomfort | 43. Let out |
| 17. British Air Aces | 44. Foreign medical graduate |
| 18. Exit sleep | 45. Nonprofit journalism organization (abbr.) |
| 20. Solar energetic particle | 46. Couples say it |
| 23. Plagues characterized by starvation | 47. Bird's beak |
| 24. Short musical composition | |

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

WORDS

- BRIDLE
- CANTER
- CHESTNUT
- COLT
- CROUP
- DRESSAGE
- EQUESTRIAN
- FETLOCK
- FILLY
- FOAL
- FORELOCK
- GALLOP
- GELDING
- HALTER
- HOOF
- MANE
- MARE
- MUZZLE
- PASTERN
- PONY
- SADDLE
- STALLION
- TROT
- WITHERS

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



Solve the code to discover words related to horses.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 16 = D)

A. 12 23 18 17

Clue: Balances horse

B. 10 18 16 15 10

Clue: Passenger

C. 6 23 16 16 17 15

Clue: Riding accessory

D. 3 23 16 16 22 11 19

Clue: Small enclosure

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Gardening

By Connie Doyle,
Master Gardener UF/IFAS

Right plant, right place: Smart substitutes for coastal Florida gardens

This is the month to enjoy the fruits of our labor and the beauty of our spring gardens; walking the pebbled paths in the early morning, sipping coffee and the cool breezy evenings, wine glass in hand. Take note of plants thriving... and those declining. One of the most common frustrations I hear from gardeners in Ponte Vedra and Palm Valley is this: "I planted it and then watched it decline." More often than not, the issue

isn't how the plant was cared for—it's that the plant simply wasn't suited for our coastal conditions.

Gardening along the northeast Florida coast comes with unique challenges. Sandy soil drains quickly, salt air can damage sensitive foliage and our heat and humidity can stress plants that thrive in cooler climates. The key to success is simple: Right Plant, Right



Connie Doyle

Place — one of the key principles of UF | IFAS' nine principles of Florida-Friendly Gardening.

A good example is gardenia. While loved for its fragrant white blooms, gardenias often struggle in our sandy, alkaline soils and are sensitive to salt. A better choice is Simpson's stopper, a Florida native shrub that produces delicate flowers, attracts birds and handles coastal conditions with ease.

Many gardeners also try to grow lavender, only to watch it decline in our humidity. Instead, consider gaillardia, more commonly known as blanket flower. It thrives in heat, tolerates poor soil and provides long-lasting color throughout the warmer months.

For those who love large showy blooms, peony and lilac are often disappointing choices due to their need for cold winters. A more reliable option is hibiscus or sweet almond bush, both of which flourish in Florida's warmth and offer beautiful, often fragrant blooms.

If you are drawn to tall, colorful flower spikes like delphinium, try salvia, gaura

or society garlic. All not only handle our climate well but also attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds — making them a great addition to any garden.

Shady flower beds can also be tricky. Traditional impatiens often struggle with disease and heat, while pentas provide reliable color and thrive in both sun and partial shade.

Even classic favorites like hydrangea macrophylla and Japanese maple can be difficult to grow successfully here. Instead, consider oakleaf hydrangea or dahoon holly, both of which are better adapted to Florida's climate and soils.

And while tulip bulbs rarely perform well due to our mild winters, amaryllis offers a dependable and striking alternative with bold seasonal blooms.

The takeaway is simple: gardening success in northeast Florida doesn't come from working harder — it comes from choosing plants that naturally thrive here. By selecting the right substitutes, you can create a landscape that is not only beautiful but also resilient, low-maintenance and perfectly suited to life along the coast.

Meet you in the garden...

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@floridanewsline.com.

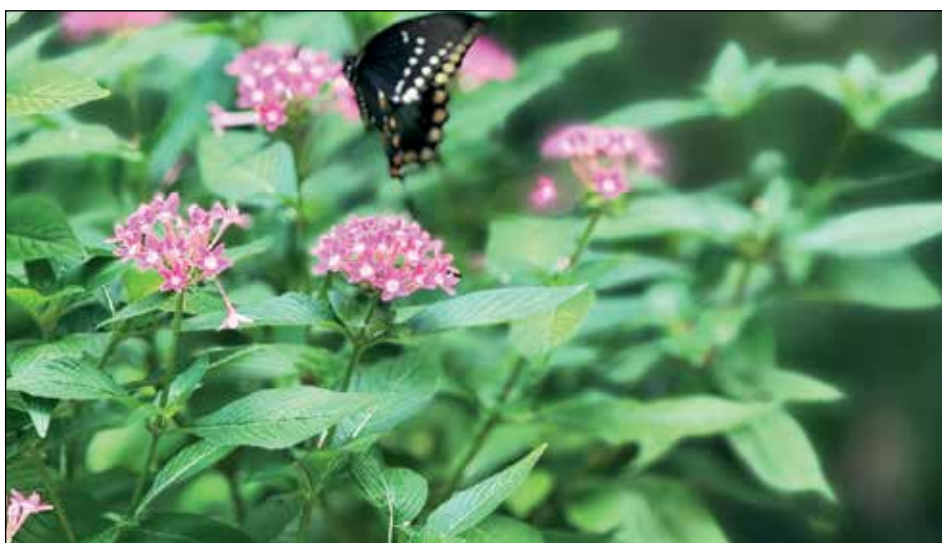


Photo courtesy Connie Doyle
Garden flower



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Travel

Zion National Park: Big rock wonders and riverside trails

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewsline.com

I recently flew to Las Vegas, then drove to two of America's standout national parks: Zion and Bryce Canyon. Both had been on my wish list for years. This month, I'll start with Zion, one of Utah's most dramatic landscapes.



Debi Lander

to access the other main road without re-entering through the busy entrance gate.

For an easy start, the Lower Emerald Pool Trail offers a gentle stroll to small waterfalls and shaded alcoves, although water flow can be limited depending on the season. Another favorite is the Riverside Walk at the end of the shuttle route. This paved path follows the Virgin River, offering cool shade and beautiful reflections. At the trail's end, more adventurous hikers can continue into The Narrows, where the river becomes the trail itself. Walking between towering canyon walls with water swirling around your legs creates a uniquely immersive experience, but you'll need proper gear.

More ambitious visitors set their

Zion's towering sandstone cliffs glow in layered shades of rust and cream, while the Virgin River winds through a deep canyon. Despite its popularity and crowds, Zion still offers moments of quiet beauty, especially in the early morning or late afternoon light.

Getting there is straightforward. Most visitors fly into Harry Reid International Airport in Las Vegas, Nevada, then drive nearly three hours northeast, briefly passing through Arizona before reaching the park's main entrance in Springdale, Utah. The scenic drive itself sets the tone, shifting from desert plains to sculpted red rock formations as you approach.

Once inside the park, private vehicles are restricted along the main canyon road for most of the year. Instead, a free and efficient shuttle system transports visitors to trailheads and viewpoints. It is easy to use, but expect lines during peak times.

The shuttle delivers you to Zion Canyon Scenic Drive, where massive canyon walls rise thousands of feet overhead. If you are fortunate enough to stay at the Zion Lodge, the only in-park lodging, you can drive partway into this area. This saves time and makes it easier



Photo by Debi Lander

The Virgin River winds through the canyon floor, offering cool shade and beautiful reflections for hikers.



Photo by Debi Lander

A scenic hiking path leads through the towering sandstone cliffs and sculpted red rock formations of Zion.

sights on Angels Landing, one of the park's most famous hikes. The final section climbs a narrow ridge with steep drop-offs on both sides, aided by chains bolted into the rock. Permits are required, and this hike is best suited for those who are very fit and comfortable with heights.

Beyond hiking, visitors enjoy e-bikes, horseback rides or simply slowing down. An open-air tram tour offers historical background. Whether you watch climbers scale sheer cliffs or sit and listen to the breeze move through cottonwood trees, Zion encourages you to absorb the landscape.

In addition to lodging inside the park, Springdale offers numerous hotels and restaurants just outside the entrance. Be prepared for crowds, however. Even early in the morning, lines for the shuttle form quickly. And do not expect good cell service in the region.

Whether you visit for a day or stay longer, Zion's soaring cliffs, winding river and ever-changing light leave a lasting impression. Some come for the challenge of its most demanding hikes, others for the scenery. Either way, nature takes center stage, and visitors enjoy the ride.

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@floridanewsline.com.

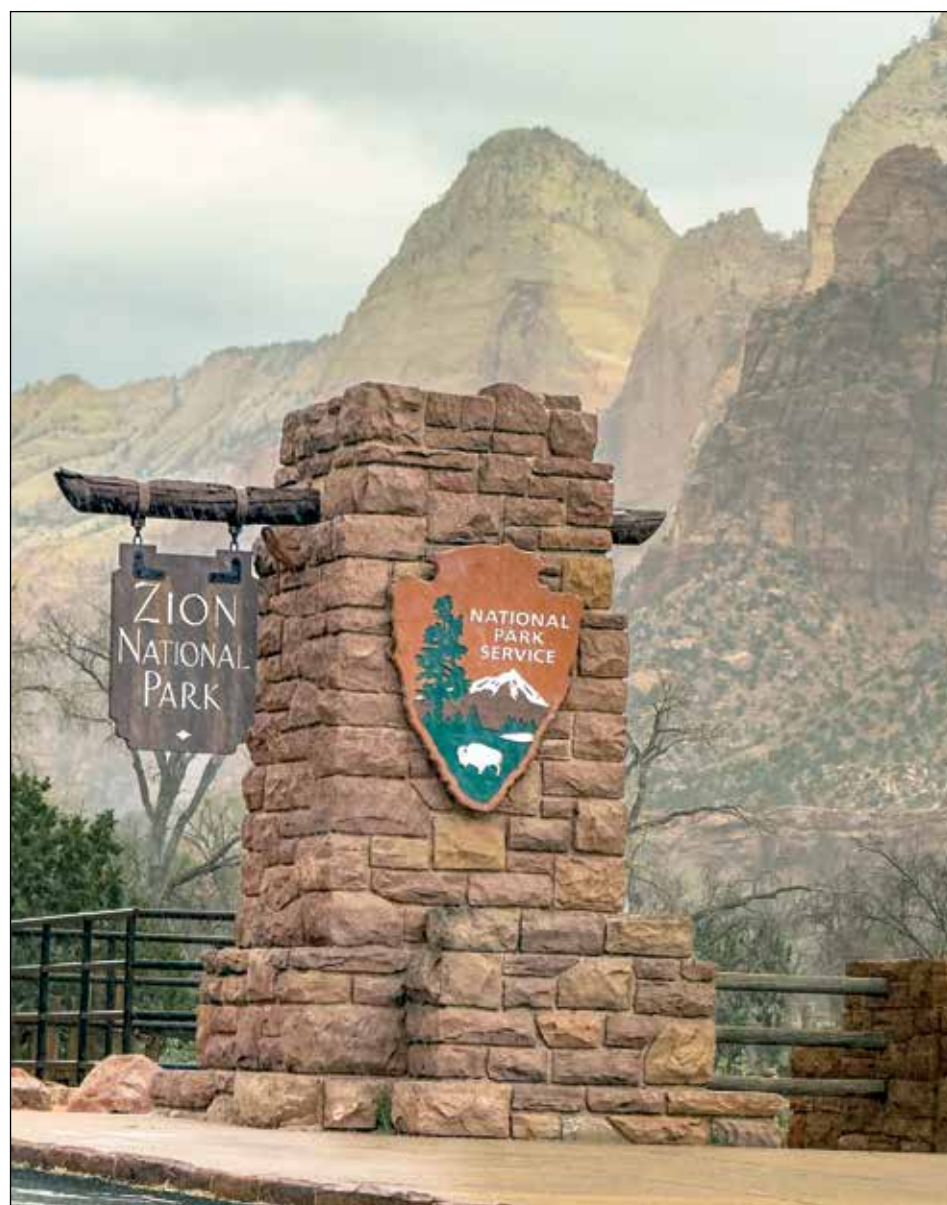


Photo by Debi Lander

The stone entrance sign welcomes visitors to Zion National Park, one of Utah's most dramatic landscapes.



Photo by Debi Lander

Visitors enjoy an outdoor meal at the Zion Lodge, the only in-park lodging available to guests.

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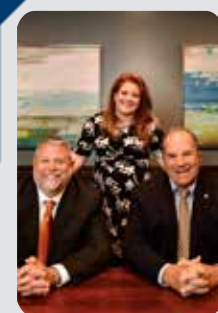
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Personalized financial advice to help achieve your goals



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St Johns County resident since 1993

PARISH BINGO

Bingo Night at St Joseph

LOTS OF GAMES, 50/50'S & DOOR PRIZES



PLENTY OF LIGHTED PARKING AND SECURITY ON THE PREMISES. GREAT FOOD, DRINKS, & SNACKS.

DOORS OPEN AT 6:15PM
GAMES START AT 7:00PM

Cody Center - Tally Room
4152 Loretto Rd, Jacksonville, FL 32223

NO CHILDREN ALLOWED PER STATE LAWS.

849.0931(10)(A)

GAME DATES: May 16th, June 13th, July 11th

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