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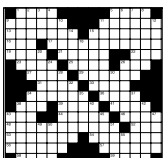
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Shawn Coarsey

Undersheriff Shawn Coarsey retires after nearly 32 years

NewsLine staff

Jacksonville Sheriff T.K. Waters announced Sept. 20 that Undersheriff Shawn Coarsey, the department's second-highest-ranking officer, retired the week of Sept. 21 after nearly 32 years in law enforcement.

"After nearly 32 years with the department, the Undersheriff is retiring this week," Waters said in a news release.

Coarsey was appointed undersheriff in March 2023, after previously serving as director of investigations and homeland security. Waters announced Sept. 21 that he will name Mark Romano as the new undersheriff.

Romano has served at JSO for nearly 30 years, beginning his career as a patrol officer before working his way through the promotional ranks. He was appointed to an executive role in 2020 under former Sheriff Mike Williams and has since held multiple executive leadership positions under Waters, including director of investigations and homeland security. Romano currently serves as director of patrol and enforcement.

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office oversees law enforcement in the Mandarin sector. Coarsey's retirement marks the second undersheriff transition at JSO since Waters took office in 2022; Coarsey himself was elevated to the role following the retirement of former Undersheriff Nick Burgos.

NEW MURAL, NEW ERA



Photo by Lindsay Brown

Lindsay Brown and her dog, Cooper, pose in front of the new mural outside Hurricane Grill & Wings.

Restaurant's makeover comes ahead of employee fundraiser

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman

A splash of color has landed on the side of Hurricane Grill & Wings, and it's turning heads for more than the wings.

New owner Manon "Max" Patel commissioned a mural on the restaurant's exterior this summer, a tribute to the community that has quickly become a local talking point, and a magnet for photos.

A gift to the neighborhood

Patel, who took over the restaurant earlier this year, said the mural was inspired by daily drives down San Jose Boulevard.

"Every day I drive on San Jose Boulevard, and I do not see any kind of local art or anything that is inspiring, something that people can visit and

take a picture of," Patel said. "I wanted to represent an attraction point for the people of Julington Creek, something that identifies the community, something exciting, a good spot."

The design incorporates elements specific to the area, including the Julington Creek waterway and the oaks and

New Mural cont. on pg. 2

Pete the Cat and more headline October at Mandarin libraries

By Jeremy Yates

Pete the Cat is coming to South Mandarin Library for Count Your Buttons Day. Wear your favorite button-up shirts and pop in at 10:30 a.m. or 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 21, for a read-aloud and some groovy button activities.

Bring your reluctant readers, and their favorite book, to read to a therapy dog.

Meet Yona, the Newfoundland dog, from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 10, at South Mandarin Library, or Saturday, Oct. 24, at Mandarin Library. The gentle JC, the yellow Labrador retriever, returns at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 26, at South Mandarin Library. Spots are available on a first-come, first-served basis.



Photo courtesy Jacksonville Public Library

Pete the Cat greets library visitors ahead of Count Your Buttons Day at South Mandarin Library.

Pete the Cat cont. on pg. 2



Photo courtesy Mandarin Community Club
The stage-side façade of the historic 1872 Schoolhouse, headquarters of the Mandarin Community Club, where an official Mandarin mural is planned.

Mandarin mural in the making

Mandarin Community Club is excited and proud to announce that a committee has just formed with the goal of acquiring design options and a qualified artist or artists to execute an official Mandarin mural. Several years in planning and discussion, the mural project was recently approved and will be painted on the stage-side façade adjoining the historic 1872 Schoolhouse.

The original Freedmen's Bureau building was destroyed by fire prior to 1872, and the reconstruction was spearheaded by famed author

and Mandarin part-time resident Harriet Beecher Stowe. Now the building is one of Jacksonville's most historic and the headquarters of the Mandarin Community Club.

The mural will be designed to capture the history, culture and beauty of Mandarin. Watch for details and more to come. To share ideas or recommendations, email mandarin-communityclub@gmail.com.

Submitted by Susie Scott, Mandarin Community Club board member and past president



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Photo courtesy Max Patel
The new mural outside Hurricane Grill & Wings pays tribute to Julington Creek, incorporating local landmarks into its postcard-style design.

New Mural cont. from pg. 1

greenery that give the neighborhood its character.

In a social media post announcing the artwork, Patel elaborated further: "I had this mural painted as a small gift to the neighborhood, something that's really ours. A place to pull over, snap a picture, and mark a moment. Graduations. Engagements. Birthdays. First days. Last days. The big stuff and the small stuff."

Patel, who grew up near Jacksonville Beach and Arlington, said Mandarin and Julington Creek have always felt like one of the city's hidden gems, a place people love that doesn't always get its own landmark.

"This mural is my thank-you to Julington Creek for welcoming me in," Patel wrote.

Looking after the team

The restaurant has changed hands more than once over the past two years, a stretch original owner Rob Kluba described as a difficult time for staff. Kluba, who built the restaurant into a neighborhood fixture over 15 years, stepped back in during that rocky pe-

riod before ultimately selling to Patel.

Twenty-nine employees are still owed a week's pay from that transition, and both Kluba and Patel say making sure the staff is taken care of is the priority going forward.

"I don't care about me. I took a loss on this," Kluba said. "But I want the employees to get taken care of. You never see restaurant employees work at a place for 15 years. It's unheard of, and I still have original staff working there today."

Patel confirmed he's working on a plan to help make those employees whole.

"I'm sitting down with my team to work out the details," Patel said, adding that he'll share more information as plans come together.

Kluba said he's glad the restaurant landed with an owner invested in the community.

"He's really trying to do good, really trying to get engaged with the community," Kluba said of Patel. "I wish I had sold it to the people who own it now."

For now, the mural stands as a visible symbol of the restaurant's fresh start, an open invitation for neighbors to stop by, snap a photo and make it part of their own Julington Creek story.

Pete the Cat cont. from pg. 1

Do you have a budding Junior Artist or Junior Scientist? These art and STEM-based programs are perfect for creative and curious 5- to 8-year-old kids. Programs alternate weekly between art and science, with new themes and books each time. Stop by 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Wednesdays at Mandarin Library or 4 to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays at South Mandarin Library.

Families can drop in and explore robotics, circuits and more at Turn Up for Tech. There's a new challenge every month. This month, join in from 5 to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 6, at Mandarin Library and 4 to 5 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 8, at Mandarin Library.

South Mandarin Library has lots of spooky season fun in store for teens. Homeschool teens can create their own horror zines in "Teen Lab" from 11 a.m. to noon Fridays, Oct. 9-30, at South Mandarin Library. Then grab a slice and share your favorite horror and thriller titles at "Pizza and Pages: Teen

Book Club" from 4 to 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 9.

Later in the month, team up, follow clues and book the crook in "Horror in the Stacks," a teen murder mystery, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 23, at South Mandarin Library. Or master practical effects and learn how to survive a horror movie at "Teen Advisory Board: Special Effects Horror Makeup" at 4:45 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 30.

On Halloween, the whole family is invited for spooky fun at the fifth annual Halloween Happenings from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 31, at Mandarin Library.

Looking for a good scare? "As the Page Turns" Book Club for adults will discuss the chilling historical horror novel "The Buffalo Hunter Hunter" by Stephen Graham Jones at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 8, at Mandarin Library.

Jeremy Yates is the marketing specialist for Jacksonville Public Library.

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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. ©2026.



BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Leo



Breed:
Domestic Shorthair

Favorite Activity:
Venturing through the woods

Favorite Food:
Temptation cat treats

Favorite Friends:
His sister, August

How did your BFF get their name:
By embracing the spirit of a lion

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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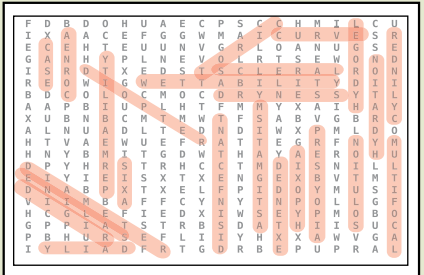
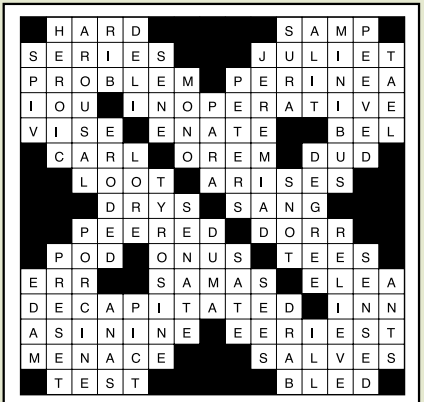
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BREAST CANCER
AWARENESS MONTH

Answers to our Puzzles PG 8



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October

Community Calendar

What's Happening in Mandarin

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

October 2-3 Mandarin Garden Club "Trash to Treasure" sale

The Mandarin Garden Club hosts its "Trash to Treasure" garage and estate sale Thursday and Friday, Oct. 2 and Oct. 3, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 2892 Loretto Road. A pop-up plant sale and garden cafe run the same dates and times. The event is free and open to the public. Visit mandaringardenclub.org.

October 19 All Star Quilters' Guild meeting

The All Star Quilters' Guild meets Monday, Oct. 19, at The Springs Church, 900 Park Ave., Orange Park. Socializing begins at 9:30 a.m., prior to the 10 a.m. meeting. The program will feature a reveal of the surprise brown bag fabric quilts, and Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. This location is temporary pending a return to a more permanent Mandarin location after June 2027. Visit allstarquilters.org for more information.

October 22 Mandarin Women's Club Annual Game Day

The Mandarin Women's Club hosts its Annual Game Day Thursday, Oct. 22, with doors opening at 9 a.m. at the Ramada Inn Mandarin, 3130 Hartley Road. Reservations are required by Oct. 12. To reserve a spot, contact Susie at spm104@aol.com or (904) 885-8952.

October 22 Mandarin Republican Club meeting

The Mandarin Republican Club meets Thursday, Oct. 22, at St. Mary's Seafood, 11290 Old St. Augustine Road. Social time begins at 6 p.m., with the meeting starting at 6:30 p.m.

October 23 Mandarin Community Club Halloween Bingo Fundraiser

The Mandarin Community Club hosts its Halloween Bingo Fundraiser Friday, Oct. 23, at the historic 1872 Mandarin Schoolhouse. Call (904) 268-1622 or visit mandarincommunityclub.org.

October 24 Florida Citrus Fundraiser at Mandarin Market

The Mandarin Community Club offers direct payment for its Florida Citrus Fundraiser at the Mandarin Market on Saturday, Oct. 24. Pre-orders for navel oranges, satsuma mandarins and Citrus Under Protective Screens red grapefruit run through November, with pickup also available Friday, Dec. 4, during the club's annual Christmas Tree Lighting. Call (904) 268-1622 or visit mandarincommunityclub.org.

Ongoing Activities

Monthly Sundays Mandarin Parkinson's Support Group

The support group meets monthly on Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. at Church of Eleven22, 4911 Losco Road. Contact Katheryn Donaldson at (904) 710-1449.

Tuesdays Shuffleboard

Shuffleboard is played Tuesdays at 10 a.m. at Tommy Hazouri Park in

Mandarin. The courts are located next to the tennis courts at the park entrance. Beginners are welcome; arrive a few minutes early for court assignments, weather permitting.

Wednesdays North Florida Genealogical Society Library

The library at 6215 Sauterne Dr. is open every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call (904) 778-1000 or visit nfgen.org.

Second Thursdays American Legion Post 372

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 are welcome.

Third Thursdays Friends of Mandarin South Library

The group meets at 1 p.m. the third Thursday of each month in the foyer meeting room to sponsor library programs and activities.

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Rare but Real: Local man's breast cancer journey inspires mission to educate others

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewsline.com

When Bill Carter felt a lump on his chest on New Year's Day 2024, he almost brushed it off. But being married to Susan, an oncology nurse for more than 30 years, changed everything.

"If I wasn't married to Susan, I would have blew that off and just went on about my business," said Carter. "Being married to her for 50 years and hearing all her stories about patients, I knew I needed to show her this lump."

Susan Carter immediately recognized the danger. The lump felt "spiculated" — spiky rather than smooth — a characteristic often associated with malignancy.

"When I felt Bill's lump, it was like my heart skipped a beat," Susan said. "The word spiculated came to mind and I thought, we need to move on this."



Photo courtesy Susan and Bill Carter
Bill Carter wears a "Breast Cancer Survivor" t-shirt as part of his mission to educate men about breast cancer risks.

Within five weeks, Carter had undergone mammography, biopsy

and a mastectomy. The experience opened his eyes to challenges women face during breast cancer screening.

"When they put me in that vice-type thing and cranked it down, it was hurting like hell," Carter recalled of his mammogram. "I have so much more appreciation for women that go through that now than I did before, because I know the pain now."

Carter's surgeon told him he was treating an unusual case. Men represent only 2% of all breast cancer patients, and the surgeon had never treated a 75-year-old male patient with the disease.

"He'd been doing this surgery for over 20 years and said he had never had a male patient," Carter said. "He said of the ones he knows of, male breast cancer patients are between 30 and 40 years old."

According to the American Cancer Society, 2,800 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2025, and 510 men will die from the disease. One in 726 men carry a lifetime risk of developing breast cancer.

Carter's cancer was caught between stage one and two. His recovery was remarkably smooth — he took no pain medication after surgery and felt minimal discomfort.

"Two days after I had the surgery, I told the doctor, 'Did this really just happen to me?' I couldn't feel any pain," he said.

The experience sparked what Carter believes is a divine calling to educate other men about breast cancer



Photo courtesy Susan and Bill Carter
Susan and Bill Carter.

risks. Three weeks after surgery, he dreamed of speaking to groups of men about his experience.

"It's like Jesus is guiding me to do this," Carter said. "I really believe I'm on a mission. If I could just get across to one person and it saved his life, I would be doing what I'm supposed to do."

"Men need to check themselves like women do and take it seriously if they find a lump," Carter emphasized. "I promise you 95% of all men would not take it seriously. They would find a lump and think it's not a big deal, but it's serious."

With encouragement from his son, Carter wrote a book about his life experiences, including his cancer journey. The book, "100% Bill, Stories by Aron William (Bill) Carter,"

written with a ghostwriter and available on Amazon, chronicles Carter's path from a troubled youth in Jacksonville's housing projects to police officer and cancer survivor.

"I just told a story," Carter said modestly about his book. "I tried to be as honest as I could. I didn't try to hide anything or glorify anything. I just told it how it was."

Susan Carter, drawing on her decades of oncology nursing experience, emphasized the broader message of their journey: "It is a wicked disease, all cancer is, but if people are aware and informed, it can save lives."

Those interested in learning more about his story or arranging speaking engagements can contact him at abcpaving@gmail.com.

Handwritten hope in dark moments

By Anonymous

At her second appointment after her initial breast cancer diagnosis, a local woman received a care package from her oncology team containing personal care items, emergency guidelines, medical resources and frequently asked questions to help navigate the disease and upcoming treatment.

"You can likely imagine how devastating facing this type of news is and the contents of the package highlighted the sobering reality of the horror yet to come," she wrote in an email to the editor.

Yet also tucked inside was a handwritten note by a mother who had also been diagnosed with breast cancer. The note contained words of encouragement for strength, hope and peace, along with small colored drawings likely crafted by a child.

"I must share that I burst into tears as all of this was beyond overwhelming," the woman recalled. "But as I slowly caught my breath, the words hit home and my appreciation for this small act of kindness was intense."

The experience introduced her to

Girls Love Mail, an organization that connects women fighting cancer with handwritten letters of support from strangers worldwide. The nonprofit provides guidelines for letter writing that ensure consistency and encouragement.

"Yes, kind words even from a stranger can be impactful during sad times in life," she noted. She plans to write her own letters to newly diagnosed patients through Girls Love Mail.

Anyone can participate in writing notes of support and encouragement

regardless of their health status or personal connection to a breast cancer patient.

"Thank you for including a breast cancer segment for breast cancer awareness in October," the woman wrote to the editor. "I know the topic has become commonplace and maybe tiresome for many people, but for the newly diagnosed, it is a whole other story."

For more information about Girls Love Mail, visit girlslovemail.com.

What the 2026 midterms could mean for your portfolio

By Chris Thompson

Election seasons often spark questions about what might come next for the economy and the markets. As the 2026 midterms draw closer, some investors are wondering whether they should make changes to their portfolios or simply stay the course.

It's a fair question. Midterm elections can influence fiscal policy, tax legislation, government spending and the broader regulatory environment. But when it comes to investing, it's important to separate what's truly worth paying attention to from what's simply generating headlines.

What investors are watching

A few themes stand out this cycle. The balance of power in the House and Senate is a big one because it will influence how much legislation can move forward over the next two years. Trade policy, energy production, domestic manufacturing and supply chain resilience continue to be areas of focus, with potential implications across multiple sectors of the economy.

Investors are also paying attention to broader economic and global developments. Ongoing geopolitical tensions, the rapid buildout of AI-related infrastructure, government spending, retirement policy and affordability concerns



Christopher Thompson

are all likely to shape economic discussions long after ballots are counted.

A little history for perspective

Every election cycle feels unique and has its own dynamics, but political change is nothing new. In fact, midterm elections often reshape priorities in Washington. History shows that the party holding the White House has generally lost seats in Congress during midterm elections since World War II.¹ That's not a forecast for 2026, rather it's a useful piece of perspective when thinking about what may lie ahead.

Markets have also tended to respond reasonably well to periods of divided

government. In many cases, legislative gridlock limits large policy swings and creates a more predictable environment for businesses and investors. A unified government can lead to more substantial policy changes, which may create both opportunities and uncertainty. Either way, the election could play a role in shaping economic policy and growth expectations for the remainder of the presidential term.

That said, markets generally react more to factors like inflation, interest rates, corporate earnings and global events than to election results alone. Politics matter, but it's rarely the primary driver of long-term investment outcomes.

Volatility is part of the process

Midterm election years often bring a little more market volatility than non-election years, and this cycle may be no different. The good news is that markets have historically performed well in the year following an election as uncertainty fades and investors gain a clearer sense of the path ahead.

Staying anchored

No one knows exactly how the midterms will unfold or how markets will respond in the weeks and months that follow. What we do know is that uncertainty is a normal part of investing. That's why periods like these can be a good reminder to step back and look at the bigger picture. If your investment strategy is aligned with your goals and built with flexibility in mind, it may not need to change every time the political landscape does.

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The cast of Act II Players' production of "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" takes the stage. The volunteer community theatre thanks everyone who came out to support the show.

Act II Players brings community theatre to Mandarin

By Marilyn Painter

This fall, Mandarin's own community theatre, Act II Players, delighted audiences with its production of John Mattera's stage adaptation of "Dracula." The show, presented Oct. 9-11, offered a unique blend of spooky thrills and laugh-out-loud comedy, putting an entertaining twist on Bram Stoker's classic tale. Audience members enjoyed a fast-paced production featuring eccentric characters, theatrical melodrama and plenty of surprises as the infamous Count Dracula moved in next door to an insane asylum. The

production continued Act II Players' tradition of bringing high-quality, affordable live theatre to the Mandarin community.

Act II Players is a volunteer-driven community theatre dedicated to providing opportunities for local performers, directors, technicians and theatre lovers while enriching the cultural life of the area. Located in Mandarin, the theatre welcomes both seasoned performers and newcomers who share a passion for the performing arts.

Although "Dracula" has now con-

cluded its run, community theatre patrons are encouraged to watch for information about Act II Players' upcoming productions. This December, audiences can enjoy "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play," a heartwarming holiday favorite presented in the style of a classic radio broadcast. Looking ahead to next summer, Act II Players will bring the energetic and entertaining musical "Legally Blonde" to the stage.

To stay informed about auditions, ticket sales, volunteer opportunities

and upcoming performances, visit actiplayers.org, follow Act II Players on Facebook at facebook.com/ActIIPlayersJax, or on Instagram at instagram.com/actiplayers. Community members may also email info@actiplayers.org to be added to the theatre's email newsletter and receive the latest updates directly in their inbox.

Act II Players looks forward to welcoming both returning patrons and first-time theatre-goers to future performances as it continues to bring live theatre to the Mandarin community.

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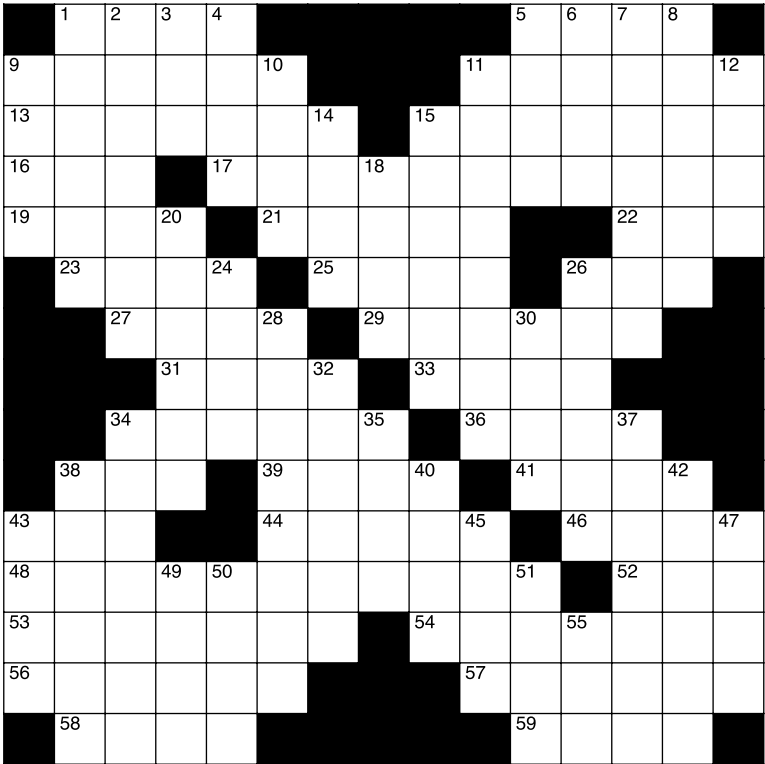
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Difficult

5. Coarsely ground corn

9. A group of similar things ordered one after another

11. Loved Romeo

13. Something to solve

15. Pelvic areas

16. Informal debt instrument

17. Ineffective

19. A device attached to a workbench

21. Related on the mother’s side

22. “Fresh Prince of ___ Air”

23. Astronomer Sagan

25. C. Utah city

26. Turkey

27. Informal terms for money

29. Awakens

31. Those who favored Prohibition
33. Blabbed

34. Looked through

36. Rhode Island rebellion

38. A type of “cast”

39. One’s duty

41. Where golfers begin

43. Make a mistake

44. Semitic Sun god

46. Ancient Greek City

48. Removed someone's head

52. A place to stay

53. Unwise

54. Most unnatural

56. “Dennis” is a notable one

57. Ointments

58. Examination

59. Leaked fluid

CLUES DOWN

1. Brave

2. A state of excitement

3. Jest at

4. Sandwich store

5. Chapter of the Koran

6. Dismounted from a horse

7. Small vehicle

8. Irrked

9. A disreputable man

10. Monetary unit of Samoa

11. A list of woes

12. Weight unit

14. Alone, single

15. Broadway legend Bernadette

18. Monetary unit of Serbia

20. Worn by exposure to the weather

24. A body of traditions

26. Students seek one
28. Hydrophilic amino acid

30. Nasal mucus

32. Branch of U.S. Congress

34. Swinish

35. Russian assembly

37. Grant an exemption to

38. Set up in advance

40. Satisfy

42. Felt

43. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls

45. Witnesses

47. Strong insects

49. Gasteyer and de Armas are two

50. One of an ancient people inhabiting Scotland

51. Cheerless

55. Unhealthy



Solve the code to discover words related to contact lenses.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 25 = S)

A. 25 10 4 15 11 9 10 2

Clue: Cleaning liquid

B. 26 24 25 14

Clue: Container

C. 14 6 14 25

Clue: Sight organs

D. 26 10 2 11 24 26 11 25

Clue: Fixes vision

CONTACTS CARE WORD SEARCH



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

WORDS

- ASTIGMATISM
AXIS
CASE
CORNEA
CURVE
CYLINDER
DAILY
DIAMETER
DIOPTER
DISINFECTANT
DRYNESS
EXTENDED
HYDRATION
HYDROGEL
HYPOXIA
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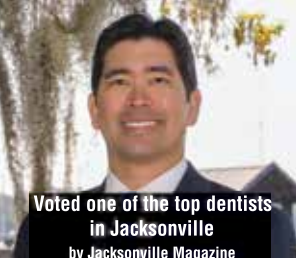
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Gardening

The Good Earth: Slow down and dig in

By Connie Doyle, Master Gardener UF/IFAS

Fall is when temperatures are dropping, the light is subtly changing and plant growth slowing. It's like the garden is taking a long deep breath after summer's sprint. The air feels clearer, the shadows stretch a bit longer, and bees are seen working on the last blooms. That slowing down can feel calm, even grounding. With a reminder that rest is part of the cycle too, we begin the much anticipated transition from the hot, rapid growth of summer to the relaxed pace that October invites. Yes, fall is upon us, and welcomed by all.

October is a bit like spring in reverse in Northeast Florida. Summer's heat is finally easing, and you can embrace the quiet joy of working outside in cooler air. Meanwhile, your soil is ready for something new too. Think: What can I do now so my garden looks its best through winter and is ready for spring?

My favorite activity is replacing tired summer annuals with cool-season color (pansies, petunias, snapdragons, violas, alyssum and dianthus) that say FALL IS HERE and along with it Halloween and Thanksgiving.

After summer's stress, adding a top dress of compost is well worth the effort. If you have pine trees consider the cost-cutting gathering of needles that are dropping and using them as a natural mulch. Be sure to adjust your irrigation system for cooler nights so plants don't stay soggy. Soggy plants invite fungus.

It's also a good time to divide, transplant and establish new perennials, evergreen shrubs and trees. If your landscape is lacking in color consider planting evergreen hollies; their



Connie Doyle, Master Gardener UF | IFAS

bright berries add color to the landscape when other plants have died back for the winter with the extra bonus of providing food for birds.

You're a veggie gardener you say? Time to prepare vegetable beds for bulb onions, salad crops such as arugula, lettuce and spinach. This is the last month to set

strawberry plants in the garden or in large containers.

Removing diseased limbs and weak branch unions now means fewer headaches during storm season. Trees with poor structure are less likely to survive storms. Good tree selection, proper structure and routine maintenance is the best defense against weather-related damage. Don't forget to cut back plants that need rejuvenation and divide overcrowded perennials.

If you pride yourself on a beautiful lawn, control winter weeds before they appear. Pre-emergent herbicides must be applied at the right time to be effective. Apply when nighttime temperatures are 55-60 degrees for 4-5 days.

So as October settles in, take a breath with your garden, make a few thoughtful changes and let nature take the lead as things slow down.

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@floridanewslines.com.



Photo courtesy Connie Doyle

AIA Jacksonville hosts lecture on Apalachicola Valley archaeology

Submitted by Mike Napper

The Archaeological Institute of America — Jacksonville Society will meet at noon on Oct. 17, 2026, to hear a lecture by Dr. Nancy Marie White, professor at the University of South Florida. The title of her lecture is "Apalachicola-lower Chattahoochee Valley Archaeology."

Dr. White will synthesize the results of decades of jungle survey and testing of 14,000 years of human occupation in this region of northwest Florida, south-east Alabama and southwest Georgia. She will discuss evidence of Paleo-Indian activity as well as Archaic adaptation to climate change and production of the earliest pottery 4,500 years ago. Then fast forward to Middle Woodland times (A.D. 350-700), Fort Walton-period agricultural chiefdoms by A.D. 1000, and European contact.



Dr. Nancy Marie White

The lecture is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served afterwards in the Anthropology Lab. On Saturday, parking is free, and the staff/faculty/vendor spaces are available to everyone. For more information, contact Melva Price at (904) 214-9411 or aiajaxsoc@gmail.com.



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Mandarin Community Club plans fall fundraisers, art festival

The Mandarin Community Club is hosting several fundraising events this fall, including its Florida Citrus Fundraiser and annual Halloween Bingo Fundraiser, while also beginning early planning for the 2027 Mandarin Art Festival. Proceeds from the fall events support the club, a nonprofit civic organization established in 1923 that serves as caretaker of the historic 1872 Mandarin Schoolhouse.

The Florida Citrus Fundraiser allows residents to pre-order fresh, Florida-grown fruit while supporting both the historic club and the state's citrus growers. Last year's fundraiser moved more than 3,300 pounds of citrus into local homes and businesses, according to the club. This year, the club has partnered with the Florida Farm Bureau Federation, the largest voice for Florida agriculture, to expand citrus options, lower prices and direct a portion of proceeds to the state's remaining groves.

Florida's citrus industry has declined significantly in recent decades due to citrus greening, a bacterial disease that has driven statewide production down from roughly 300 million boxes in the early 2000s to about 14 million boxes in recent years. This year's fundraiser



offers navel oranges, satsuma mandarins grown in North Florida, and red grapefruit grown under the Citrus Under Protective Screens program, which shields trees from the insect that spreads the disease. A combo box featuring all three varieties is also available.

Pre-orders run through November, with discounted pricing for online orders. Direct payment is also available at the Mandarin Market event on Oct. 24. Orders can be picked up Friday, Dec. 4, during the club's annual Christmas Tree Lighting.

The club's Halloween Bingo Fundraiser is set for Friday, Oct. 23, at the historic 1872 Mandarin Schoolhouse. Tickets are \$25 for 10 games and are sold at the door, cash only.

The club is also beginning early planning for the 2027 Mandarin Art Festival, held annually over Easter weekend since 1968. The planning committee officially launches in October. The club is seeking volunteers for a range of roles; the festival also offers an opportunity for students seeking volunteer service hours.

For more information on any of these events, call the Mandarin Community Club at (904) 268-1622 or visit mandarincommunityclub.org.



Photo courtesy of Mandarin Community Club
The Mandarin Community Club's entrance sign welcomes visitors to the historic Mandarin site, home to this year's citrus fundraiser.

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Travel

Central Oregon is worth the wait

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewsline.com

A passing rain shower could have spoiled my visit to Smith Rock State Park. Instead, it provided the finishing touch. As the weather cleared, the cliffs glowed above the winding Crooked River, their colors freshened by the rain. For a photographer visiting Oregon for the first time, it was quite a welcome.

Oregon was my 49th state, and Central Oregon gave me plenty of reasons to wonder why I had waited so long. Here were rushing rivers, volcanic rock, mountain views and towns where an afternoon of browsing could be as appealing as a morning on the trail. For this Floridian, even the horizon was a welcome change.

Redmond is the region's air gateway, with Bend a convenient base for exploring. Set along the Deschutes River, Bend combines outdoor energy with the pleasures of a walkable downtown. Restaurants, galleries and coffee shops make it easy to fill the hours between excursions. You can plan an ambitious day of hiking and paddling, or keep things simple with a riverside stroll and a good meal.

South of Bend, the High Desert Museum helps explain the country you are traveling through. Its mix of indoor exhibits and outdoor habitats connects the landscape with the history, the people, the art and wildlife that call it home. I saw birds of prey, otters and other native animals, while the exhibits explored the challenges of living in the high desert. It is a



Debi Lander

worthwhile early stop: the scenery means more when you begin to understand it.

At Benham Falls, the Deschutes trades its gentler stretches for a noisy rush through a rocky channel. Think tumbling rapids rather than a single curtain of falling water.

White foam surges against dark rock, and a ponderosa pine trail along the river offers places to stop and take it all in. For photographers, the movement of the water and the contrast of light and dark provide plenty to work with. For everyone else, the river supplies its own entertainment.



Photo courtesy of Debi Lander
Hikers follow the trail along the Crooked River at Smith Rock State Park.



Photo by Debi Lander
Clouds break over the cliffs of Smith Rock State Park as the Crooked River winds through the canyon below.



Photo by Debi Lander
Western-style storefronts line Main Street in Sisters, Oregon.

Smith Rock, north of Bend, delivers drama on a much larger scale. Rock walls and spires tower over the Crooked River, drawing climbers from around the world. Views from above the canyon are rewarding, while trails offer closer encounters with the river and cliffs — some more demanding than others.

The town of Sisters offers a gentler afternoon. Western-style storefronts give main street a distinctive cowboy look, with mountain scenery beyond. Shops, galleries and its celebrated annual outdoor quilt show reflect a strong creative streak. It is a place to browse without a schedule and stop for lunch.

Lodging can be part of the experience, too. Sunriver Resort offers upscale accommodations and recreation, FivePine Lodge & Cabins in Sisters pairs a wooded setting with a spa, and Brasada Ranch adds horseback rides through the high desert.

What stayed with me was the variety: otters at the museum, white water at Benham Falls, the easy pace of Sisters and those cliffs emerging from the rain. Oregon may have been number 49 on my list, but Central Oregon deserves far more than a check mark. I can't wait to return.

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 courtesy of Debi Lander
A 19th-century stagecoach is on display at the High Desert Museum near Bend.

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Josh Watkins Tennis Tournament turns 20

By Melinda Lewis

For 20 years, the Marine Corporal Josh Watkins Annual Tennis Tournament has brought together the tennis community, military families, veterans and YMCA supporters for a weekend centered on competition, community and remembrance. This November, the Williams Family YMCA will once again host this special tradition in honor of Marine Cpl. Joshua Watkins and the legacy he left in the community he called home.



Marine Cpl. Joshua Watkins

The 20th Annual Marine Corporal Josh Watkins Tennis Tournament will take place Thursday, Nov. 12, through Sunday, Nov. 15, at the Williams Family YMCA, located at 10415 San Jose Blvd. in the Mandarin neighborhood.

The celebration begins Wednesday, Nov. 11, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., with the tournament's Draw Reveal Party and a special University of North Florida Women's Tennis exhibition match, as the tournament brackets are revealed and the community celebrates two decades of honoring Joshua's life and service.

Marine Cpl. Joshua Watkins grew up attending the YMCA and eventually became an employee as a counselor and lifeguard and assisted with tennis maintenance. He later served his country as a U.S. Marine and was killed in action in Iraq. Twenty years later, his connection to the First Coast YMCA, tennis and service continues through an event that brings the community together in his memory.



Photo courtesy First Coast YMCA
Tournament players show their patriotic spirit on the court during a past Marine Corporal Josh Watkins Tennis Tournament.



Photo courtesy First Coast YMCA
Finalists and champions display their awards from the 19th Annual Marine Corporal Josh Watkins Tennis Tournament.

Proceeds benefit two causes that continue Joshua's legacy of service. A portion supports the Williams Family YMCA Annual Campaign, helping local children and families access First Coast YMCA programs regardless of their ability to pay, including Safety Around Water swimming lessons, summer day camp, youth sports and other programs. Half of the proceeds benefit the Marine Corporal Joshua Watkins Memorial Endowed Scholarship at the University of North Florida, which provides scholarship assistance to veterans pursuing their education. The endowment typically helps provide scholarships to approximately 10 to 12 veterans each year.

Community members, businesses,

First Coast YMCA members, friends and families do not have to play in the tennis tournament to support the cause — an online auction featuring donated items and experiences lets anyone bid and contribute from wherever they are, even those who never pick up a tennis racquet.

Tournament play will include adult doubles divisions for men, women and mixed teams, as well as new junior singles events, giving the next generation of tennis players an opportunity to become part of this longstanding tradition.

The 20th anniversary also recognizes the players, volunteers, sponsors, local businesses, restaurants, military families and community partners who have helped keep Joshua's memory and this tournament alive for two decades.

For 20 years, the tournament has ensured that Joshua Watkins' story continues to be told. Through every match played, every auction bid, every veteran scholarship awarded and every child benefited, Joshua's legacy of service continues.

Registration is open now, and sponsorship opportunities are available. For additional tournament, auction or sponsorship information, contact Melissa Glasgow at the Williams Family YMCA at M Glasgow@fcymca.org.

Melinda Lewis is Associate Executive Director and Healthy Living Director for First Coast YMCA.



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