

Mandarin NewsLine

MARCH 2020 Volume 14 Issue 5

A Florida NewsLine Publication



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Mandarin Senior Center to hold grand opening

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The Mandarin Senior Center's months-long expansion and renovation is finally coming to an end and the center has a reopening date. A grand opening, complete with a ribbon cutting by dignitaries, will be held at 10 a.m. on March 25 at the center, located at 3848 Hartley Road. The event is open to the community.



Photo by Martie Thompson
Mandarin Senior Center

According to center specialist Erica Hickey, the grand opening will include refreshments and tours of the new, enlarged facility. The Mandarin Senior Center will resume normal hours of Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

“We are looking forward to showing off our new building,” Hickey said. “We cater to active seniors, aged 60 and older, and look forward to offering increased programming as a result of the expansion.”

The Mandarin Senior Center expansion is a 13,054 square foot addition that includes office space, computer lab, craft room and an enlarged kitchen. An electronic display board is also being added along Hartley Road, that will inform citizens of events at the new Mandarin Senior Center.

Call the Mandarin Senior Center at (904) 262-7033 for more information.

ANA'S ANGELS A TRUE LABOR OF LOVE FOR ANIMALS

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

Ana Andenmatten said she has always loved animals. She recalls hiding various animals in her room as a young girl. When her father found out about a particular rabbit that wasn't supposed to be there, young Ana got in trouble. She hid a rabbit again and the next time her father found it, he gave in and helped her build a hutch for it in the backyard.

In college, she worked in a veterinarian's office. She said she was upset that some people would have their pets put down for what she considered unacceptable reasons and this stayed with her and was instrumental in the work she does today as founder of Ana's Angels Animal Rescue.

Ana's Angels started up in 1999 and was incorporated as a 501 c 3 non-profit in 2003. Every Saturday, Andenmatten drives to animal shelters in rural areas like



Ana Andenmatten with Hope, who was pulled from Clay County Animal Control in an emaciated state.

Clay County and Putnam County and loads up her car with dogs and kittens to be adopted at Petco, PetSmart and Pet Supermarket, all on San Jose Boulevard. She is particularly drawn to black dogs and cats (which she said take the longest to be adopted) as well as those that are elderly or have medical needs.

“I always felt badly for these animals in rural areas, because they weren't being seen by prospective families,” Andenmatten said. “They had no visibility and their outlook was bleak. So I bring them to Mandarin, which is full of nice families who can give them good homes.”



Photos courtesy Ana Andenmatten
Ana Andenmatten with one of the many cats she has helped find a forever home for.

To date, Ana's Angels has placed more than 5,000 animals in loving homes.

By day, Andenmatten utilizes her early childhood education degree that she earned from the University of North Florida. She has worked for 13 years as a Duval County Public School teacher and is currently in her third year teaching first grade at Mandarin Oaks Elementary. She currently fosters animals in her classroom at the school, with permission from administration as well as parents of students in her classroom. She said it is not



This dog was left in the Baker county forest in a hunting box with no food and no water. She was named Dolly Parton because she was rescued on Dolly Parton's birthday.

unusual to have a mama cat in the back of her classroom nursing kittens while the children work on their studies.

“It teaches students responsibility and compassion,” Andenmatten said. “I always tell the students, ‘Don't get attached’ to the animals, because we are fostering and the ultimate goal is for the animal to be adopted.”

She said that she gives the students a much anticipated weekly update on the animals that have found their forever home each week.

At her home, Andenmatten has, predictably, a rescued menagerie — including a horse, goats and chickens. Since she has her Florida Fish and Wildlife license, she also has rescued bobcats in a cage in her backyard.

“I come home from work in heels and change into boots,” Andenmatten said, since she has so many different animals on different diets to feed. She and her husband are parents to two young children, who are also animal lovers.

Andenmatten said she is in need of foster families in the Mandarin area for the animals awaiting adoption so that she can continue her passion of helping animals.

“I've gotten better at being realistic about what I can do,” she said. “I'm better about only taking in the number of animals that we adopt out each week and not trying to do more than we have resources for.”

Ana's Angels is completely volunteer-run and Andenmatten said she couldn't make it work without the approximately 25 volunteers who help her. Donations to pay for the required veterinary visits for each animal as well as food are gratefully accepted and tax deductible. Visit “Ana's Angels Animal Rescue” on Facebook for more information or to contact Andenmatten to learn more about fostering.



Dolly Parton after being cared for by Ana Andenmatten and fostered in her classroom at Mandarin Oaks Elementary.

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Finley!



BREED:

English Springer Spaniel

FAVORITE ACTIVITY:

Loves running down the dock.

FAVORITE TREAT:

He loves any human food

FAVORITE FRIEND:

His stuffed teddy bear

HOW YOUR BFF GOT THEIR NAME:

Finley got his name at a Firehouse Subs when the family was randomly suggesting names

This month's contest sponsored by:
Mandarin Animal Hospital
4473 Sunbeam Road
www.mandarinanimalhospital.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!
Does your business cater to pets? Would you like to sponsor our contest?
Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet or sponsor the BFF contest.

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MYSTERY PHOTO



Can you guess where this is?
Submit your answer to: mail@FloridaNewsLine.com.

Last month's Mystery Photo was the South Mandarin Library.
Our winner was Larry Read. Congratulations!

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around town

March 2

Southside Newcomers Club First Monday Coffee
10 a.m.
IHop, 3250 Hodges Blvd.
sncmembership84@gmail.com

March 3

Shuffleboard
1:30 p.m. (repeating event on Tuesdays)
Mandarin Park, next to tennis courts at park entrance
Just show up unless it rains

Ixia Chapter of Florida Native Plant Society general meeting, "Award-winning Member Yard Makeovers" by Jake Ingram

6 p.m.
Willowbranch Library, 2875 Park St.
www.ixia.fnpschapters.org

Honeybee Quilt Guild

6:30 p.m.
Mandarin Presbyterian Church, 2501 Loretto Road
www.honeybeequilters.org (Repeats first Tuesday of each month)

March 4

Jacksonville Camera Club
6:45 p.m.
Shepherd of the Woods Church, 6595 Columbia Park Ct.
www.jax.jaxcameraclub.com (repeating event, first and third Wednesdays)

March 5

Lifetree Cafe, "Amazing Grace"
7 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Harbor Chase Mandarin, third floor Limoncello Lounge
George@lfcjax.org or (904) 731-0731

March 7

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

Weed Wrangle

9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Walter Jones Park, 11964 Mandarin Road

Read with Rover (beginning readers practice reading to therapy dogs)

3 p.m. - 4 p.m.
South Mandarin Branch Library, 12125 San Jose Blvd.
(904) 288-6385

Toast of Jax Toastmasters meeting

7:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.
Baha'i Community Center of Jacksonville, 5034 Greenland Road
www.toastofjax.com (Repeating event on Saturdays)

Mandarin Republican Club breakfast meeting featuring Colonel Lynn Loving

9:30 a.m.
Golden Corral, 11470 San Jose Blvd.
Breakfast cost is discounted; all who attend must purchase breakfast. rmclean1@bellsouth.net

March 10

Service Officer available
4:30 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Mandarin/St. Johns Elks Lodge, 4280 Oldfield Crossing Drive
(904) 268-4974 (Repeats second Tuesday of each month)

March 11

N.O.W. God (Night Out with God) for middle and high school youth
7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. (repeating event on Wednesdays)
Mandarin Lutheran Church, 11900 San Jose Blvd.
MLCJax2014@gmail.com (904) 268-4591

Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Support

3:30 p.m.
River Garden, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road
Repeating event on the second Wednesday of each month

Southern Genealogist's Exchange Society library open

10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
6215 Sauterne Drive, Jacksonville
www.sgesjax.org or (904) 778-1000

March 12

Book Club/Friends of the South Mandarin Library meeting
1 p.m. / 2 p.m.
South Mandarin Branch Library, 12125 San Jose Blvd.
(904) 288-6385

Mandarin Council networking luncheon

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Bonefish Grill, 10950 San Jose Blvd.
mandarincouncil.org

Magnolia Circle, Mandarin Garden Club: "Orchids and How Too," by Bonnie Meyers

10 a.m.
Mandarin Garden Club, 2892 Loretto Road
Mandaringardenclub.org

American Legion Post 372 general assembly

6 p.m. meet and greet / 7 p.m. meeting
Mandarin/St. Johns Elks Lodge, 4280 Oldfield Crossing Drive
(904) 297-8344 or www.mandarinpost372.org

March 14

10th annual North Genealogy Conference
8 a.m. registration; 8:30 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 461 Blanding Blvd. Orange Park
www.nfgenealogyconference.org

Second Saturday Arts and Farmers Market

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd.

March 16

All Star Quilt Guild general meeting
10 a.m.
First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd.
www.orgsites.com/fl/allstarquiltguild or (904) 735-0506

March 17

Dogwood Circle, Mandarin Garden Club: Bromeliads by Dr. Russ Snyder
10 a.m.
Mandarin Garden Club, 2892 Loretto Road
(904) 886-4562; mandaringardenclub.org

March 18

River City Women's Club luncheon, "Skin care and makeup for senior women" by a Mary Kay district manager
10:30 a.m.
Ramada Inn, 2130 Hartley Road
RSVP by March 10: (904) 262-8719

Playing HOOKie crochet, loom and knitters group

10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Whole Foods on San Jose Boulevard
paulab2097@gmail.com (repeating event on Wednesdays)

March 19

Cherokee Rose Circle, Mandarin Garden Club
10 a.m.
Mandarin Garden Club, 2892 Loretto Road
(210) 910-0672; mandaringardenclub.org

March 21

Meet the Maple Leaf Divers
12 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Mandarin Museum, 11964 Mandarin Road
www.mandarinmuseum.net

Pickwick Park Community Yard Sale

8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Entrances off Beauclerc Road and San Jose Boulevard at Pall Mall Drive

March 26

Live Oak Circle, Mandarin Garden Club
7 p.m.
Mandarin Garden Club, 2892 Loretto Road
Mandaringardenclub.org

Mandarin Council monthly breakfast

8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.
Jumpin' Jax House of Food, 10131 San Jose Blvd.
Mandarincouncil.org

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 372 meeting

7 p.m.
Mandarin/St. Johns Elks Lodge, 4280 Oldfield Crossing Drive
(904) 297-8344 or www.mandarinpost372.org

Mandarin Women's Club featuring comedian Juanita Lolita

10:30 a.m.
Ramada Inn Mandarin, 3030 Hartley Road
RSVP by March 19; bkwaldrep@comcast.net or (904) 571-6765

Lifetree Cafe, "How to Spot a Liar"

7 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Harbor Chase Mandarin, third floor Limoncello Lounge
George@lfcjax.org or (904) 731-0731

March 28

Harriet Beecher Stowe lecture by Dr. Michele Navakas
10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Episcopal Church of our Saviour, 12236 Mandarin Road
(904) 268-0784 or mandarinmuseum@bellsouth.net

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take 5

Women's club offers opportunity to laugh

Mandarin Women's Club members will enjoy a good laugh with comedian Juanita Lolita on March 26 at the Ramada Inn Mandarin. Lolita's humor is centered on her hillbilly background and Latin flair about everyday occurrences that we can all relate to. Her career began when a co-worker signed her up for an open mic night; she has since performed throughout the country and has been featured on ABC, NBC and the CTN. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. and reservations for the luncheon are required. The luncheon cost is \$17.50 and must be received by Thursday, March 19. To make reservations and obtain payment instructions, call Betty at (904) 571-6765 or email her at bkwaldrep@comcast.net. Visit www.mandarinwomensclub.com for more information on events, photos, and membership forms.

Garden Club Clothing Sale is back

Mandarin Garden Club will hold its annual \$1 Clothing and Jewelry Sale on Friday, March 6 from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. and Saturday, March 7 from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. The main hall of the club will be filled with gently used clothing for men, women, and children. The Boutique area, where items are priced a little higher, will feature evening wear, name

brands, jackets, scarves, business casual clothing, and other fine clothing items. Checks, credit cards, or debit cards are not accepted. The event features free parking and admission. The Mandarin Garden Club is located at 2892 Loretto Road. Visit mandaringardenclub.org for more information.

Italian American Club offers Spaghetti to Go

The Italian American Club of Jacksonville will host Spaghetti Dinners to Go on Friday, March 27, from 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. Dinners, which cost \$8 and include pasta, two meatballs and bread, will be available to pick up in the evening, perfect for on the way home from work. The Italian American Club is located at 2838 Westberry Road in Mandarin. Advance orders are not available and the club can accept cash or credit card. Call the Italian American Club at (904) 586-2700 or visit www.iacofjacksonville.com for more information.

Seminars to be held at African Violet Show

The Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society will host its 27th annual Show & Sale on Friday, March 27 from 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. and Saturday, March 28 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on March 27 and 28 at San Jose Church of Christ,

6233 San Jose Blvd. This judged show will feature many varieties of African violets and other gesneriads that are seldom seen by the public. Attendees can learn from experts about how to keep plants happy and healthy as well as how to propagate them. Two free seminars are given each day: on Friday, Violets 101 at 1 p.m. and Violet Rescue at 3 p.m. and on Saturday, Violets 101 at 10:30 a.m. and Violet Rescue at 12:30 p.m. A wide selection of African violets and other gesneriads will be available for sale. Parking and admission are free. Visit <http://jacksonvilleviolets.org/Home.php> for more information.



Photo courtesy Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society
Rob's Boondoggle

Volunteer weed pullers needed for Weed Wrangle

On Saturday, March 7, Weed Wrangle will be held from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Walter Jones Historical Park, 11964 Mandarin Road. This is a statewide volunteer effort to help public parks get rid of invasive plant species. Walter Jones Park has lots of invasive camphor, Chinese privet, ferns and smilax vines that are trying to take over, and volunteer help is needed. Attendees

should wear long sleeves and pants and bring small hand clippers if possible. Call the Mandarin Museum & Historical Society at (904) 268-0784 for more information.



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with Duval School Board Member, District 7, Lori Hershey

Q: Do you have an update from the Feb. 13 Chat with the Superintendent that was held at Loretto?

A: This meeting went very well. Dr. Diana Greene made a presentation on the strength of schools in District 7 — all District 7 schools are A or B schools and compete with St. Johns County schools as far as student performance. Another noteworthy item she shared is that more than \$1 million has been invested in extra security cameras in Mandarin High School and Atlantic Coast High School, so each school has more than 100 cameras at this time. Our middle schools also have cameras and cameras are coming soon to the elementary schools.

Q: What else do you have to share with District 7?

A: The governor has released the new standards for education, to replace Common Core: BEST, which stands for Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking. This will involve a three-year roll out starting in the 2020 – 2021 school year this fall. This means that 10th graders will not take the

FSA, but will instead take either the SAT or the ACT (the school district decides). The state has not yet identified the score which students must attain on these tests.

Q: What are some of the highlights of BEST?

A: BEST gets rid of the End of Course exam for geometry and returns more to basic math. There are no more Common Core math frustrations (especially for parents) as there is more of a return to memorization of basic math facts. There are also identified books for students to read and a return to cursive writing instruction, most likely in third grade. There is a heavier emphasis on civics. High school students are required to take a Florida civics literacy exam, which includes questions about major Supreme Court cases as well as questions found on the naturalization exam.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

A: They can email me at HersheyL@duvalschools.org or call me at (904) 316-3609.



with Jacksonville City Council Member, District 6, Michael Boylan

Q: Can you comment on some of the recent rezoning requests?

A: We have had a plethora of rezoning requests lately. In fact, there are no fewer than 10 rezoning applications in play at this time. I actually have three general things I'd like people to understand:

Rezoning means changing the existing rules by which a particular piece of property can be developed. So, for this reason, we have to be especially diligent in our consideration.

There needs to be an appreciation of the vetting process. It's a very detailed process and all the steps need to be followed.

My role, since I am vice chair of the LUZ (Land Use and Zoning) Committee — which I asked to be on due to the amount of activity in Mandarin — is a quasi-judicial role. What this means is I cannot take a position on anything until it actually comes before the LUZ as part of the vetting process. But I can and do host Town Hall meetings and bring interested groups of neighbors together to work with developers to determine what would be a mutually agreeable outcome.

I understand that Mandarin is a highly desirable place to live. The City of Jacksonville is growing and naturally some of the growth is coming our way.

Q: Can you give an update on the meeting held on Feb. 10 regarding the potential rezoning of the historic home and property on Loretto Road owned by the Sissel family?

A: This was a well attended meeting

— we probably had more than 100 people at the Mandarin Garden Club. A member of the city's planning department and someone from the office of general counsel talked about the process and how citizens could offer opinions. The developer explained what he wanted to build. Concerns by those in attendance included preservation of the home, traffic and school impacts, and environmental and drainage issues. We were able to secure a small group, led by long-time Mandarin resident Tracey Arpen, to meet later with the developer to open a dialog. This particular rezoning request has been deferred at least two cycles while this dialog continues.

Q: What is the latest on the Simon property near County Dock Road, which had an unsuccessful rezoning request a couple of years ago?

A: I am working with the city to hopefully acquire this property and develop it as a passive park. We should have more specific information about this in the coming months.

Q: Are there any upcoming rezoning community meetings?

A: On March 9 at 7 p.m. at River Garden, the potential rezoning of property on Barkoskie Road will be discussed. The proposal is for 12 high end quadplexes (four units to a building) for a total of 48 units. These units will be for sale, not for rent.

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

A: Community members can email me at MBoylan@coj.net or call (904) 255-5206.

TRANSFORMING LIVES BY TRANSFORMING LAWN! CITY RESCUE MISSION 2020 MULCH PROGRAM

City Rescue Mission is excited to announce our **Transforming Lives by Transforming Lawns 2020 Mulch Program.** Get your yard looking great for the upcoming season and support the hungry, homeless and addicted in Northeast Florida! City Rescue Mission was started by local businessmen in 1946 with a passion for helping those in need. Today, the Mission has served thousands of men, women and children as they provide addiction recovery, meals, shelter, and clothing for the community.

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Angie's List 2019

Spring break time sharing tips

By Lawrence Datz
mail@floridanewsline.com

Spring break is supposed to be fun, but in the world of families where parents no longer live together — and minor children go back and forth between parents — spring break may not be so joyous. Most separated parents who have been through the legal system have a court-ordered shared parenting plan that includes a time-sharing schedule, a term substituted for what was previously called “custody and visitation.” Typically, the schedule was determined by agreement, rather than by a judge after a contested hearing. Either way, the parents are obligated to follow the court-ordered time-sharing schedule.

Parents who are in conflict with each other can rationalize and create a wide variety of issues as to why their time-sharing schedule is flawed, unfair, harmful to their children or not being followed by the other parent. To be fair, some of these are genuine issues that arise in good faith.

A common issue arises when a parent who plans to take the children on a cruise to the Caribbean, also plans to be accompanied by his or her boyfriend, girlfriend, or purported fiancé. To the other parent, concerns arise about the safety of the children around a stranger, not to mention moral corruption.

In a recent case, a mother claimed that, since classes were only recessed from Monday through Friday, her former spouse was not entitled to timesharing on the weekends before and after the recessed week. (In reality, almost all time sharing schedules in northeast Florida

specify that Spring Break is from the Friday when school recesses until the Monday when it resumes.)

Problems such as these can be easily resolved if the parents concentrate on what is best for their children. Often, these issues arise simply because one parent or the other worries he or she will not get enough time with their children. If you have that concern, ask yourself how much will a few days here or there affect your relationship with your child? The answer is that the days in conflict will probably not have any long-term impact on your parent-child relationship.

Judges and attorneys are quick to tell parents to be reasonable. The problem is that offending parents usually do not perceive themselves to be unreasonable, and each parent typically blames the other for the conflict. When these conflicts can't be resolved by mutual agreement, the parents may elect to pursue resolution in court, which involves having an attorney file a motion and schedule the motion for hearing, then getting a ruling from the judge.

Often, the process cannot be completed before the scheduled timesharing. The easiest way to resolve these issues is through mutual agreement, but if that can't be done, start early and choose an attorney experienced in the many facets of family law.

Lawrence Datz is the managing partner of the Mandarin-based law firm Datz & Datz and is Board Certified in Marital and Family Law.

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ElderSource launches Caring Connections to fight loneliness in seniors

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

ElderSource recently launched the Caring Connections Telephone Reassurance Program to help fight the loneliness and isolation seniors experience when living alone or home bound. Caring Connections provides trained volunteers who make regular, friendly phone calls to seniors giving them an opportunity to make a connection outside of their home.

A report from the Department of Elder Affairs indicates that 21 percent of seniors aged 60 and older are living alone in Northeast Florida. Isolation often affects the mental and physical health of older adults. The goals of the program are to improve the quality of life for seniors and reduce concerns facing homebound seniors such as depression, anxiety, loneliness and cognitive decline. Since the program launched in January, participants and volunteers have given positive feedback.

“It’s great to know I have people who care and who won’t let me slip through the cracks,” said 71-year-old MaryJoe Bernard, who receives weekly phone calls. “The calls are comforting and my volunteer always has encouraging words to share.”

Valerie Hurt is a Caring Connections volunteer who looks forward to speaking with her assigned senior every week.

“There are so many seniors who are disconnected from the community and this program allows them to talk about what’s going on in their world so that they don’t feel as alone,” she said.

According to Vanessa Boyer, volunteer coordinator for the program, seniors can sign themselves up or be referred to the program by a family member, neighbor or caregiver. Seniors must be 60-years-old and live within ElderSource’s service area that includes Duval, Clay, Baker, Nassau, Flagler, Volusia and St. Johns counties.

Caring Connections volunteers undergo a background screening and reference check, attend training sessions, work toward establishing a friendly relationship with seniors; and commit to calling a senior at least once a week for a minimum of six months to a year.

Persons interested in becoming a Caring Connections volunteer or know of someone who might benefit from the program should call Vanessa Boyer, volunteer coordinator, at (904) 391-6631.

ElderSource is a local nonprofit organization designated by the state as the Area Agency on Aging and Aging and Disability Resource Center for Northeast Florida. Visit www.myeldersource.org for more information.



Landon Pittman, Asa Carte, and Atlas Rivas stacking 100 cups.



Alana Livingston and Monica Molina designed their own shirts.

100th Day of School celebrated at Crown Point

On Tuesday, Jan. 28, the kindergarten classes at Crown Point Elementary School celebrated 100 days of learning. The students had a lot of fun with the number 100 — they decorated 100 day hats, made their own 100 design shirts, took the 100 lick challenge, stacked 100 cups, and covered each other with 100 sticky notes. The kindergartners also wrote their numbers in invisible ink, put together 100 piece puzzles, and counted snacks to 100.

Local junior handler has amazing finish at Westminster



Photo courtesy Scott Keffer

Mandarin teenager Zoe Keffer and her rottweiler Lux competed at the 2020 Westminster Kennel Club dog show. She competed in the Junior Showmanship and Professional Breed rings. Her female dog was awarded “Grand Champion Select Bitch” in the breed ring, since she finished as the second female to the best of breed, which was also a female. This accomplishment of a 13-year-old in the ring with adult professionals at the most prestigious dog show is particularly noteworthy.

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20 reasons to join Rotary

By Elizabeth Shaw
mail@floridanewline.com

Are you interested in becoming more involved in your community in 2020? If so, here are 20 reasons to consider joining the Rotary Club of Mandarin:

1. **Friendship:** Rotary provides one of the most basic human needs. It is one of two reasons why Rotary began in 1905.
2. **Business Development:** The second reason Rotary began is everyone needs to network.
3. **Personal Growth and Development:** Membership in Rotary continues one's growth and education in human relations and personal development.
4. **Leadership Development:** Rotarians learn how to motivate, influence and lead.
5. **Citizenship in the Community:** Rotarians are the most active citizens of any community.
6. **Continuing Education:** Weekly meetings have programs designed to inform and enlighten.
7. **Fun:** Club projects, meetings, social activities and serving others is fun.
8. **Public Speaking Skills:** Rotary develops confidence and skill in public communication.

9. **Citizenship in the World:** Rotarians are welcome at any of the 33,000 clubs in over 200 nations and geographical regions.

10. **Travel Assistance:** Rotarians have often found help as close as the nearest Rotary Club.

11. **Entertainment:** Rotary holds local and international conferences, conventions, assemblies, and institutes.

12. **Development of Social Skills:** Rotary develops one's personality, social skills and people skills.

13. **Next Generation and Family Programs:** Rotary provides one of the world's largest youth exchange programs, and opportunities for spouse and family involvement.

14. **Vocational Skills:** Rotary helps one make a better professional.

15. **Ethics Reinforcement:** Rotarians are expected to be ethical in business and personal relationships.

16. **Cultural Awareness:** Rotary is a cross-section of the world's most prominent citizens from every background.

17. **Prestige:** Rotary is the oldest and most prestigious service club in the world.



Photos courtesy Susie Scott

Community Club hosts Flag Retirement

The Mandarin Community Club collected hundreds of flags for proper disposal at a recent Flag Retirement ceremony with SAR (Sons of the American Revolution) conducting and officiating. The event also included members of DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) and children to participate in the ceremonial dismantling and explanation of the history of the American flag and the significance of its components. The host from SAR commented that it was the most flags he has seen surrendered for this type of ceremony.

18. **Nice People:** Rotarians follow the policy of "It is nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice."

19. **The Absence of an "Official Creed":** Rotary is an open society of men and women who believe in helping others.

20. **The Opportunity to Serve:** Rotarians believe in service above self; it is richly rewarding.

The headlining comedian for the club's annual Laughs for Charity Gala, which will take place on Thursday, April 30 at the Comedy Zone will be Greg Morton, who is a popular opening act

for many performers including Celine Dion, Dionne Warwick, Harry Connick Jr., and Luther Vandross at Radio City Music Hall. The event will include cocktails, heavy hors d'oeuvres, a live and silent auction and a comedy show. This event will raise funds to support local charities.

The Rotary Club of Mandarin meets at 7:30 a.m. each Tuesday morning at the Ramada Inn and Conference Center on Hartley Road in Mandarin. Contact Membership Chair Wesley R. Caldwell at wes@dannagracey.com if you are interested in learning more about Service Above Self and joining the Mandarin Rotary.



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Harriet Beecher Stowe in Mandarin lecture to be held March 28

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

No one today would describe the land between Mandarin and Jacksonville as “... thousands of acres of good land, near to a market, near to a great river on which three steamboats are daily plying, that can be had for five dollars per acre, and even for less than that.” But that is how Harriet Beecher Stowe described it in one of the stories in her 1872 book, “Palmetto Leaves.”



Photo courtesy Mandarin Museum & Historical Society
Vintage postcard of Harriet Beecher Stowe's home

Stowe purchased 30 of those acres and a small “cottage” in 1867 and for 17 years made it a winter home for herself, her husband Calvin and two of her daughters. The geography, climate and way of life in Florida were very different than what the Stowes were used to in New England. She described life here as a “tumble-down, wild, picky” existence, but she appreciated the unstructured specialness of Florida.

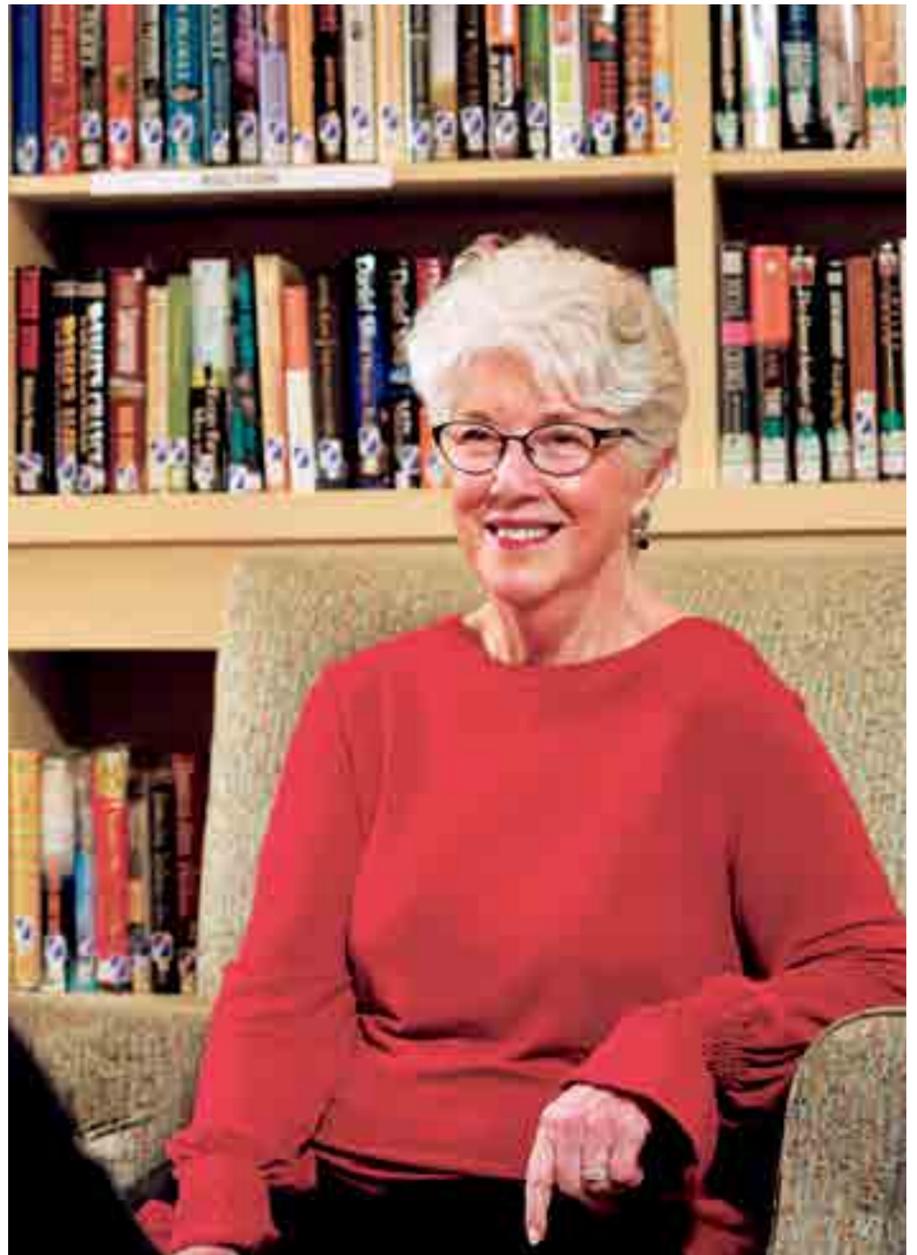
Many say that Harriet Beecher Stowe was the most famous woman in America at the time she came south after the Civil War. Her anti-slavery novel “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” was still being read all over the world. She could have come to Florida to rest on her laurels — to relax and get away from the cold and the attention. But instead, she came to make an impact on Florida’s future growth and development as a state.

The community is invited to “hear the rest of the story” at this special lecture, which is hosted by the Episcopal Diocese of Florida, The Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, Mandarin Museum & Historical Society and the Jacksonville Historical

Society. Attendees will learn about why Stowe came to Florida, what she thought about it, and how she impacted Mandarin and beyond in the areas of religion, education, environmental appreciation and protection, and tourism — at a very critical time in history.

The guest lecturer is Dr. Michele Currie Navakas, Associate Professor and Affiliate of American Studies at Miami University of Ohio. In 2018 she wrote a book titled “Liquid Landscape,” focusing on Florida’s unique terrain and the challenges it always has and continues to present to those who inhabit it. Dr. Navakas tells this story through the writings of those who wrote about the early settling of Florida, including William Bartram and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

This public lecture takes place on Saturday, March 28 from 10 a.m. –11:30 a.m. at the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, 12236 Mandarin Road. It is free and all are welcome to attend. Contact the Mandarin Museum & Historical Society at (904) 268-0784 or email mandarinmuseum@bellsouth.net for more information.



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The Pantry Raiders

Bite into pie in honor of Pi Day

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Each year on March 14, math aficionados around the world celebrate the mathematical constant known as pi, which is represented by the Greek letter "pi." Pi relates to the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, which comes to approximately 3.14159, but goes on infinitely. The celebration date is significant because it corresponds to the first three digits of pi, or 3.14. While discussions about math and ponderings on pi in particular can fill the day, this calendar event also marks the opportunity to dig into pi's homonym ... pie. Any pie can fit the bill, but why not feast on this recipe for "Rhubarb Hand Pies" from "Simply Scratch" (Avery) by Laurie McNamara?

Rhubarb Hand Pies

(Makes 6 pies)

- ¾ lb. fresh rhubarb, trimmed and cut into ½ inch pieces
- ½ cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. ground ginger
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 pie crust (2 discs), homemade or store-bought
- 1 large egg, beaten



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Rhubarb Hand Pies

Combine the rhubarb, brown sugar, lemon zest and juice, ginger, salt, and 1/4 cup water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the rhubarb mixture is thick. Remove from the heat, stir in the vanilla, then pour into a heat-safe bowl to cool completely.

Preheat the oven to 400 F. In a small bowl, combine the beaten egg with 1 tablespoon water to make an egg wash. Roll out one disc of dough to 1/8 inch thick. Use a six-inch biscuit cutter to stamp out three circles. Brush the outer edges with a little egg wash before spooning two tablespoons of the cooled rhubarb mixture onto one half of each circle. Fold the unfilled side over the filling and crimp the edges with a fork. Brush the tops of each pie with more of the egg wash. With a sharp knife, make slits in the center for ventilation and sprinkle each pie with one half teaspoon of turbinado sugar. Refrigerate. Repeat with the second disc of pie dough and remaining filling.

Bake for 15 to 18 minutes or until the crust is golden and the filling bubbling. Let the pies cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes before transferring them to a wire rack.

Nutrition Check: American Diabetes Alert Day

By Kristen Hicks-Roof, Ph.D., RDN, LDN and Marissa Schwam, B.S.
mail@floridanewslines.com

The fourth Tuesday in March every year (this year, March 24) is American Diabetes Alert Day. This day is meant to be a "wake up call" to understand risk factors for diabetes and highlight how serious the disease is. Did you know that diabetes affects about 30.3 million Americans (9.4 percent of the population)? Diabetes is listed as the seventh leading cause of death in the United States, so it is a serious condition. According to the American Diabetes Association, diabetes prevalence has increased in the United States 382 percent since 1988.

You may be thinking, what is diabetes? Diabetes is a condition that results in excess sugar in the blood. There are three main types of Diabetes: Type 1 Diabetes, Type 2 Diabetes and Gestational Diabetes. Type 2 Diabetes is the most common type of diabetes and is generally identified more in individuals who are overweight, physically inactive, older than 45 years, and/or have a family history of diabetes.

If you are at risk, how can you start making better nutrition choices to either prevent or manage your condition?

Understanding carbohydrates: A carbohydrate provides energy to the body; we need carbohydrates for fuel. Foods that contain carbohydrates include grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy and processed foods (chips, crackers, cookies, cakes etc.). It is important to control how



Photo by MetroCreative

much carbohydrate you consume each day. Try to focus on eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Aim to reduce daily added sugars found in sweets, such as baked goods, candy, chips and flavored beverages (soda, sports drinks, juice).

Balance your plate: For meals, try to incorporate a protein (meat, beans, egg or tofu) and a carbohydrate (from list above); this helps to balance your blood sugar. Not every meal needs to be perfect; the goal is to improve your food selections over time.

Work with your team: Attend regular visits with your doctor or primary care office. You can opt to see a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) who can help you with planning, cooking and eating your meals and snacks. You are not alone; don't be afraid to ask for help in preventing or managing your condition.

Kristen K. Hicks-Roof Ph.D., RDN, LDN is an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Brooks College of Health, University of North Florida.

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Get to Know

Debbie Kane

Debbie Kane is well-known to Crown Point Elementary School parents, where she has worked as a crossing guard and currently works in the front office of the school. Originally from New York state, Kane has lived in Mandarin for more than 20 years, and has come to love life on the First Coast.



Photo courtesy Debbie Kane
Debbie Kane

By Cassy Fiano-Chesser
mail@floridanewsline.com

Q: What brought you to Jacksonville?

A: I'm originally from upstate New York, and I moved here 27 years ago. My kids were born here and we've lived in Mandarin the whole time. My husband got a job down here; we're from a small town and there weren't a lot of opportunities there. We looked all over for the right place to live, and found a house right around the corner from his job. We just really lucked out.

Q: What got you started working at Crown Point?

A: All of my kids went there, and I started by volunteering. At one point, I started being a crossing guard for the school. When one of the secretaries for the school was ready to retire, they suggested that I apply for the job, so I did. I got the job, and stopped being a crossing guard and started working in the office. This is my third year working inside in the front office. It's great. I love it.

Q: What is your favorite thing about your job?

A: We're like a big family. We all get along. The principal is great, we all really like each other, and it makes the

job easy to be happy and friendly to people. I like the kids and the people I work with.

Q: What do you like to do for fun?

A: I'm kind of a crafty person. I like to do sewing projects and craft projects. When I get down time, I also enjoy yoga. My boys play lacrosse, so that takes up a lot of time, but I love watching them play. My oldest is in college and playing for Embry-Riddle, so when he has home games, we go. My youngest is actually on a couple of travel teams. We really enjoy it. And I am pretty passionate about lacrosse myself, too. I don't know what I'm going to do when my boys aren't playing anymore. I help with the boosters at the high school lacrosse team, and I don't even have kids playing for the team right now.

Q: What is your favorite thing about living in Mandarin?

A: I find it hard to pick a favorite. I really enjoy the area; there's a ton of stuff to do. I have a comfort zone of about a five-mile radius; if I have to go outside of that, I usually won't do it. We're close enough to the beach, but we don't have to deal with the traffic. I've never lived anywhere else in Jacksonville, so I can't really compare it, but I have been happy here. It has everything that I need.

Get to Know . . .

Interested in being featured?
Email Martie Thompson at
editor@FloridaNewsLine.com

Act II Players presents "Charley's Aunt"

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Mandarin-based theatre troupe Act II Players is taking it back to the '80s when they bring the comedy "Charley's Aunt" to the stage. "Charley's Aunt" is normally set in the 1800s, but director Erin Krull is presenting a more contemporary version.

"The story is a timeless theme of young love, chance meetings, missed opportunities, and second chances," said Krull. "And the '80s are such a fun decade, it magnifies the comedy within the show and makes it more relatable. Audiences are going to love this."

The story finds Jack and Charley in love with Kitty and Amy. Both girls are about to go away, and the boys believe they've lost their shot. Then, Charley discovers his aunt, Donna Lucia, a Brazilian woman he hardly knows, is coming for lunch. How rad! Now the aunt can chaperone while the boys ask the girls to marry them. Naturally, things don't go as planned. Charley's aunt is late, so the boys enlist the help of their friend, Michael Babberley, to impersonate her. A perfect mixture for a wild afternoon filled

with mistaken identity, young love, old love, angry fathers, and chance meetings brings lots of laughs to the audience. Gnarly!

All four shows will be held at Mandarin United Methodist Church's 400-seat auditorium at 11270 San Jose Blvd. Attendees are invited to break out their Members Only jackets, skinny ties and glitter lipstick and come to the show.

"Charley's Aunt" will be presented on Friday, March 6 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, March 7 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 8 at 2 p.m.

All general admission seats are \$15 and tickets are available on the Fine Arts Conservatory website, faconservatory.org. There's also special pricing for students (\$10) and the final show on Sunday is \$10 for all seats.

Act II Players is a theatre troupe of the Fine Arts Conservatory. The Fine Arts Conservatory is a 501 (C) 3 not-for-profit organization established in 2019.

Just for fun...

A vintage postcard from the collection of Mandarin Museum & Historical Society.w



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Coast Guard Flotilla 14-8 update

By Paul Tynda
mail@floridanewsline.com

With the cooler and somewhat unpredictable weather we have at the start of the year, it is a great time to do any maintenance your boat may need or maybe make an upgrade. One thing to consider is taking a safe boating course from the Coast Guard Auxiliary. If not you, then a friend or family member may benefit from it.

In Florida, everyone born on or after Jan. 1, 1988 must have a safe boating course and carry the state boating card with a photo ID on them while at the helm of a boat. Boaters born before that are exempt, but stand to gain a lot from attending the class; boaters at any experience level will benefit from the safe boating course.

Flotilla 14-8 offers the About Boating Safely course, an eight hour in-person class that covers a variety of topics relevant to everyone on a boat. Some of the topics covered in the class include:

- General information about boats and terminology.
- How to prepare a safe and enjoyable voyage.
- The navigation rules and the various aids to navigation and their meaning.

- Guidelines for operating your boat or personal watercraft safely.
- What to do in an emergency.
- Federal and state boating laws.

The courses are held once a month at the Florida Tackle and Gun Club on a Saturday. Private groups of 10 or more can make special arrangements to hold a class. The current schedule for the About Boating Safely class in 2020 is:

- March 7
- April 5
- May 2
- June 6
- July 11
- Aug. 1
- Sept. 5
- Oct. 3

Check the Flotilla 14-8 website for updates to the schedule. The Auxiliary also offers free vessel safety checks for all boats and paddle craft. Visit www.safeboatingjax.com or send an email to info@safeboatingjax.com to sign up for a class, to schedule your free vessel safety check, or to learn more about the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

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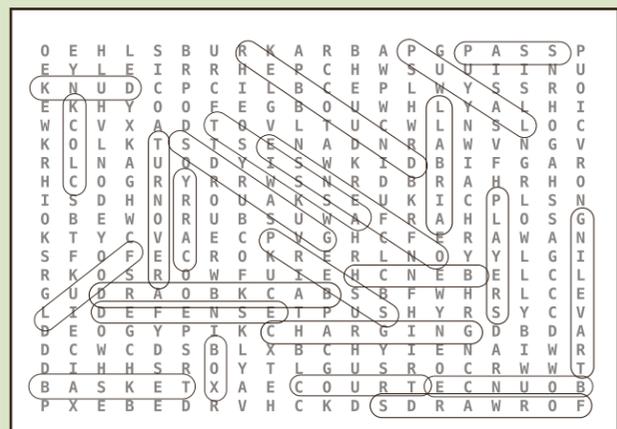


Answers to puzzles on page 16

Answers to our Puzzles



Answers: A. hoop B. dribble C. dunk D. shoot



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Fishing

Capt. David's Fishing Report

By Captain David Lifka
mail@floridanewslines.com

Good news: the best fishing of the year is happening right now. Better news: it only keeps improving.

No matter what your fishing priorities might be, the month of March is when all aspects of area fishing begin to kick into high gear. Offshore, nearshore, inshore, surf, lakes, rivers, and ponds are all returning to life for the start of another fishing season.

Preparing properly for another fishing season is a must. Now is the time to inventory your tackle and check your rods and reels for any repair or maintenance needed. If you own a boat, checking batteries, fuel filters, water pumps, lighting, safety equipment, and trailer bearings now, can possibly save on a lot of aggravation later.

If you or the kids don't fish, or haven't fished before, there is no better time than now to give it a try. The weather is right — not too hot, not too cold, plus the fish are biting.

The easiest way to get started is by fishing for panfish that can be easily caught at any nearby freshwater pond, creek, or dock. Inexpensive, light equipment with just a hook and a float is all that is needed to give it a try. Fresh white bread, or even better, live worms for bait should have you catching bream and maybe even a catfish or two in no time. Mandarin Park Dock at the south end of Mandarin Road or Trout Creek Fish Camp just south of Orange-dale on State Road 13 provide great, easy, fishing access for the family and kids.

Finding beach access from Fernandina

Beach to Crescent Beach is the only platform needed to get you started with some of the area's fantastic surf fishing. Surf fishing can be at its finest this time of year for anyone regardless of their fishing experience or expertise. Any rod and reel that cast far enough into the ocean to reach or get just behind the breakers will work. Surf rigs will vary, but any simple fish finder rig or store-bought surf rig should be all you need for starters. Dead shrimp or sand fleas for bait can be purchased at nearly any bait store in the area you will be fishing.

Numerous tutorials exist online to help teach, inform, and answer whatever "how to" fishing questions you might have. Fishing with an experienced friend or just watching others that are catching fish can be invaluable to learning some of the tricks that may be needed where you are fishing. Bait stores and tackle stores are usually a wealth of information for what's working in their immediate area.

Yes, March is the time of year that area fishing kicks into gear and now is the time to take advantage. Regardless of your fishing skills, getting outside, being on or around the water, wetting a line, and possibly even stretching a line is something that can be enjoyed individually, or with the whole family. Now let's go fishing!

Fishing report: It's all about the surf this time of year. Whiting and more whiting, followed by pompano and more pompano.

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



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— Resident Mary M. (with her dog, Jade)

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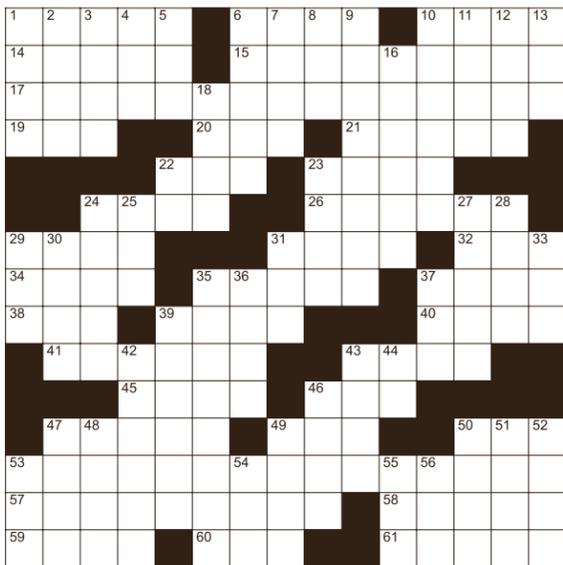
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Puzzles

Answers to puzzles on page 14
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Yields Manila hemp
- 6. A type of gin
- 10. Japanese ankle sock
- 14. Swiss city
- 15. Applied to
- 17. Achievements
- 19. Japanese title
- 20. Possesses
- 21. Belgian city
- 22. Child
- 23. Great delight
- 24. Petty quarrel
- 26. Gathered
- 29. Zoroastrian concept of holy fire
- 31. Path
- 32. Legendary hoops coach Riley
- 34. A citizen of Denmark
- 35. Flat
- 37. Upper-class young women
- 38. Payment (abbr.)
- 39. Distort

CLUES DOWN

- 40. Affirmative! (slang)
- 41. One who has a child
- 43. Without
- 45. Workplace safety agency
- 46. Political action committee
- 47. Period of plant and animal life
- 49. Swiss river
- 50. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- 53. State of being kept secret
- 57. Hobbies
- 58. One-time Korean ruler
- 59. Sudden attack
- 60. Born of
- 61. Assists

CLUES ACROSS

- 6. Thin wood
- 7. Polynesian garlands
- 8. Fluid replacement (abbr.)
- 9. Flammable hydrocarbon gas
- 10. Multi-leveled
- 11. Influential diarist
- 12. Gambles
- 13. Many subconsciousnesses
- 16. Current unit
- 18. Illumination unit
- 22. Tantalum
- 23. Steps leading down to a river
- 24. Kids love him
- 25. Before
- 27. Fencing swords
- 28. Mountain range in China
- 29. Payroll company
- 30. A way to pack together
- 31. Business designation
- 33. Thyroid-stimulating hormone (abbr.)

CLUES DOWN

- 35. Forage fish
- 36. Greek temple pillars
- 37. Internet mgmt. company
- 39. Rouse oneself
- 42. In a way, covered
- 43. Elaborate silk garment
- 44. Cooling unit
- 46. Riley and O'Brien are two
- 47. ___ fide: genuine
- 48. Ancient Incan sun god
- 49. Poker stake
- 50. Trigonometric function
- 51. Interesting tidbit
- 52. Adieus
- 53. U.S. Treasury position
- 54. Midway between east and southeast
- 55. Doctors' group
- 56. Women's ___ movement



Solve the code to discover words related to basketball. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 24 = o)

A. 5 24 24 21
Clue: Used for scoring

B. 6 4 18 13 13 3 22
Clue: Move a basketball

C. 6 15 7 10
Clue: Push the ball down

D. 20 5 24 24 14
Clue: Throw ball at hoop

<p>O E H L S B U R K A R B A P G P A S S P E Y L E I R R H E P C H W S U U I I N U K N U D C P C I L B C E P L W Y S S R O E K H Y O O F E G B O U W H L Y A L H I W C V X A D T O V L T U C W L N S L O C K O L K T S T S E N A D N R A W V N G V R L N A U O D Y I S W K I D B I F G A R H C O G R Y R R W S N R D B R A H R H O I S D H N R O U A K S E U K I C P L S N O B E W O R U B S U W A F R A H L O S G K T Y C V A E C P V G H C F E R A W A N S F O F E C R O K R E R L N O Y Y L G I R K O S R O W F U I E H C N E B E L C L G U D R A O B K C A B S B F W H R L C E L I D E F E N S E T P U S H Y R S Y C V D E O G Y P I K C H A R G I N G D B D A D C W C D S B L X B C H Y I E N A I W R D I H H S R O Y T L G U S R O C R W W T B A S K E T X A E C O U R T E C N U O B P X E B E D R V H C K D S D R A W R O F</p>	<p>WORDS</p> <p>AIRBALL ASSIST BACKBOARD BASKET BENCH BOUNCE BOX CARRY CHARGING CLOCK COURT DEFENSE DUNK FORWARDS FOUL GUARDS LAYUP OFFENSE PASS PLAYERS PRESS REBOUND TRAVELING TURNOVER</p>
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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

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Gardening

Signs of Spring

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale
mail@floridanewsline.com

It feels like spring is almost with us, but I'm writing in early February when we used to expect cold snaps up until our average last frost date around March 20. All we can do is work with what the weather throws at us and plan for the unexpected — be it heat or cold, rain or drought — but I guess that's always been the case for gardeners and farmers.

My personal spring includes a pretty flowering redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), creamy flowers just emerging on the Carolina cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*), and I'm still enjoying the beautiful perfume of my winter-flowering tea olive

(*Osmanthus fragrans*). My spiderwort's (*Tradescantia obiensis*) purple three-sided flowers are beginning to show, and they are all attracting honey bees. On Jan. 30 I spotted my first hummingbird of the year; he was feeding on shrimp plants that have been flowering sporadically since last spring.

As part of our continuing training, Master Gardener Volunteers are lucky to be able to learn from experts in various fields associated with horticulture, and this week we took a morning to learn about pest control using biological means. The most well-known agent available to homeowners is probably BT (*Bacillus*

thuringiensis subsp. *Kurstaki*). Totally harmless to us, it is a strain of bacteria which can kill small caterpillars when correctly applied. It works by destroying their ability to eat once they have ingested it. It's a good product to use on tomatoes and leafy greens. "Mosquito dunks" contain a different strain of BT, and can be worth using in water features.

It's not just insect pests that we can control with biological methods. A number of invasive plants — plants that are disrupting our natural ecosystems by crowding out native plants — have been the subjects of experiments here in Florida for many years. One notable success has been to find a control for the air potato vine (*Dioscorea bulbifera*), which is native to Africa, Asia, and northern Australia. After extensive testing for safety and efficacy, a beetle from the air potato's home range was released and made available to the public. Currently you can request beetles online at www.fdacs.gov/APB. Where beetles are released is determined by demand and location. The beetles will not eradicate the vine completely, but keep it in reasonable bounds without the use of potentially harmful chemicals.

Other plants that have been targeted with biological controls include the Melaleuca tree that almost destroyed the Everglades; alligator weed, once so prevalent in our waterways; and tropical soda apple, a problem for cattle ranchers as well as a source of pathogens (diseases) that can

affect important crops like tomatoes, eggplants, and potatoes which are in the same plant family (*Solanaceae*).

As home gardeners, perhaps our best form of biological insect control is simply to encourage as many species of insects as possible to make their homes in our yards by avoiding the use of chemicals and providing a wide variety of nectar-rich flowering plants. More than 90 percent of insect life is considered beneficial: they are predators which use other insects as food or parasitoids that use other insects as a place to lay their eggs, and include ladybugs, lacewings, wasps, and assassin bugs. You won't always see them at work, but work they do.

I hope this reassures you that the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is looking out for us. Research is the key to solving complex problems on the ground, and we all benefit from the results. For our part, we should never transport plants into the state as they can carry pathogens, harmful insects or just be plain thugs — remember kudzu, the vine that ate the south?

For timely tips for your yard you can find both current and archived editions of A New Leaf newsletter at <https://tinyurl.com/yxuhw2qq>.

Have a great spring!

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Travel

Tasting the flavors of the Mississippi Delta

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewsline.com

Newspaper reporter David Cohn is credited with the saying, "The Mississippi Delta begins in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel and ends at Catfish Row in Vicksburg." Other sources say the Delta reaches from southern Illinois to the southeastern tip of Louisiana, covering more than three million acres. Yet, native son and author Willie Morris describes the region as "half hills, half Delta and all crazy."

Like the region's abundant natural resources, the Delta supports rich and diverse cultural traditions, like hunting, fishing and the Blues. Over the centuries, American Indians, African Americans, and immigrants intermingled to form a new culture, one found only in the Delta. While the expanse might be hard to define, it offers distinctive cuisine. I decided to take a tasting tour.

I flew to Memphis and made my first stop in nearby DeSoto County, Mississippi, at Memphis BBQ. Melissa Cookston, a female pitmaster and seven-time world barbecue champion, owns the so-named restaurant. No surprise, her succulent ribs and tangy dry-rubbed wings put me in finger-licking heaven.

If you're a BBQ fan, this restaurant is a must.

I then drove on to Greenwood to take a class at the Viking Cooking School based on the hit movie, "The Help." Many scenes from that movie were filmed in Greenwood and those gorgeous Viking appliances are manufactured there. Rest assured, the Southern-style cornbread, greens, and chicken featured on the class menu turned out great. Thankfully, Minny's chocolate pie did not contain any secret ingredients.



Sides at Walnut Hills Restaurant

I toured Simmons Catfish Farm to learn about farm raising the species. Personally, I never choose catfish because I consider them bottom feeders; however, farm-raised catfish feed off food sprinkled on top of the water. To taste some, I tried a traditional local restaurant: Hines

Grocery. It's the Delta way to dine in a "grocery store restaurant" and pick up local specialties on the way out. Mmm. I was converted. One bite of the delicate, fried catfish brought juicy moistness to my mouth, yet tasted not at all fishy.

Vicksburg came next, home of the National Park Vicksburg Battlefield, the most-visited tourist attraction in

the state. But I was searching out food and let me say, I wish I could return. The fried chicken at Walnut Hills Restaurant was sublime, the best I've ever tasted. Seriously. Plus, the array of southern sides pushed the meal over the top.

Lastly, I ventured to the heart of the Delta, Greenville, home of the Delta Hot Tamale Festival. Tamales are traditional Delta fare made from inexpensive ingredients combined with hot sauce to stretch the budget and please the heat-loving palate. I'm not a tamale fan, but the crowds said otherwise. This festival makes an ideal place to compare various restaurants and recipes.



Tamale Festival

My final taste treat came from the 1947 original Doe's Eat Place, famous for outstanding steaks (and tamales, too), but also for its ramshackle location and



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Catfish farming

unpretentious service. I can't compare it to any other restaurant. Humble Doe's attracted the state dignitaries who came for the festival as well as movie star Jessica Lange. They all sat at cramped tables eating off mix-matched china. Guests are served house salad from a gigantic mixing bowl. Steaks measure about seven inches thick, and I'm not exaggerating. They're cooked under a broiler hovering around 600 degrees. You can also choose shrimp that's swims in butter topped with a homemade dry rub. Doe's ranks as an unforgettable dining experience.

Indeed, my trip to Mississippi became one-hundred percent crazy, but as they say, "So Delta."

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