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BFF Best Furry Friend



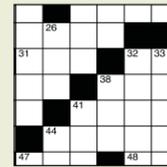
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Get to Know ...
Angela Freyman



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Troop 280 recognizes 2018 Eagle Scouts



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Puzzles

Camera club captures Northeast Florida

By Angela Higginbotham
angela@floridanewslines.com

Photographs capture moments that are otherwise gone forever — and the Jacksonville Camera Club is passionate about sharing knowledge of what to practice behind the lens in an effort to make photographs even more beautiful.

Originally formed in 1935, the Jacksonville Camera Club has offered decades of encouragement and fun to residents in-



Photo courtesy Bill McSherry
Jacksonville Camera Club members

terested in photography. Today, the club has approximately 90 members from all walks of life who share a common love for photography. Primarily an amateur club, the members learn from each other and enjoy making new friends.

"A lot of people are hesitant to come because they feel like they will be intimidated. This really is a place for any skill set," said Jacksonville Camera Club President Brian Leonard.

Approximately 50 members attend meetings on a regular basis. Meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of every month. Club member presentations of various topics of interest are presented during the meetings. The members also enjoy periodically formed

Camera club cont. on pg. 17



Photos courtesy Stephanie Triay

"Special things really do happen between the white lines." So says George Vancore, lead

umpire for the Field of Dreams Baseball League, a voluntary organization that provides a safe

ADA certified facility where special needs children of all ages (kindergarten through 12th grade) can play baseball for free and be an active part of a thriving athletic association.

Opening day this year will be Saturday, Feb. 2 with the first game at 9 a.m. at Aberdeen Park. The entire community is invited to attend. Vancore says he is prepared to be enlightened and have your heart touched.

At Field of Dreams, children with special needs (intellectual or physical disabilities) have the opportunity to play baseball in an organized league; to wear a uniform; have their names announced; participate in the National Anthem before each game; and to be a player on an athletic team. Vancore said last year, the league had a total of 161 participants on the 10 teams, the biggest year to date. He anticipates there may be 200 participants this year.



required to field a player for the season.

Volunteer buddies, at least one per special needs player, help with batting and rounding the bases.

Some buddies are members of area youth or high



school athletic teams who volunteer year after year. Vancore said last year seven former buddies who are now college students called him to ask if they could volunteer during their Spring Break — a testament to what Vancore said is the special experience of being a buddy.

Every Saturday for nine weeks, five games of two innings each that last approximate-

Registration is ongoing and always free. In fact, everything is free at Field of Dreams — uniforms, equipment, conces-

ly one hour and 10 minutes are played. All players have their name announced and everyone bats. Vancore said the league accommodates all types of special needs, from the nine blind children they had last year to those in wheelchairs and walkers. Coaches are mostly local ESE teachers and the children come from all over northeast Florida to participate in Field of Dreams.

Vancore said it's important to recognize that what the league is doing is sustainable and scalable — and to that end, they are branching out to build a boundless playground on the other side of the fence at right center field. This playground will feature equipment specifically designed for the special

needs student, such as a teeter totter that can accommodate a wheelchair and mechanically go up and down.

The total buildout of the playground, plus permanent ADA

restrooms, a permanent concession stand and a community pavilion, is estimated to cost \$550,000. Vancore said \$160,000 has already been raised. The first major piece of playground equipment, along with ADA certified mulch, will be installed sometime during the upcoming season, most likely in March. Although the Field of Dreams is locked when not in use, in order to protect the investment of the specialty turf field, the playground will be all access and open for use by all children.

Field of Dreams looks toward ninth Opening Day

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com



For more information about Field of Dreams or to register, visit www.fod-baseball.com or visit the league's Facebook page, "FieldofDreams-BaseballSt-Johns." Donations for the boundless playground may be made at the league's GoFundMe

account utilizing keyword: boundlessplaygroundsjc.

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Willow!



BREED:
Golden Retriever
FAVORITE ACTIVITY:
Going for rides in the truck with her dad
FAVORITE TREAT:
roasted marrow bone
FAVORITE FRIEND:
She loves her daddy - she follows him everywhere & lays under his desk while he is working
HOW YOUR BFF GOT THEIR NAME:
The kiddos all picked names & then agreed on Willow. She's our sweet girl!

This months sponsor:
Palencia Pet Clinic
159 Palencia Village Dr #101
www.palenciapetclinic.com

Do you have a cute pet? Send us your pet's picture and the answers to the five questions above before the 10th of the month. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and you could win a Gift Certificate!

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MYSTERY PHOTO



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around town

Feb

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save the date!

March 2 - 26th annual Chocolate and Beyond, sponsored by RSVP

2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
First Coast Technical college, 2980 Collins Ave., St. Augustine
www.rsvpstjohns.com or (904) 547-3952

March 16 - Pets on Parade

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Faith Community Church, 3450 County Road 210
Sponsored by Helping Hands; proceeds benefit Canine Companions

March 29 - 30 - Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society, "Violets in Paradise"

Friday, 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
San Jose Church of Christ, 6233 San Jose Blvd.
www.jacksonvilleviolets.org

Feb. 1
Rotary Club of St. Johns meeting
7:30 a.m. (repeating event on Fridays)
St. Johns Golf and Country Club Clubhouse
www.rotarystjohns.org

Donovan's Irish Pub, 7440 US Highway 1
Diane Tamplin, (904) 808-7326

Feb. 2
Bingo Night at St. Joseph's
Doors open 6:15 p.m.; Games start 7 p.m.
Cody Center, 4152 Loretto Road
Open to the community; (904) 742-8777

Feb. 7
Florida Bluebird Society presentation
6:30 p.m.
Wild Birds Unlimited, 450 State Road 13 N
Free; RSVP: (904) 230-3242

Feb. 2
Read to Rover (beginning readers practice reading to therapy dogs)
11 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Bartram Trail Branch Library
(904) 827-6960

Feb. 7
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7
6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.
St. Augustine Yacht Club near the St. Augustine Lighthouse
pa@mysafeboating.com

Feb. 4
Current Events Discussion Group
10 a.m. (repeating event on Mondays)
New location: Amenities Annex, 625 Market St., Palencia
adsilby@yahoo.com

Feb. 7
Rotary Club of Bartram Trail
7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (repeating event on Thursdays)
Westminster Woods, 25 State Road 13
lancedmalcolm@gmail.com

Feb. 5
First Coast Card Club - adult card players
1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
St. Augustine Main Library, 1960 Ponce de Leon Blvd.
(904) 829-0643

Feb. 9
Friends of the Library Book Sale
9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Bartram Trail Branch Library
(904) 827-6960

Feb. 5
World Golf Village Toastmasters
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
First Florida Credit Union, 1950 County Road 210W
Worldgolfvillage.toastmastersclubs.org

Feb. 11
Northwest United for Progress Club featuring Emmett and Wendy Tattler, "Florida's Prisons: Flaws and Fixes"
Social 6:30 p.m./Meeting 7 p.m.
2777 Race Track Road
nwsjcp@gmail.com

Feb. 7
Palencia Bridge Club plays Party Bridge
11 a.m. - 3 p.m. (repeating event on Thursdays)

Feb. 12
Bartram Trail Newcomers and Women's Mardi Gras party
11 a.m.
St. Johns Golf and Country Club
RSVP by Feb. 5, bartramtn@gmail.com

Feb. 13
Dementia Support for Caregivers
3:30 p.m.
River Garden, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road
Repeating event on the second Wednesday of each month

First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd.
www.orgsites.com/fl/allstarquiltguild or (904) 502-5254

Feb. 13
First Coast Newcomers Club Valentine's lunch and game day
12:30 p.m.
Limited number; RSVP (904) 829-0643

Feb. 19
Newcomers of North St. Johns featuring "Mrs. Henry Flagler"
11 a.m.
Ruth's Chris Steak House, 814 A1A North, Ponte Vedra Beach
RSVP by Feb. 8: sjaird@comcast.net

Feb. 14
Garden Club of Switzerland featuring Master Gardener Karen Van Pernis, "Propagation of Plants"
10 a.m.
Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd.
RSVP: www.switzerlandgc.org

Feb. 19
St. Johns CARES meeting
7 p.m.
Bartram Academy, 164 Everest Lane, Ste. 1
www.stjohnscares.org

Feb. 14
Shorebird Walk at Matanzas Inlet with St. Johns County Audubon Society
9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Matanzas Inlet West Parking Lot, 8655 A1A S., St Augustine
www.stjohnsaudubon.com

Feb. 19
North Business Council of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
8 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Westminster Woods on Julington Creek, 25 State Road 13
Register at www.sjcchamber.com or call (904) 829-5681

Feb. 15
Owl Sunset Symphony
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Beluthahatchee Park, 1501 State Road 13
RSVP: AyoLane Halusky at ahalusky@sjcfl.us or (904) 209-0348

Feb. 19 - March 26
Free Quit Smoking Now Class
Tuesdays, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Flagler Hospital Wellness Center
Call Florida AHEC to register (904) 482-0189

Feb. 16
Fruit Cove Cruise In sponsored by Sunshine State Chevilles
4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
PDQ parking lot, 194 State Road 13
Repeating event on third Saturday of each month

Feb. 22
Helping Hands of St. Johns County, collecting clothing for Webster School Giving Closet
10 a.m.
Faith Community Church, 3450 County Road 210W
jacqphil@aol.com

Feb. 18
All Star Quilt Guild
9:45 a.m.

Feb. 27
Lego Club for Kids
3 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Bartram Trail Branch Library
(904) 827-6960

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take 5

United States Navy Band to perform at Bartram Trail Branch Library

The United States Navy Band from NAS Jacksonville will perform on Feb. 13 at 3 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library as part of the St. Johns Reads programming taking place in the month of February. "Before We Were Yours" is the 2019 St. Johns Reads book. (Funding for this program was provided through a grant from the Florida Humanities Council with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the Florida Humanities Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities.)

Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club celebrates Mardi Gras

On Feb. 12, at 11 a.m., the Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club will host a Mardi Gras party at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club, located at 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. Members are encouraged to wear decorative masks, beads and Mardi Gras attire and there will be a contest for the best mask and Mardi Gras costume. Entertainment will be provided by St. Augustine-area band, Buffalo Rose. Lunch choices include cajun steak and broccolini fettuccine pasta or New Orleans style half muffaletta sandwich served with house kettle chips. Also included is the

chef's choice of appetizers, rolls, dessert as well as iced tea, coffee or soda with a cash bar available. The cost is \$20 per person; make checks payable to BTNC and mail to Hilda Gilpin, 621 Pineland Lane, Saint Johns, FL 32259. Indicate your entrée choice on the check memo line. Payment must be received by Feb. 5. Visit www.facebook.com/BTNC1 for more information.

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The Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Florida 511 (FL511) Advanced Traveler Information System is the state's official source for traffic and travel information. It provides current road and travel conditions, including updates on accidents, congestion and construction, so drivers can make choices about their travel plans. FL511 also provides camera views on major Florida roads, so users can see road conditions throughout the state. The goal is to increase driving safety and reduce travel time. Before heading out, drivers should check the FL511 App or interactive road map on FL511.com for important traffic information and incident alerts. The FL511 mobile app, available from the Apple App Store or Google Play, features an interactive map showing traffic congestion and incidents and camera snapshots on roads around the user's location. Travelers can follow FL511 on 13 Twitter handles, on Facebook @FL511, and Instagram @Florida_511. Visit www.FL511.com for more information.

Dog Day Afternoon celebrates canines

St. Johns CARES' 10th Dog Day Afternoon will be held on Sunday, March 31 from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. at Plantation Park inside Julington Creek Plantation. This fun day will include dog washes, "pet-i-cures" (nail trimming), a canine obstacle course, pet adoptions, pet photographs, hot dogs, baked goods (for humans and dogs), special K9 and other demonstrations, pet specialty vendor booths and services, face painting, a bounce house and balloon animals — all while raising funds to benefit St. Johns County Fire & Rescue's purchase of oxygen masks for dogs and cats rescued from burning buildings. Sponsors and booth vendors are needed. Contact Linda Gomolka at (904) 287-1377 or geralindjon@bellsouth.net for more information.



Photo courtesy St. Johns CARES

Bluebird lecture offered

Joanne Heinrich from the Florida Bluebird Society will share unique facts about the colorful and beneficial Eastern Bluebird at a free presentation on Feb. 7 from 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at Wild Birds Unlimited, 450 State Road 13 N, Suite 108 in St Johns. Attendees

will learn about the history, research, and conservation of this federally protected species and how to attract, create a safe habitat, and enjoy viewing them in their own yard. Questions and discussion with Heinrich and a staff naturalist will follow the presentation. Refreshments will be served and the store will remain open until 8 p.m. Space is limited; reserve your seat by emailing [wbujacksonville@yahoo.com](mailto:wbutjacksonville@yahoo.com) or calling (904) 230-3242.

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Inquiring Minds want to know!

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

Are you puzzled about something going on in NW St. Johns County or wondering about whatever happened on a topic from a previous issue? Email your question to us at editor@floridanewslines.com by the fifth of the month and we will do our best to track down the information for you.



with Beverly Slough, St. Johns County School Board Member, District 1

Q: Can you give us an update on the half cent sales tax, passed in 2015 to benefit St. Johns County Schools?

A: In early January, the Half-Cent Sales Surtax Citizen Advisory Committee reported to the school board the the half cent sales tax this year is outperforming projections. This is partially due to the increased number of tourists spending money in our county. The half cent sales tax was projected to bring in \$13 million annually and for the 2018-2019 year, we are on track for \$19 million.

Q: What are some of the things the half cent sales tax has funded over the past three years?

A: There are four categories that expenditures must fit in: new construction, renovations, technology, and safety. In the past three years, the half cent sales tax has funded:

New construction: Picolata Crossing Elementary, Freedom Crossing Academy and partially funded Palm Valley Academy.

Renovations: roof replacements, covered PE areas, and site improvements at several different schools.

Technology: the megahertz radio system that allows us to be in direct contact with the SJSO; upgraded technology in multiple schools and tech refreshment for teachers.

Safety: upgraded camera and security systems for all schools; improved fencing and single points of entry enhancements for multiple schools. Also we purchased the school bus GPS for all of our buses.

Q: What does the board plan to spend this year's funds on?

A: We have allocated \$5.6 million for debt service on the bonds used to build new schools like Palm Valley Academy; we plan to expand the dining area at Liberty Pines Academy; roof replacements at more schools and continue to upgrade technology and single points of entry in more schools; and purchase a wireless school bus video management system that allows for real time information. We have no major capital items this year, but are banking \$7 million for the next school to be built in the future.

Q: Do you have any update on building a new school?

A: We are continuing to explore and identify a site for the next high school, which is the next school on our radar. It will most likely be in the central part of the county, perhaps near the World Golf Village area. This will provide relief for several of our high schools, including Nease. This is essential since Nocatee is zoned for Nease.

Q: Do you have anything else to share with our readers?

A: We are anticipating the new legislative session and the opportunities and challenges we will have as we work with new leadership including a new commissioner of education, governor, and legislative leaders. We are working to forge relationships with these leaders to make sure our voices are heard for the good of our students.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

A: They can email me at beverly.slough@stjohns.k12.fl.us or call me at (904) 547-7510.

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with St. Johns County Commissioner Jimmy Johns, (District 1)

Q: Regarding the recent Board of County Commissioners vote in favor of the MSTU for beach renourishment in Ponte Vedra Beach, can you share how you voted and why?

A: I always look at the whole scope of work and am not an incrementalist. We definitely need sand on our beaches, but we also have many other infrastructure needs in our county. There were basically two reasons I voted against this. First is the MSTU will only provide funding to find a source of sand and preliminary design analysis. Nobody will know today what a renourished beach in Ponte Vedra will even look like. Secondly, the Ponte Vedra beaches do not qualify for federal funding as a potential source because they do not meet the required threshold for public access or parking.

Q: What do you say to those who think, we have to start somewhere?

A: I disagree. If we don't know which direction we are going, we could spend hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on nothing. The goal is to put sand on the beach. But what is the path to the goal? There may be a more efficient way to achieve this and that's what we rely on our county staff to do. As of today, there is no plan to put sand on the beach. I haven't given up; we're still looking for a path to this goal.

It's important to realize that we do not have enough money at the local level to provide for all the infrastructure improvements needed in our county. That's why I held the community meeting in November and another one in January — to discuss the many needs, prioritize, and hopefully come to a consensus.

Q: Can you comment on the recent misunderstanding by some residents regarding the location of the Julington Creek Cemetery and the new Publix being built as part of Bartram Market?

A: It's so important that people get complete and accurate information. The land around the cemetery is being developed according to what the land use allows. No action has been requested of the Board of County Commissioners to date for any variances that would involve disturbing the cemetery in any way.

Q: Likewise, how about the potential for building a funeral home on County Road 210 that has been upsetting to some residents?

A: A funeral home is just one type of business that could be built that meets the zoning criteria for the parcel. There are no plans to build one at this time. To access the buildable part of the property, there would potentially be impact to a conservation easement fronting County Road 210. There recently was a community meeting about this and I wish I could have attended. I do plan to attend future meetings. If there is supposed to be a conservation easement into perpetuity, it would be a very hard sell for me to change that. I'm only an advocate of development that meets three criteria: employs residents, adds to the tax base and is embraced by the community. This doesn't seem to be embraced by the community, but like the cemetery issue, there seems to be a lot of information floating around that is inaccurate. I'm very glad people have brought this issue to my attention.

Q: Do you have anything else to share with District 1?

A: I had a great meeting in January with our federal leaders, John Rutherford and Rick Scott. We discussed beach renourishment and infrastructure needs. I asked them directly: how do we get our taxpayers' money back from the federal government? St. Johns is a donor county, giving far more money to state and federal government than we get back. We want to retain local control, doing everything we can to be good stewards — and we want to get our due share back of what we put in. I was told that we need to provide a percentage (for some projects, 12.5 percent) at the local level to get federal funds. They are much more likely to get money for us if we have consensus on how we'd like to spend it.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?

A: Readers can email me at bcc1johns@sjcfl.us or call me at (904) 615-7437.



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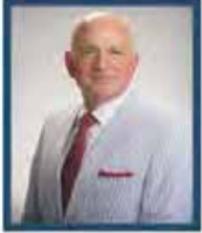


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March 1, 2019




FYI Contact Numbers

St. Johns County Local Government
(www.sjcfl.us)

Sheriff's Office: Sheriff David B. Shoar,
dshoar@sjso.org, (904) 824-8304
Julington Creek Field Office: (904) 209-2150

Property Appraiser: Eddie Creamer,
sjcpa@sjcpa.us; (904) 827-5500

Supervisor of Elections: Vicky Oakes,
voakes@votesjc.com, (904) 823-2238

Tax Collector: Dennis Hollingworth,
taxcollector@sjctax.us, (904) 209-2250

Clerk of Court: Hunter S. Conrad,
(904) 819-3600

St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

District 1: Jimmy Johns,
bcc1johns@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0301
District 2: Jeb Smith,
bcc2smith@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0302
District 3: Paul Waldron,
bcc3pwaldron@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0303
District 4: Jeremiah Blocker,
bcc4jblocker@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0304

District 5: Henry Dean,
bcc5hdean@sjcfl.us, (904) 209-0305

St. Johns County School Board (www.stjohns.k12.fl.us)

District 1: Beverly Slough,
beverlyslough@stjohns.k12.fl.us, (904) 547-7510
District 2: Tommy Allen,
tommy.allen@stjohns.k12.fl.us, (904) 547-7510

State of Florida Elected Officials

Governor Ron DeSantis, (850) 488-7146

State House District 17: Representative Cyndi Stevenson,
Cyndi.Stevenson@myfloridahouse.gov, (904) 823-2300

State Senate District 7: Senator Travis Hutson, (386) 446-7610

Federal Elected Officials

U.S. Congress District 4: Representative John Rutherford,
(202) 225-2501

U.S. Senate:

Senator Marco Rubio, (202) 224-3041
Senator Rick Scott, (202) 224-5274

Editorial

Local breast cancer charity reaching out to community for venue donation

By Catherine Murphy, Hope Floats board member/secretary

Hope Floats is a local fundraising partner of The DONNA Foundation. Currently, we are in search of a donated venue for our second annual Shop the Closets event, slated for Saturday, March 30 and Sunday, March 31.

Last year we collected thousands of gently used, higher-end clothing, handbags, shoes, jewelry and accessories. Individual boutiques were provided for each price point, ranging from \$1 to \$20. The public's generosity was impressive and in three short hours, we

raised more funds per hour than any other fundraiser we'd held before.

This year, Hope Floats would like to expand the event by offering an additional shopping day to those buying a \$10 VIP pass. VIPs will have the added benefit of shopping the day before we open to the public, thereby offering them greatest opportunity to score the best quality merchandise with the widest variety of items available.

Editorial cont. on pg. 13



with St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

Q: Can you give us the basic information for homestead exemption in Florida?

A: Between now and March 1, it is time for qualifying homeowners to file for homestead exemption. To qualify, you must have owned the property as of Jan. 1, 2019 and occupied it as your primary residence. Evidence of this is your Florida driver's license with that address. You may not claim or be eligible to claim a homeowner's tax exemption in Florida or any other state.

Q: Why is it important to apply for homestead exemption?

A: It's important because it reduces your property's taxable value by \$50,000 — which can result in a savings of approximately \$650 for the average homeowner in Florida. It also sets the base for the 3 percent "Save our Homes" cap, which limits the taxable value of your home from rising more than 3 percent per year. Already this year we are seeing property value increases that are higher than this cap.

Q: How should a homeowner file for homestead exemption?

A: Homeowners can file in person in our office or online at www.sjcpa.us. Presently, about 50 percent of homeowners are filing online, compared to about 10 percent just two years ago.

Q: Are there other exemptions?

A: There are many different and specific exemptions designed to provide tax relief to certain homeowners. Examples include exemptions for widow/widowers, totally and permanently disabled veterans or first responders, those who are blind or have other permanent disability, deployed service members, surviving spouses of first responders, and seniors with an adjusted gross income of \$29,450. Please call our office for more information if you think any of these might apply to you.

Q: What is the most important thing to remember?

A: It is mandatory that you apply for any exemption by March 1. Even if you qualify, if you don't apply for it — we can't grant the exemption. Florida Statute is clear that the homeowner must apply.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?

A: Our office is located at 4030 Lewis Speedway Ste. 203, (904) 827-5500. It is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Also, readers can email me at Eddie@sjcpa.us or call me at (904) 827-5500.

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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

MarketInsight



Your Money or Your Life

By Scott Grant
ScottGrant@StJohnsBusinessMonthly.com

Ossip Bernstein was born in Imperial Russia in 1882. He was a lawyer, a banker, and a pretty good chess player. He prospered under the reign of the Tsar. Like many, he lost everything during the Communist Revolution. And like many, he fled to Paris and started a new life. A year later he was back in the Ukraine, during the Ukrainian War of Independence in 1918. He was arrested by the secret police and sentenced to death for being a lawyer. He and the other bankers and lawyers were lined up against a wall awaiting the firing squad when one of the senior officers noticed his name on the list of the condemned.

The officer approached Ossip and asked if he was the same Bernstein who had won the Moscow City Chess Championship a few years before. Ossip averred that he was, but the officer was skeptical. He devised a plan to determine the truth. He proposed a game of chess. If Ossip Bernstein won, he would go free. If not, he would be shot with the rest of the capitalists. According to the legend, Ossip won that game with ease. The game itself continues to fascinate chess fans. Did it really happen or is it just another one of those crazy stories that crazy chess players often tell? William Steinitz, the first World Chess Champion, once announced that he was playing a game with God Almighty by telegraph, and he was winning!

No record exists of the moves of the game — but chess players have often mused about how one would play if one were playing for their life. It

must put extra pressure on a game that is already one of the most psychologically stressful of human activities. The consensus is that you would not want to play too aggressively or too timidly. A mistake could be very costly.

It is unimaginable that any of us will ever play a game of Chess for our lives, or a game of Monopoly or Candyland at such weighty stakes either; however, each of us is engaged in the life-long “game” of preparing for retirement. It is an important game for us to “win.” Like Ossip, we do not want to be too aggressive or too timid. A mistake in either direction could be extremely costly.

According to Benjamin Graham, who taught Warren Buffett, our goal in building wealth should be to compound over time at a reasonable rate of return and at a reasonable risk. Graham annually suggested portfolio weightings that ranged from 75 – 25 percent stock. In no instance did the Columbia professor suggest that his institutional clients should seek to get 100 percent of the potential return. Why? Because Graham felt that investors did not want to take 100 percent of the risk either. There is a valuable lesson here. We do not want 100 percent of the return, because we do not want 100 percent of the risk. Like Ossip, the consequences are just too great. That is why we diversify.

Scott A. Grant is President of Standfast Asset Management in Ponte Vedra Beach. He welcomes your comments or questions at scottg@standfastic.com.

First home closed in Beachwalk

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Bailey and Derrick Bruce had a lot of communities and homes to choose from when selecting their first home together. The innovative idea of combining a vacation lifestyle with the conveniences of urban living is what initially drew them to Beachwalk — and they they were the first residents to close on a new home.

“It jumped out to us an exciting place to start our family,” Bailey Bruce said.

“Beachwalk offers multiple positives. Resort style amenities and living within a 15-minute drive to the river, beach, attractions, and shopping.”

Comprised of five unique neighborhoods, they selected the Abaco, a home built by Lennar and only available in Dorado at Beachwalk.

“Something we really wanted was a pool. We compromised by selecting a great lot that is going to be near the clubhouse and lagoon,” Bruce said. “We also plan on putting in a fire pit in for our social gatherings and relaxing nights by the fire.”

The Abaco features a single-story floor plan and is equipped with numerous multiple state-of-the-art and connected smart home features. The

four-bedroom, three-bath, and 2.5-car garage design offers plenty of room for a growing family. Located off the large gathering room is a patio that serves as an extension of the indoor living space and brings in an abundance of natural light. The Abaco also features an open kitchen complete with a large quartz island and professional grade appliances.

The Bruces are steps away from all the Beachwalk amenities, including the area’s only Crystal Lagoon with white, sandy beaches, splash park for pets, fitness center, tennis, volleyball, and eventually, shopping and dining. Dual 40-foot lagoon water slides are being installed in February, the clubhouse is under construction and plans for retail and dining choices are being finalized.

Bailey Bruce is from St. Johns County. She attended Bartram Trail High School, Florida State College at Jacksonville and the University of North Florida. She owns her own marketing company. Lieutenant Commander Derrick Bruce is a Navy Pilot at NAS-Jacksonville and a Naval Academy graduate with his MBA from the University of North Florida. Visit www.beachwalkstjohnscounty.com for more information.



Photo courtesy Mike Bonts Public Relations
Bailey Bruce

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with Florida State Representative Cyndi Stevenson, District 17

Q: Can you give us an overview of what is happening in Tallahassee now?

A: Session starts in March. As of now (mid-January) we are in committee weeks, where much of the work on bills is done in advance of session, which only lasts 60 days. I was pleased and honored to be named chair of the Insurance and Banking Subcommittee and vice chair of the Children, Families and Seniors Subcommittee.

Q: What are some of the upcoming bills that you feel are noteworthy?

A: There are a couple I would like to share with the readers. The first is a bill that I am supporting: HB 45, Bill Hands Free Florida. This is the distracted driving bill that aims to prohibit the operation of a motor vehicle while using a hand held device. Basically, a driver wouldn't be able to touch a mobile device except when stopped and doing so would be a primary offense. A driver would be able to use a hands free device such as Bluetooth. This obviously doesn't cure everything as drivers can still be distracted in other ways ... grooming, eating, operating onboard systems.

Secondly, I am introducing a bill (HB 281) that will protect the privacy of information of minors who have pre-registered to vote. Voter registration information is public record and as such can be used for things like sales solicitations or other general purposes. We get a lot of complaints about this and so this bill would make the personal information of 16 – 18 year olds not appear in public records.

Q: Can you give us a budget outlook?

A: The one thing we must do each year is pass a balanced budget. Beginning in the fourth quarter of last year, we began to see signs of a slowing in our state economy, mostly due to national items including tariffs already enacted and the increase in interest rates. The Florida economy is still growing though, at a projected 3.5 percent growth rate.

It's important to understand that the state's economy is driven by a robust tourism industry, so we are vulner-

able to anything that puts a chill on this industry. Sales tax, paid in part by tourists, makes up 78 percent of the state's general revenue. The problem is that recurring revenue, such as sales tax, is mismatched with entitlement costs, which are fixed. In three years, because of increasing entitlement costs for healthcare, we anticipate the need for an additional \$9.5 billion in recurring revenue. This will make it very difficult to fund new services, unless there are existing items in the budget that can be cut.

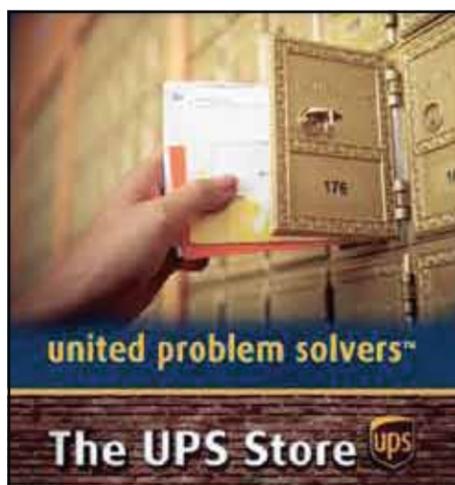
Q: What are the major categories of income and expenses for the state budget?

A: The entire state budget for 2019 – 20 is approximately \$89 billion. Income for the state is roughly in thirds: general revenue, state trust funds, and federal funding. Roughly 42 percent of the funding goes towards entitlements, which has overtaken education (29 percent) as the number one expense. The state's share of existing Medicaid commitment alone is \$30 billion, while we spend \$26 billion on education. Just like a business or a household, the state government is having a hard time affording health care costs; we are trying to still provide affordability, access and quality.

Additionally, we are dealing with the impacts of hurricanes Irma and Michael. The state has advanced funds for Irma damages that it expects to (eventually) be reimbursed by the federal government and we are still estimating damages from Michael. It is expected that these damages will require more state resources than Irma, due to the total devastation of rural counties with little or no reserves and many uninsured homes.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?

A: Readers can email me at Cyndi.Stevenson@myfloridahouse.gov or call my local office at (904) 823-2300. Please note that my office location has changed to the northern part of the county, 309 Kingsley Lake Drive, Suite 902, located just west of Interstate 95 off County Road 210.



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New Location

Briefs

Current Events group has new home

Current Events, the discussion group that meets every Monday morning in Palencia, has a new home. Beginning with the New Year, Current Events began meeting in the Amenities Annex, located near the center of Palencia, at 625 Market St., at 10 a.m.

This is Current Events' fourth year bringing together people from Palencia, Jacksonville, and surrounding communities to discuss items drawn from the daily news. With no requirement on who can participate, the group attracts people who enjoy exchanging views and opinions about current events.

During the past weeks, the group discussed: efforts by Facebook and other platforms to control "hate speech"; dangers posed by climate change; the invasion of privacy provided by signals emitting from smart phone; the orientation provided to new members of Congress; the impact of the shifting demographics in the U.S.; and among other issues, the challenge to the First Amendment arising from a court suit in Texas.

While the number of participants varies from week to week, the group usually numbers between 20 and 25. The group is not affiliated with any political, religious or cultural organization. Efforts are made to present news items impartially in a congenial setting while stimulating discussion.

Participants are encouraged to bring issues in the news that they find of

interest, which adds variety to the topics discussed each week. There is a \$3 fee charged to all that covers the cost of the coffee and nibbles provided. Contact ADSilby@yahoo.com for more information about the group.

Community PedsCare program benefits from generosity of businesses

For Community Hospice & Palliative Care's Community PedsCare program, unwavering support from local businesses since its inception in 2000 has been a major difference-maker in its growth and innovative delivery of hospice and palliative care services to children from prenatal to age 21.

"As the director of Community PedsCare, I am so blessed to touch the true meaning of the season. We have so many incredible people and businesses in our community that are aware, understand and feel the compassion to assist the children and the families in our pediatric hospice and palliative care programs," said Patrice Austin.

Community PedsCare has been the recipient of these ongoing acts of generosity by just a few of the following community supporters:

- THE PLAYERS Championship recently donated of hundreds of holiday gifts to deserving Community PedsCare children and families, including Lego sets, PS4 and gift cards
- St. Johns CARES donates children's toys and other supply needs yearly to

Community PedsCare families and children

- Local father Brendan Hoffman creates and donates handmade dollhouse masterpieces in honor of his daughter to Community PedsCare
- Stellar has been fulfilling gift wishes to Community PedsCare kids for several years and sponsored 55 of them this holiday season
- Photographer Curt Coenen has given the gift of Santa photos to PedsCare children and families for 14 years
- Helping Hands at Faith Community Church gifted decorated two-foot-tall trees to Community PedsCare families for the Hendricks Christmas Party, hosted annually by Community PedsCare
- The Florida Theater donates Nutcracker tickets yearly to Community PedsCare families
- Coquina Crossing Community and Sandy Collamati stuffed 166 Christmas stockings with toys for Community PedsCare children this holiday season
- Jax Woodworkers Club handcrafts little wooden toys like cars, trucks, planes and trains for the Community PedsCare children each year

"Every extended effort speaks to the ownership our community takes in caring for the village of our children and their families touched by a complex medical need, chronic or end of life experience," Austin said. "Today, hospice for children focuses on living, capturing forever moments and shining the light of living."

Community PedsCare offers palliative care for children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions, along with hospice care for children and their families who seek to focus on life and living. Visit www.CommunityPedsCare.com for more information.

St. Johns CARES reports successful initiatives

St. Johns CARES, a local non-profit organization, generated more than \$72,000 worth of monetary and in-kind donations during November and December through the group's annual Food Drive and Giving Tree initiatives. Generous community and business support in November enabled St. Johns CARES to assist Christ's Cupboard Food Pantry, St. Francis House, and the S.E.A. Community in providing food to county residents in need. During the December Giving Tree initiative, 67 St. Johns County businesses, clubs and organization served as Giving Tree host sites and featured decorated displays with wish tags representing items needed by 40 St. Johns County non-profit organizations serving seniors, veterans, homeless, abused, children, medical and animals.

The next scheduled event is the pet-friendly Dog Day Afternoon on March 31 at Plantation Park within Julington Creek Plantation. Visit www.stjohns-cares.org for information about St. Johns CARES, Inc., teen and volunteer opportunities and donation opportunities.



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St. Johns Reads 2019 to include special events

By Chett Wood
mail@floridanewline.com

The St. Johns County Public Library System is excited to announce that St. Johns Reads 2019 is going to be very special. We have chosen Lisa Wingate's bestselling novel, "Before We Were Yours" as our next community reads title, and Lisa Wingate will be visiting St. Johns County in February.

"Before We Were Yours" depicts the story of a horrifying and little known piece of depression era history. From Lisa Wingate's webpage:

"An engrossing new novel based on one of America's most notorious real-life scandals — in which Georgia Tann, director of a Memphis-based adoption organization, kidnapped and sold poor children to wealthy families all over the country — "Before We Were Yours" brilliantly fictionalizes and brings to life a shocking facet of America's past."

St. Johns Reads will feature a full month of programming and events centered around the community reading "Before We Were Yours." Scheduled programs include a presentation by the St. Johns

Riverkeeper, craft programs, food programs featuring a "Taste of the Old South," and many more events touching upon the culture and era surrounding this power story.

As a finale to St. Johns Reads, Lisa Wingate will be making a personal appearance at the World Golf Village on Saturday, Feb. 23, 2019 at 2 p.m. Her appearance is funded in partnership with the seven Friends of the Library Groups and a grant from the Florida Humanities Council (FHC) through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The author of 30 books, Wingate will be reading from "Before We Were Yours," discussing her work and her process for researching and writing. Books will be available for purchase and signing by Wingate, courtesy of the Bookmark Independent Book Store in Neptune Beach.

The book is now available in multiple formats at your St. Johns County Public Library System. For further information or to place a hold on your copy of this outstanding book, visit www.sjcpls.org or call your branch library.

Other St. Johns Reads events at the Bartram Trail Branch Library include:

Painting Beach Scenes, Feb. 2, 11 a.m.: Avery spends time at the beach on Edisto Island trying to track down mysteries in her grandmother's past. Create a beautiful beach scene in this free beginner-level painting class for adults, taught by local

St. Johns County recycles Christmas trees

A total of 364 Christmas trees were recycled at various locations around St. Johns County for the Parks and Recreation Department's third annual Tree-Cycling Program. Held over five days in January, the program accepted decoration-free trees at Al Wilke Park in Hastings, St. Johns Golf Club in Elkton, Ron Parker Park in St. Augustine Beach, Cornerstone Park in Ponte Vedra, and Mills Field in St. Johns. The nearly 400 trees will be chipped and the resulting mulch will be spread around county parks.



Photo courtesy St. Johns County

artist Kasha Fahy. Visit the Reference Desk or call (904) 827-6960 to register. Registration begins Friday, Jan. 11.

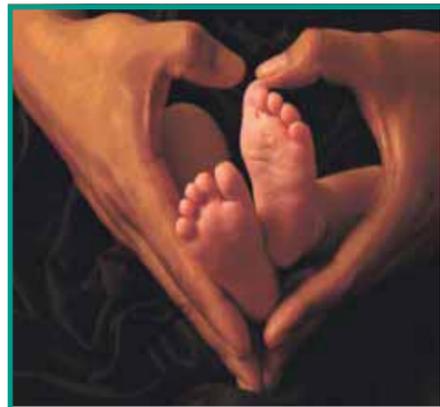
What Can You Learn from Your DNA? with Special Guest Connie Bradshaw, Feb. 9, 2 p.m.: Just like in the story of the illegally adopted siblings in "Before We Were Yours," our roots can be a mystery. Join genetic genealogy specialist Connie Bradshaw as she helps you make sense of the mystery of your roots.

Books & Bites: A Scandal in Memphis, Feb. 15, 11 a.m.: Join us as we unravel the scandal surrounding Georgia Tann and the Tennessee Children's Home. Books & Bites, a delightful cooking demonstration presented by St. Johns County librarians, combines the love of literature and food. Sample Southern cuisine while learning about the many children affected by power and greed in Memphis. Registration required.

A Dazzle of Dragonflies, Feb. 22, 10:30 a.m.: Dragonflies, a prominent and recurring symbol in "Before We Were Yours," are said to symbolize our ability to overcome hardship and to help remind us to take time to reconnect with our own strength, courage, and happiness. Join us to create a framed daily reminder for your home crafted from buttons.

(Funding for the Feb. 23 program featuring author Lisa Wingate was provided through a grant from the Florida Humanities Council with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the Florida Humanities Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities.)

Chett Wood is the Reference and Adult Services Librarian at the Bartram Trail Branch Library.



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Girls on the Run spring registration now open

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com



Photo courtesy Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida

Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida's registration for the spring season is now open. Girls on the Run is a physical activity-based, positive youth development program that inspires girls in third through eighth grade to be joyful, healthy and confident. The volunteer-led program brings together groups of eight to 15 girls for a 12-week program that encourages personal development, team building and connection to the community. At the conclusion of the program, girls complete a celebratory 5k event, giving them a tangible sense of achievement as well as a framework for setting and achieving life goals.

This season, Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida will be celebrating their 15th anniversary. To commemorate the milestone, the end of season 5k will be an evening run on Saturday, May 4, with a glow theme, post-race activities and unique finisher medals.

Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida has impacted the lives of more than 17,000 girls. This season, Girls on the Run will be offered at 61 locations. Most teams will meet two times a week for 75 – 90 minutes after school, with

the exception of a handful of Saturday sites that meet once a week in the morning. Each team participates in research-based lessons that use dynamic discussions and fun running games to teach life skills. Life skills such as managing emotions, resolving conflicts, making intentional decisions and helping others are woven in to the program curriculum. At the end of each season, each team also designs and delivers a community service project.

Program registration is now open and late registration will be available if there is space open on a team until the second team practice. Visit www.gotrnefl.org for more information about the program, site locations and registration.

Editorial cont. from pg. 8

If finishing breast cancer is near and dear to your heart and you own retail space you'd like to donate for the purpose of our fundraiser, please contact: Hope Floats President Kerri Henderson (904) 657-9376
HopeFloats4BreastCancer@gmail.com

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LOVE MARRIAGE



Valentine's Day numbers to know

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Valentine's Day is one of the most popular days of the year to celebrate. Here's a look at some interesting numbers associated with this day to celebrate the love people have for one another.

400: The year that Pope Gelasius declared Feb. 14 a day to honor Saint Valentine.

62: The percentage of adults who say they celebrate the holiday.

1.7: The amount, in billions, that is spent on candy for Valentine's Day, according to the National Retail Federation.

512: The average dollar amount spent per person for Valentine's Day.

58: The number of pounds, in millions, of chocolate bought during Valentine's Day week.

150: The number of cards and gifts, in millions, sent each year for the day of love.

1: The dollar amount, in billions, that Americans are expected to spend on Valentine's Day cards.



61: Percentage of men who purchase flowers or plants for Valentine's Day.

15: Average cost, in dollars, of a box of chocolates.

8.6: Amount of dollars, in millions, spent on sparkling wine for Valentine's Day, making it the second most popular occasion, after New Year's Eve, to enjoy some bubbly.

150: The average amount, in dollars, men spend on gifts. Women spend an average of \$74 on gifts.

2: The ranking of red roses in comparison to other types of flowers gifted.

Sources: NRF, Greeting Card Association, National Confectioners Association, U.S. Postal Service, USDA.

Sentiments that the colors of roses are meant to convey

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Roses are a popular gift on Valentine's Day. When accompanied by a box of chocolates, a bouquet of long-stemmed roses is sure to make a sweetheart smile on Feb. 14.

Few people may know that the color of a rose is meant to convey a certain message. As a result, even the most head-over-heels-in-love man or woman may not be saying what they mean to say when giving roses. If that special someone has a favorite color of rose, then it might

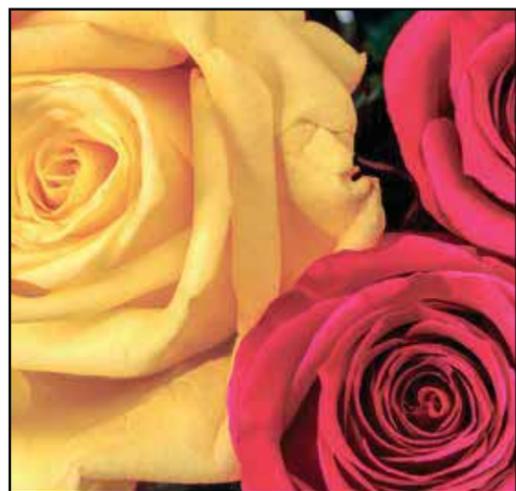


Photo courtesy MetroCreative
The color of a rose is meant to convey a certain message.

be wise to give that color regardless of what tradition suggests. But when sweethearts have no such preferences, it might be best to keep this guide,

courtesy of ProFlowers®, in mind.

- **Red:** Red roses say "I love you." Red is symbolic of love, especially romantic love. Red also symbolizes beauty, courage and respect.

- **Pink:** Pink is a popular color on Valentine's Day, but sweethearts should know that pink roses say "Thank you," which makes them a better choice for friends than lovers.

- **White:** White roses say "I am the one for you." White symbolizes true love, purity, innocence, reverence, humility, youthfulness, and charm.

- **Yellow:** Yellow roses say "We're friends and I care about you." Joy, gladness, friendship, delight, and remembrance are just a few of the sentiments yellow conveys.

- **Yellow with red tip:** Yellow roses may be best for friends, but yellow roses with red tips say "I'm falling in love with you."

- **Orange/coral:** Another awe-inspiring color, orange/coral roses say "I want you in my life." This color indicates desire, enthusiasm and fascination.

- **Red and white together:** A mixed bouquet of red and white roses says "We are a great match."

- **Peach:** Peach symbolizes intimacy, telling a lover, "Let's make this a memorable Valentine's Day."

Happy Valentines Day



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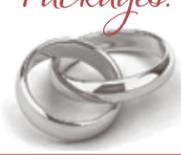
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LOVE MARRIAGE



Countdown to Valentine's Day with week-long fun

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Millions of people eagerly await the arrival of the shortest month of the year for the opportunity to show their spouses, girlfriends, boyfriends, companions, and many other special people in their lives how much they are loved. Even though Valentine's Day is just one day a year, that doesn't mean it should be the only time one expresses his or her love for a special someone.

With this in mind, you can count down the days to Valentine's Day with these daily events that precede the day of love.

February 7: Rose Day
Celebrate love with a vase filled with roses. Red symbolizes love, and many other colors represent heartfelt emotions. The flowers will add to home decor and ambiance.

February 8: Proposal Day

Couples ready to tie the knot can use this day as an opportunity to propose. Those already engaged or married can spend Proposal Day celebrating the events that led up to their own engagement or betrothal, and toast how their relationships have evolved.

February 9: Chocolate Day

Lavish a loved one with all the decadent treats they enjoy. These can include store-purchased chocolates, chocolate fudge sundaes or warm brownies fresh out of the oven.

include store-purchased chocolates, chocolate fudge sundaes or warm brownies fresh out of the oven.

February 10: Teddy Day

This day can be interpreted in different ways. Couples adding spice to their relationships can celebrate Teddy Day with the lingerie of the same name.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Show love all week long leading up to Valentine's Day.

Those looking for a more G-rated experience can gift each other with an adorable stuffed bear. Make-your-own stuffed animal retailers at nearby malls are a place to turn for customizable teddy bears.

February 11: Promise Day

Promise Day provides an opportunity to make promises to each other that are specific to couples' relationships. These can include being more patient, traveling more or spending more time together.

February 12: Hug Day

On this day the world celebrates the uplifting and comforting power of hugs, which can be powerful expressions of love.

February 13: Kiss Day

Couples can pucker up and spend a few extra moments showing their affection with some kisses. The lips are quite sensitive to touch, and kissing is one of the more renowned expressions of intimacy.

The Pantry Raiders

Show your love through dessert this Valentine's Day

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Romantic sentiments are expressed in many ways come Valentine's Day. Gifts may include sparkling jewels or personalized prose, but a homemade dessert from the kitchen can win over some hearts as well.

Even though chocolate may be expected on Valentine's Day, tiramisu can be a welcome and delicious alternative. Tiramisu is an Italian layered dessert, and the name translates to "pick me up" or "cheer me up." It is made from spongy cookies soaked in coffee and liqueur, nestled among dollops of rich mascarpone cheese. Requiring no baking at all, it is an easy treat to offer a sweet-heart. Enjoy this recipe for "Tiramisu" courtesy of the American Dairy Association.

Tiramisu

(Yield: 9 servings)

- 6 egg yolks
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 ¼ cup mascarpone cheese
- 1 ¼ cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 12 oz packages Savoradi Lady Fingers
- ½ cup cold espresso or strong coffee
- ¼ cup coffee flavored liqueur (optional)
- 1 tbsp. cocoa for dusting



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Tiramisu

Combine egg yolks and sugar in the top of a double boiler, over boiling water. Reduce heat to low and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring constantly. This is your sabayon. Remove from the heat and whip yolks until thick and lemon colored. Add mascarpone to whipped yolks, and beat until combined.

In a separate bowl, whip cream to stiff peaks. Gently fold the whipped cream in the mascarpone-sabayon mixture and set aside.

Mix the cold espresso with the coffee liquor, and dip the lady fingers into the mixture just long enough to get them wet; do not soak them! Arrange the lady fingers in the bottom of an 8-inch square baking dish (or 6X9). Spoon half the mascarpone cream filling over the lady fingers.

Repeat the process with another layer. Refrigerate four hours or overnight. Dust with cocoa before serving.



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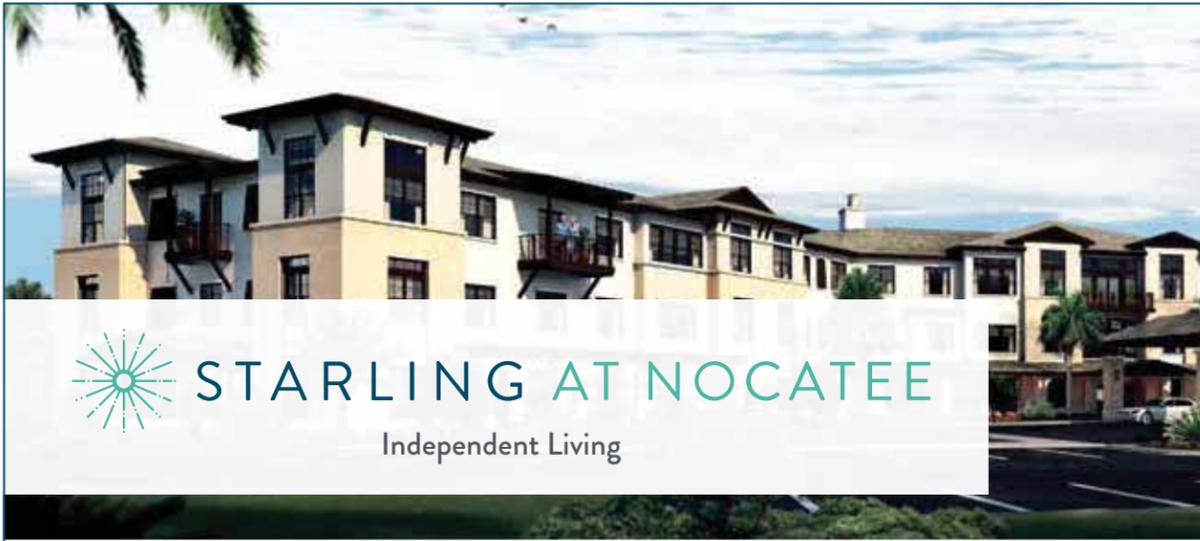
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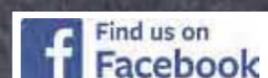
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Get to Know . . .

Angela Freyman

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com



Photo courtesy Shoot the Sky Imageworks
Angela Freyman with Nitro

Angela Freyman was born in Ukraine and was 13 years old when she relocated with her family to Brooklyn, N.Y. She attended New York University, earning both a bachelor's degree (in finance and economics) and an MBA — and married high school sweetheart, Greg, in 2000. She said they were not in love with the “busy city” and decided to move to the suburbs, in New Jersey, in 2015. They did love the suburbs, but not New Jersey and so online research and talking with friends and acquaintances led them to relocate to St. Johns in 2017.

“All of our research pointed to St. Johns County,” Freyman said. “We were tired of our quality of life in New Jersey and looked forward to the warmer weather and more affordable housing here.”

Freyman worked for the Federal Reserve Bank for 20 years and upon the family's move to New Jersey, joined husband Greg's accounting practice, which he had built from scratch. The couple has now been working together for four years and own Freyman CPA, P.C. on Race Track Road, providing tax and book-keeping services to small businesses and individuals. They have two teenage children who attend Creekside High School.

1) What do you like best about living in St. Johns?

I love the vibrant community, so close to schools and shopping. It's a very pleasant lifestyle. I love how green everything is and the gorgeous weather. Also, housing and the economy are strong, with low property taxes and no state income tax. It makes for a nice mix of neighbors who have moved here from all over the country.

2) What is the best and most challenging part of working with your husband every day?

We work well together. We fill in for each other and since we have different strengths it makes us a stronger team. When times get stressful, we are there for each other. It's the best time of our lives. I can't think of any weaknesses to the arrangement.

3) What one piece of advice would you give now that tax season is upon us?

Don't go it alone. The tax code is getting so complex and mistakes can cost a lot of money in taxes and penalties. Most importantly, don't procrastinate!

4) What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

We have a very active lifestyle. We go to the gym daily and enjoy yoga and jumping rope. No matter how busy we

are, we make time to do something healthy for ourselves each day. It helps us to stay focused and more productive. We also like to spend time with our kids, going hiking or to concerts or to museums. We have a greyhound rescue named Nitro and a Scottish Fold cat named Lucas, who is a little shy, but king of the family.

5) What is something that most people don't know about you?

We've really changed our lifestyle from sedentary to active in the past few years. I've had a large weight loss and I feel healthier. We are regimented with our cooking and always bring our lunch. My favorite is chicken with some carbs. I feel a lot better now.

Camera club cont. from pg. 1

interest groups in order to elevate members' experience in certain areas such as portraits and lighting.

The Camera Club also plans one to two outings per month. Most of the outings are local and last two to four hours. During the year, the club usually has one or two road trips to various locations, including bird shoots in South Florida, fall foliage trips to the Smokies and Western North Carolina. Weekend trips to Savannah, Ga. and other areas of interest in the Southeast are occasionally planned for members. Members find that the outings are a great way to socialize as well as a great opportunity to practice newly learned skills.



Photo courtesy Brian Leonard
Beautiful waterfall

Quarterly print and digital contests are also a highlight of each year. Ribbons are awarded for the best images.

“The best part of the competitions is to see the level of skill in various club members as well as hear comments and critiques from the judges,” Leonard said. “This is a very beneficial way to develop new skills. We are also starting contests using cell phone cameras, which seems to be getting more and more popular.”

The Camera Club is currently forming groups to welcome new members and to help others become aware of the resources offered within the club.

“We always have members that are willing to go out in small groups or do one-on-one sessions to help members improve their skills,” Leonard said.

Jacksonville Camera Club meetings are held at the Shepherd of the Woods Church (Lakeshore Location), 6595 Columbia Park Ct., near the intersection of Greenland Road and Philips Highway. Anyone interested is invited to attend. Visit <https://jax.jaxcameraclub.com> for more information.

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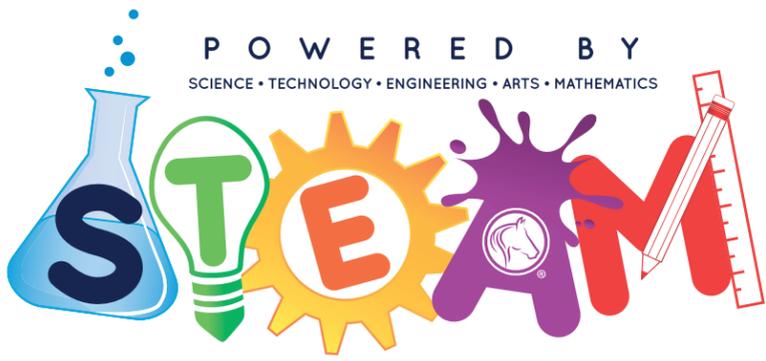
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At annual Change of Watch, Flotilla 14-7 recognizes successful year

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Members of U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7 held their annual Change of Watch event in December at the Allegro on Anastasia Island to recognize the achievements of the members for 2018 and install the slate of officers for 2019. Among the honored guests recognized at the function was the Coast Guard Commander of Station Mayport, CWO Jason Fealy, who addressed the gathering.



Photos courtesy Dylan Calwalader, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Carmen Gautille, VFC and Bill Candeletti, FC, 2019 elected officers sworn in by DCDR David Patrick.

Members and guests celebrated the achievement of flotilla members who, in 2018, collectively contributed 7,480 hours actively supporting Team Coast Guard.

“Our members volunteered their time and unique talents this last year to support recreational boating safety interests at local marinas all over St. Johns County,” said Flotilla Commander William Candeletti. “We visited 495 partners including invitations from WestMarine and marinas to exhibit items we provide free to the public, meeting one-on-one with visitors to those locations.”

Candeletti said that by year end, members of Flotilla 14-7 performed 159 Vessel Safety Checks for the boating public and were on the water for 328 hours, working with vessel owners to maintain their safety gear.

“We expect to improve our participation in 2019,” Candeletti said.

Trained members of Flotilla 14-7 provide free vessel safety checks on recreational vessels and conduct About Boating

Safety classes. The flotilla meets on the first Thursday of each month at the St. Augustine Yacht Club, 442 Ocean Avenue, near the St. Augustine Lighthouse. The next meeting is Feb. 7 and starts with a social at 6:30 p.m. followed by the meeting at 7 p.m.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed volunteer component of the U.S. Coast Guard and supports the Coast Guard in nearly all its service missions. The Auxiliary was created by Congress in 1939. Visit www.mysafeboating.com for more information about Flotilla 14-7 or visit www.cgaux.org for more information about the U.S. Coast Guard.

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“Mrs. Henry Flagler” to visit Newcomers of North St. Johns

By Carol Boehler
mail@floridanewline.com

Newcomers of North Saint Johns will hold its February luncheon, open to all St. Johns County residents, on Tuesday, Feb. 19, beginning at 11 a.m. at Ruth's Chris Steak House, 814 A1A North,

Suite 103 in Ponte Vedra Beach. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m.

Dianne Jacoby (www.mrsflagler.weebly.com) will be performing a popular Southern drama of the vivacious Mrs. Henry Flagler, complete in a period costume.

Her historical drama and impersonation of Mrs. Flagler seems to bring her back to life in a narrative that is thoroughly enjoyable and unforgettable.

The total cost for the February luncheon is \$30 for members and \$32

for guests. All reservations must be received by Feb. 8. The luncheon menu includes a four-ounce petite filet served with family-style creamed spinach and mashed potatoes. Dessert is a mini-

cheesecake with fresh berries. All are served with iced tea, hot tea, coffee, and soft drinks and a cash bar will be available.

If you are interested in a registration form for this luncheon, membership information, or information about other upcoming activities, contact Sue Aird at sjaird@comcast.net.

Newcomers of

North St. Johns offers a wide variety of activities including smaller lunch groups, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, holiday parties, day trips, and cultural events.



Photo courtesy Andy Calvert

Newcomers of North St. Johns County made a holiday gift of more than 150 books and \$165 to St. Johns County Public Library. This annual holiday donation is accepted by Andy Calvert, Youth Services Librarian and his assistant, Marcia Daniels.

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BTHS Happenings

Bartram Trail welcomes a new face

By Delaney Cantrell
 mail@floridanewsline.com

Tracy Fordham may be a new face to Bartram Trail, but she is not new to St. Johns County. Fordham recently joined Bartram as the new AP Language and Composition teacher, as well as an English III Honors teacher. Before transferring, Fordham taught at Ponte Vedra High School for seven years, and has been teaching in St. Johns County for nine years. In her 17 years of teaching, her focus has spanned from pre-school to college classes.

Fordham has three sons with her husband of 24 years. They relocated to St. Johns County due to her husband's naval career.

Fordham transferred to Bartram in the middle of the first semester of the school year.

"I was a little bit nervous, especially since it's such a big school," said Fordham.

She found it challenging to keep the transition quick and to establish routines with it being three months into the school year.

When asked the main differences she has noticed between both St. Johns schools at which she has taught, she

said, "The big thing I noticed is that Bartram is double the size of Ponte Vedra, which was hard to get used to."

Fordham has taught AP Language and Composition for many years and has proven her skills to be useful with her AP Exam pass rate.

"AP Lang provides life-long writing skills and allows students to think differently," said Fordham.

She feels it is important that her students learn these skills as they will be heavily used in their upcoming

years in college. Just in the short time she has been at Bartram, she has already seen tremendous improvement in her students' writing.

Fordham has had a great transition into Bartram and is already well liked by her students. Stepping into an already established fast-paced classroom with a set routine is not easy for the new teacher or the AP students; however, there has been an abundance of positive statements coming from Fordham's new students, including a sense of optimism surrounding the upcoming AP Lang test.

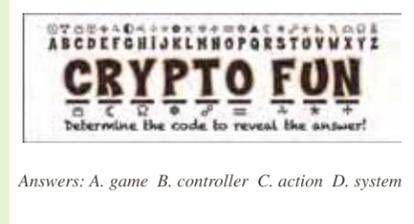


Photo courtesy Delaney Cantrell
 New Bartram Trail teacher Tracy Fordham with some of her students.

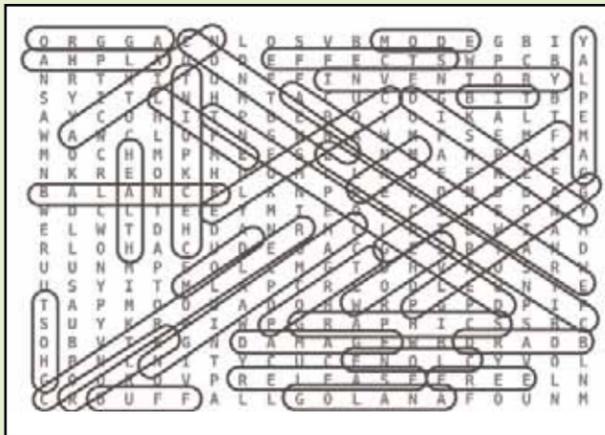
Answers to puzzles on page 22

Answers
 to our
 Puzzles

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



Answers: A. game B. controller C. action D. system



Troop 280 recognizes 2018 Eagle Scouts

By Kenny King Jr.
mail@floridanewline.com

Achieving the Eagle Scout rank is the goal of most scouts, yet only about 4 percent of all who participate in Boy Scouts earn the rank. Troop 280 is proud to recognize eight outstanding young men

who earned the Eagle rank in 2018: Dylan Mixon, Jacob Titus, Rain Blocker, Ryan Turner, Zack Graves, Ben Miller, Frank Puzzeni, and Scott Cummings.

Prior to the Eagle rank, Scouts must first earn six lower ranks that require learning and demonstrating various skills, holding positions of responsibility within the troop, and exhibiting good character.

The Eagle candidates must also plan and lead others in a project that benefits the community. The projects com-

pleted by this group of scouts benefited Julington Creek Elementary, Creekside High School, Florida State Parks, River of Life United Methodist Church, Creekside Christian Church, Billion



Photo courtesy Kenny King, Jr.
Troop 280 Eagle Scouts Scott Cummings, Ryan Turner, Frank Puzzeni, Zach Graves, and Jacob Titus. (Not pictured are Dylan Mixon, Rain Blocker, Ben Miller)

Graves cemetery database, and St. Francis in the Field Episcopal Church. Being an Eagle Scout has many benefits and is included on college and job applications, provides opportunities for significant college scholarships, and those who

choose a military career enter at a higher pay grade. When asked about their accomplishments, all the Scouts proudly said, "We are Eagles for Life."

To learn more about scouting and Troop 280, visit River of Life United Methodist Church where the troop meets Mondays at 7 p.m.

Helping Hands to host Pets on Parade

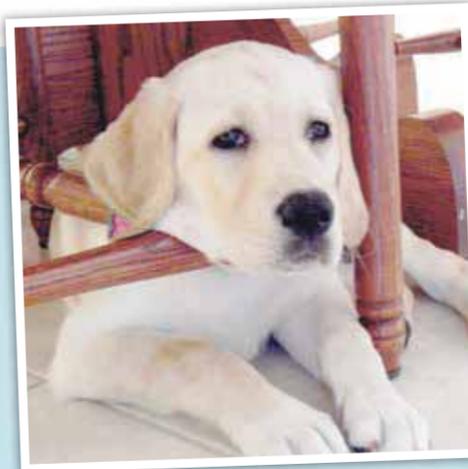


Photo courtesy Jackie Valyou

Pets on Parade will be held on March 16 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Faith Community Church, 3450 County Road 210. Helping Hands will be collecting dog and cat supplies and shelter cats and dogs will be available for adoption. Canine Companions, which supplies service dogs to those in need, will host a puppy kissing booth with informational services. Helping Hands has sponsored two dogs, Adele and America. A pet parade will begin at 12 p.m.; dress your pets if you choose and there will be prizes.

Refreshments will be available, and all proceeds will go to Canine Companions. Contact jacqphil@aol.com for more information.

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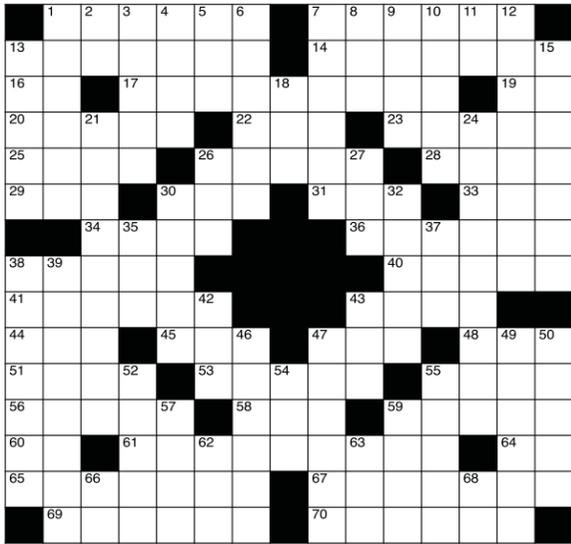
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Puzzles

Answers on page 20
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. Got paid
7. Sets free
13. Domestic hybrid cattle
14. Quality of one's character
16. Doctor's helper
17. Not holding back
19. Type of degree
20. Short but severe
22. 007's creator
23. Linguistics icon
25. Large integers
26. Upset
28. Former
29. Peyton's younger brother
30. An Irish dance
31. Title of respect
33. Small lump
34. Baroque musical instrument
36. The third sign of the zodiac
38. The 1st letter of the Hebrew alphabet

CLUES DOWN

1. Nix
2. Indicates position
3. Quantitative facts
4. Strong and healthy
5. Former measure of length
6. Dads tend to be this
7. Parts of a movie
8. An animal's foot
9. Expression of sorrow or pity
10. Saudi Arabian money
11. One billion gigabytes
12. Smallest musical interval
13. A rugged box (usually made of wood)
15. Cheese dish
18. An ugly, evil-looking old woman
21. Widely used
24. Makes into pages
26. Afflict in mind or body
27. Set up
30. Toilets

32. "Life of Jesus" theologian
35. A big deal on Wall St.
37. Western Thai people
38. Free from contamination
39. Type of dog
42. Revolver
43. High schoolers' exam
46. San Diego ballplayers
47. Hit the sack
49. Suitable for crops
50. Red mineral
52. Yellowish-brown
54. Lowest point between two peaks
55. Late TNT broadcaster
57. Thin strip to align parts
59. Swiss wind
62. A way to chill
63. Jewel
66. Rhodium
68. The top lawyer in the land



Solve the code to discover words related to video games. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 1 = e)

A. 7 3 10 1
Clue: Form of play

B. 11 26 6 20 4 26 16 16 1 4
Clue: Directs action

C. 3 11 20 9 26 6
Clue: Process of doing something

D. 8 2 8 20 1 10
Clue: Hardware components

GAMEPLAY WORD SEARCH

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

WORDS

- ABANDONWARE
- ACTION
- AGGRO
- ALPHA
- ANALOG
- BALANCE
- BIT
- BOARD
- BUFF
- CAMPAIGN
- CHECKPOINT
- CLONE
- CONSOLE
- CONTENT
- CONTROLLER
- DAMAGE
- DEVELOPMENT
- DISPLAY
- EFFECTS
- ELECTRONIC
- FARMING
- FREE
- GAMEPLAY
- GHOST
- GRAPHICS
- HEALTH
- INVENTORY
- LIFE
- MAP
- MOD
- MODE
- PLAYING
- PORT
- RELEASE
- ROLE
- SHOW

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

Fishing

Capt. David's Fishing Report

By Captain David Lifka
mail@floridanewslines.com

It is pretty easy to say that the winter months of North Florida are usually the "crappiest" time of year to fish here. Or should that be "Crappie" time of year?

While winter weather and cooler water temperatures often bring area fishing to a considerable slow down, these

same conditions are what many area fishermen have been waiting for all summer long. That just happens to be the fishing season for Florida's second most sought after gamefish, commonly referred to as the "Black Crappie" or "Crappie" by the folks from the north, "Speckled Perch" by the folks from the south, or just plain old "Speck" by the remaining good ole boys.

Shallow water of three to 10 feet seems to be the favorite depths for these fish to gather during winter months and cooler temperatures. The best time to find them concentrated on lake or creek bot-

tomms will be on a full moon, as that is when they will gather and bunch up to spawn. Using the wind or a trolling motor to slowly move your boat to cover various areas of a lake or creek is a common tactic to locating the tasty panfish and putting large numbers in the cooler. Doing the same while they are more spread out

will also prove to be more productive than fishing in one particular spot.

By far, their favorite bait is a fresh, lively, Missouri Minnow. Hooked through the lips with a #4, #5, or #6 wire hook, a small split shot eight or 10 inches above the minnow, and a small float set at the depth you are fishing on

light mono line will be all you need to get fishing. Slow trolling 1/16 or 1/32 Crappie Jigs is a good alternative, especially if you add a minnow.

Florida is regarded as the "Speckled Perch Capital of the World" with outstanding fishing almost everywhere in the state. There are literally dozens of lakes within a minimal drive of our area of the state that are famous for producing great catches of Speckled Perch every winter. Just to name a few: Rodman Reservoir, Orange Lake, Lochloosa Lake, Newman lake, Crescent Lake, Lake Santa Fe, and Harris Chain of Lakes. Most of these lakes and others have all the bait, tackle, and information needed for a great day of fishing and even rental boats. Also, Julington Creek west of the bridge and in the channel, and Durbin Creek in the chan-

nel have been known to produce some good catches in the past.

Fishing Report: This is best time to catch Specks. If you get a chance, give it a try. Take advantage of a pretty day and get the kids outside for some bream fishing in a neighborhood pond. No neighborhood pond? Try Trout Creek Marina south on State Road 13.

Whether you catch one, some, or none, the family time spent fishing will last a lifetime.

Email your Catch of the Month photo to catchofthemonthpictures@gmail.com. Be sure to include the name of the person(s) in the photo, the name of the person who took the photo, the type of fish and date and location of the catch. We will select a photo each month for publication.



Photo courtesy David Vaughn
Dawson Vaughn, age 12 of Julington Creek with a bull redfish caught at the beaches jetties on Aug. 18, 2018. Bait was the lady fish he caught earlier in the morning.

2018 - 2019 St. Johns County School Calendar

FEBRUARY 2019				
M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	

- Teacher Optional Planning
- Teacher Planning (non-student day)
- Teacher Inservice (non-student day)
- Classes Resume
- Student/Teacher Holiday
- End of Quarter
- Underline = testing dates

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Gardening | **A New Year, a New Yard?**

By Master Gardener Lesley Arrandale
mail@floridanewslines.com

Did your resolutions this year include an intention to spruce up your yard? Do you need to replenish your mulch? Improve the soil in your vegetable garden? Any number of tasks await the homeowner who enjoys their yard and gardens, and in the still-cooler months it makes sense to get to work.

It's time for careful planning. For me, this probably means I should cut back on the more complicated aspects of gardening and concentrate on simplifying what I do. And surely this applies to anyone who wants to enjoy their gardening without continuing to expend a lot of time and effort, so here are a few thoughts.

Instead of small rings of mulch around individual trees or shrubs in an area of lawn, widen the mulched areas to encompass several woody plants to make larger, simpler mulch islands. The mulch can even extend as far as the dripline and will look better than grass that is likely struggling to survive in the shade. Your trees will benefit by not having to compete with grass for nutrients and water, you will need less fertilizer and herbicide for the grass, and mowing smaller less complicated areas will be easier. Fallen leaves can easily be incorporated into the mulch.

In the vegetable garden, install drip irrigation, preferably on a timer. This type of system is not expensive and your efforts should be rewarded by a more consistent harvest — and your water bill should be reduced since the system will be more efficient than overhead watering. For much more information see www.dripworks.com. Kits and components can be found at the big box stores.

If you like your flower beds to be colorful throughout the year, choose perennials with long bloom times instead of annuals. Plants with variegated foliage, such as some gingers, add color. Different leaf forms and varied shades of green certainly add interest to a garden. And there are exotic looking plants,

like cannas, with red to purple or even stripy foliage. Avoid truly tender plants, otherwise you'll either have to protect them from freezes, or let them succumb and plant replacements the following spring.

Dwarf shrubs, which need minimal pruning, can be backbone plants for a perennial bed. My quick internet search pulled up smaller cultivars of some well-known shrubs: Walter's viburnum Mrs. Schiller's Delight and Whorled Class, bottlebrush Light Show(R), leucothoe Burning Love(R), and loropetalum Purple Daydream(R). These are from Southern Living and Monrovia, and should be well suited to north Florida, but always check an individual plant's requirements for water, soil type, light needs, and climate zone. (Please note, these are not companies that the Extension Service endorses over others; there are more growers for the south that market plants here in Jacksonville.)

If you want to encourage wildlife, native plants benefit a wide variety of beneficial insects, which are vital for raising baby birds. Shrubs provide shelter; water is a must. Butterflies need nectar and host plants on which to lay their eggs (<https://tinyurl.com/y7nzclsk>). A yard can be a world in miniature.

Above all, don't tackle your whole yard renovation in one go: break it down into small projects. Prioritize. Maintain established areas to avoid them going wild — weed, water, deadhead, prune, whatever is needed to keep them in order. Renovate one manageable area at a time, doing whatever is manageable for you.

Finally, don't forget to plan space for favorite outdoor activities; mine will be a shady, secluded place to just sit and watch the birds, butterflies, and insects, and enjoy the fruits of my labor. And for timely tips to help you on your way, check out the latest edition of A New Leaf: <https://tinyurl.com/y7n388vh>. Enjoy!



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Golf Tips from T Shot Ranch

Home, Home on the Range...

By Janie C. Farina
mail@floridanewsline.com

*"O give me a home where the buffaloes roam
Where the deer and the antelope play
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day"*
-Lyrics by Bill Staines

How many students of the game of golf feel "at home" on the golf course? What makes playing on a golf course a comfortable experience vs. an embarrassment? Recently, a novice student of mine described her last round at a local golf course, a far cry from "where the deer and the antelope play" like this: "We were rushing all the time!"

How and where do novice players go to relax and play?

I remember being a novice at pickleball, and how nervous I was learning how to play, let alone keeping up with the experts. Every team I played on lost because I was on it.

Playing on a golf course as a rookie can be just as intimidating.

"Feeling at Home" playing on the course requires a plan.

1. "When in Rome do as the Romans do." Dress the part! Ask about dress codes before showing up in jeans and a tee shirt at the country club.

2. Know the rules. Playing golf has rules just like any other sport; it doesn't take skill to educate and be informed. Walking on your teammates putting line and teeing off in front of the markers will not get you points.

3. Stay in pace with the players on your team. Be ready with club in hand when it's

your turn. Rushing the shot will not be effective.

4. Organize your tools. A golf bag with clubs haphazardly thrown in is a recipe for disaster. It takes more time to search for the desired club this way, let alone recognizing it's been left on the last hole in front of the green. Going back to get it will require holding up golf traffic.

5. Take your time looking over putts. While walking to the green, look. While waiting for your turn, look. Watch what happens when the other players putt. This eliminates mistakes on speed and direction. Players who play golf on a regular basis know this is not where you rush. Four-putting takes more time than reading a green.

6. Use your comfort clubs. Dragging out the driver on a golf hole the width of dental floss may result in out of bounds. How embarrassing to re-tee after landing in the resident's pool!

7. Lastly, practice at a driving range. Play a par three course. Here there will likely be rookies as yourself, searching for ways to develop the skill to become a better player.

So finding that "down home feeling" while playing golf can depend on where you play, whom you play with, and not how you play, but *how you are* when you play. Happy trails to the golf course!

Janie C. Farina is a 26-year LPGA teaching and club professional in St. Johns County. Email her at hitthedirt2@gmail.com with comments or questions for future articles.

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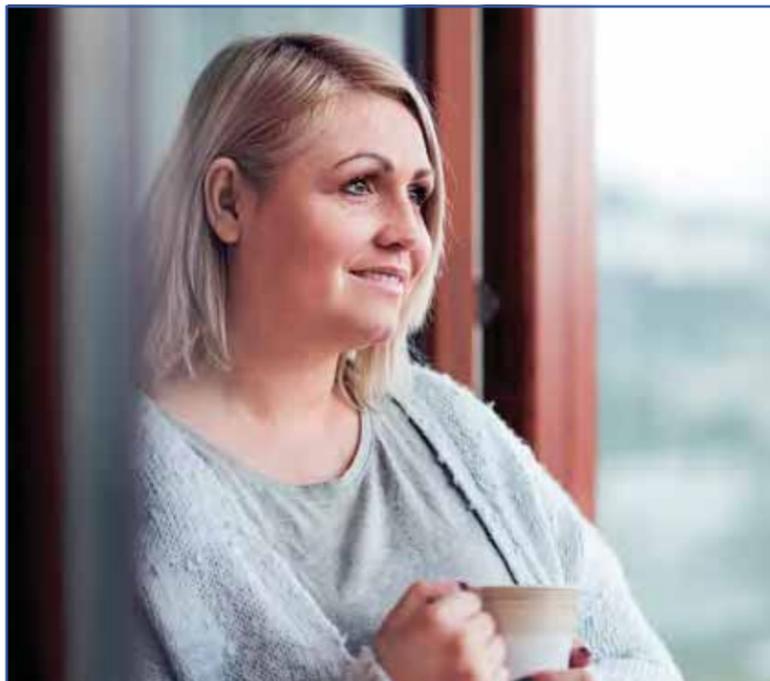
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Travel

Exploring Panama beyond the canal

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

Mention Panama and thoughts of the famous canal come to mind. A glance at the world map underscores the country's strategic location between north and south. One can easily see why the isthmus of Panama was chosen for construction of a 50-mile waterway. The marine shortcut saves transportation time, distance and costs, plus provides a safer route.

The plan to link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans faced one of the greatest environmental challenges: excavating through ponderous mountains and dense jungles. The French, who had successfully built the Suez Canal, began work in 1880, but financial problems and tropical diseases halted the project.

When Panama gained independence in 1903, the United States stepped in to continue the endeavor. The engineering feat was not only costly, but thousands lost their lives (22,000 French alone). From its opening in 1914

until December 1999, the United States administered the Canal and then turned operations over to Panama. Work to

double the capacity and space for larger vessels commenced 2007 to 2016.

Many curious travelers take a cruise that includes passage through the locks of the Panama Canal; however, I suggest you instead consider a land-

based exploration of the country. Nonstop flights from Orlando and Miami make it easy to get there. While the destination seems exotic, there's no need to change American money or time zones. Panama rests within the Eastern time zone and accepts US



Panama City skyline.



Old town.

dollars.

Arrive in Panama City, not to be confused with Panama City, Florida, and tour

the historic area much like Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, complete with a fort resembling St. Augustine's Castillo.

Colorful shops, historical monuments, squares and restaurants dot the narrow cobblestone streets of the old town.

Recent building in the



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Hiking in the rainforest.

and a small museum displays fascinating artifacts. Afterward, take a boat excursion on Lake Gatun. On my two-hour outing, I passed massive container ships transiting the waterway and rainforest wildlife including three different species of monkeys, a wide variety of tropical birds and lush jungle scenery.

Another day my group left the city to explore the mountainous Anton Valley area where the highlight was a close encounter with a tree sloth in the wild. The eco-lodge offers meals and overnight accommodations. Guided hikes within the rainforest range from a short 30-minute outing to half and full days.

If you'd like to experience Panamanian paradise, hire a driver to take you to Buenaventura Golf and Beach Resort area, about two and a half hours out of the city. The colonial architecture blends

with authentic local arts and decor. Relax around the sparkling pools, a meandering lagoon or the black sand beaches. The more energetic will find plenty of sports such as golf, tennis and boating.

downtown city center displays an ultra-modern skyline that looks like Miami or a smaller version of Dubai. Panama's economy depends on the highly successful management of the canal, and new wealth appears evident. Glass and steel high-rise office buildings and apartments border the coastline, parks intermingle with business quadrants and traffic is problematic.

Lodging options run from boutique hotels in the old town to name brand hotel chains downtown. Considered an urban oasis, the Santa Maria Hotel and Golf Club recently opened at the far end of the city. Yes, a luxury hotel and golf course right in the city!

Of course, a tour of the Panama Canal Visitor Center is mandatory. You'll get a close-up view of ships entering and exiting the locks. A video highlights footage from the complex construction



Panama Canal.

I wasn't expecting to give Panama such high praise, but I now feel it offers real value and a chance to explore beyond the ordinary.

Visit www.bylandersea.com to read more of local travel writer Debi Lander's stories and travel tips.

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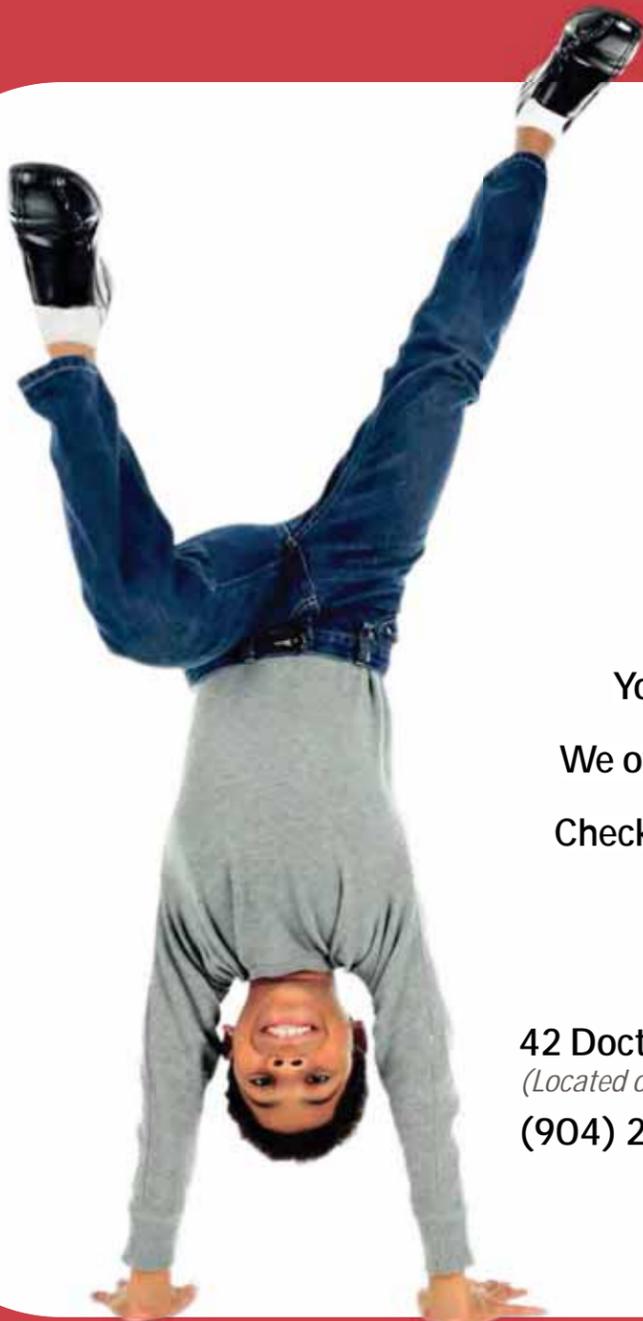
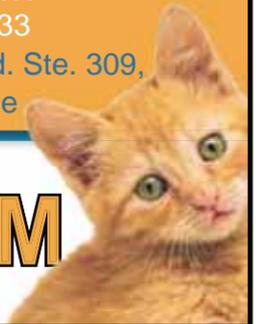
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