



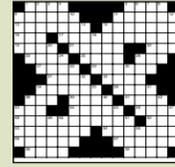
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## Wildlife rehabilitation facility unable to hold fundraisers due to pandemic; seeks donations

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Like many non profit organizations, HAWKE (Humane Association of Wildlife Care and Education) has been hit hard by the pandemic and resulting shutdown. The group has been unable to hold its normal fundraisers and open houses; HAWKE relies on donations from these events as there is no state funding available for wildlife rehabilitation.

**Wildlife** cont. on pg. 13



Photo courtesy Melanie Cain-Stage

# Nease NJROTC places third at national championships



Nease NJROTC's Armed Basic Team performs its third place finish during the Navy National Academic, Athletic and Drill Championships.

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

On April 16, the Nease NJROTC competed against the top 25 NJROTC drill teams across the country at the Navy National Academic, Athletic and Drill Championships — and earned third place. The Navy Nationals comprise a series of nine events — five drill, three athletic and one academic — where the cumulative scores are added to determine the overall national champion. Nease, which won the Area-12 Drill Championship in March in Lee County, Ga., represented NJROTC Area-12, which covers the 60 NJROTC programs across Northern Florida and the state of Georgia.

Nease earned first place in two events

— the 16 x100 Relay and Unarmed Basic Drill. The team garnered six additional trophies, including third place in Overall Athletics, Armed Basic Drill, Armed Exhibition Drill and Push Ups. Two cadets earned individual medals for athletics: Emmelie Neff finished fourth in sit ups with 320 and Amber Vidler finished sixth in push ups with 86.

“These young men and women have persevered since August, practicing at 7:30 a.m.,” said senior naval science instructor Captain Scott LaRochelle. “Finishing third in the nation validated their commitment to excellence.”

Nease has qualified and competed at the Navy Nationals every year since 2015 (last year's championships were



Photos courtesy Scott LaRochelle  
Cadet Johnny Castillo sprints the anchor leg to Nease's record setting 16x100 Relays during the Navy National Academic, Athletic and Drill Championships.

canceled, but the team qualified), and never finished higher than sixth place. The top five schools are recognized with individual trophies.

“I believed we nailed our performance perfectly,” said Cadet Brodie Mongon, commander of the winning Unarmed Basic Drill team. “Knowing how incredible some of the other programs from places like California, Virginia and Florida are makes this trophy even more special.”

## No Excuses Running Club aims to reach and inspire young athletes

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

The No Excuses Running Club became an official club in the middle of the pandemic last year. Founders Zeke and Jill Benavides said they basically took what they had done for middle schoolers (offered training to keep athletes' skills up during summer break) for the previous two summers, but expand it to include more than just Fruit Cove Middle School students. Jill Benavides said they wanted to create a sense of community and also give kids a focus

during COVID, when everything was newly shut down. No Excuses Running Club is open to all area students from first through eighth grades, as well as high schoolers who are not participating in summer training programs with their high schools. The program aims to increase athletes' skills as runners, plus build endurance, speed, and agility for other sports.

“We found that many of the students said they wanted to find friends in addition to develop



Photo courtesy Jill Benavides  
Coaches Zeke and Jill Benavides in their favorite position: encouraging young runners.

**Athletes** cont. on pg. 6

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# BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

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**Favorite friend:**

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**How your BFF got their name:**

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Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet or sponsor the BFF contest.

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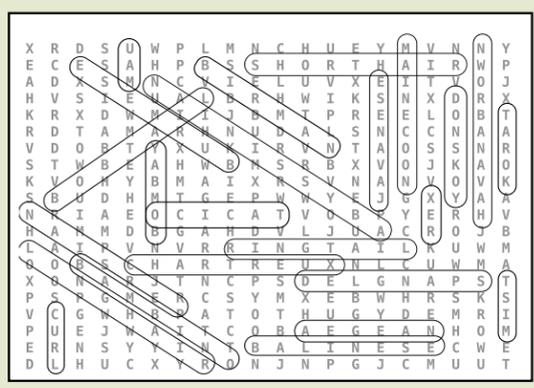
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Answers to our Puzzles PG 14

### MYSTERY PHOTO



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### with Florida State Representative Cyndi Stevenson, District 17

**Q: With this year’s regular legislative session concluded, can you give us an overview?**

**A:** I think it was a great session. Much of session was taken up with the headline issues of the day, and we have had our share. But we also passed meaningful legislation that addressed important long-term issues of the state. We addressed things like sea level rise/resiliency, quality standards for Voluntary Pre-K programs, and literacy.

We ended up with more money for the budget than we thought we would have, and we used it on one-time spends such as investing in cybersecurity and catching up on some deferred maintenance for the Capitol rather than increasing entitlements (which would have to be funded every year).

**Q: What are some of the less talked about bills that would be of interest to the community?**

**A:** We passed legislation to reduce abuses of property tax insurance and lawsuits that are driving increases in our property insurance premiums.

We passed legislation focused on increasing Florida’s literacy rate. While we have seen steady improvement in Florida’s literacy, more than 60 percent of third graders are reading below grade level — which is not acceptable. We established the New Worlds program that will mail a book to all Florida Students reading below grade level and supply their families with online materials to help their families engage their children in their pursuit of reading mastery.

We increased funding for Florida’s K-12 schools and were able to fund a \$1,000 bonus to Florida’s teachers and law enforcement officers.

We protected Bright Futures Scholarship funding and maintained our commitment to increase funding for Florida’s K-12 schools.

We passed legislation that will harden our internet connections against storm related outages and incentivize the expansion of broadband service to rural areas of Florida.

**Q: What bills were passed that were directly related to the global public health emergency that was beginning as session ended in 2020?**

**A:** We addressed the fallout of the virus by updating our laws and plans so our state is better prepared to face public health emergencies. We passed legislation to protect businesses, schools, charities, religious organizations, and

healthcare providers from frivolous lawsuits.

The shut down to slow the spread of the virus triggered massive layoffs and record numbers of people who were suddenly unemployed. We reorganized the Department of Economic Opportunity and set requirements for upgrades to the Connect System to a cloud-based system to protect it from an outage caused by a surge of users.

We saw peaceful protests used as cover for riots, violence, and looting. We responded by passing HB 1 to create one of the strongest anti-mob violence laws in the country. The law protects peaceful protests, our neighborhoods and the law enforcement officers who place their lives on the line to protect us.

We saw examples of misuse of force against our citizens, most notably George Floyd at the hands of the police. We worked to pass HB 7051 Law Enforcement and Correction Officer Practices, which requires the establishment of standards for officer training and policies regarding use of force, requires quarterly reporting to the state on certain use of force incidents and investigations of backgrounds for people seeking employment as a law enforcement or corrections officer.

**Q: What was your favorite bill that was passed?**

**A:** I would say HB 5. This bill passed both the Florida House and Senate unanimously. It requires the development of a K-12 curriculum which will be a part of the regular schoolwork for both district and charter schools. It will assist students in developing an understanding of their shared rights and responsibilities as residents of the state of Florida and of the founding principles of the United States. It will develop an understanding of effectively advocating before government bodies and officials. It will include the curation of a collection of oral histories to provide portraits in patriotism based on personal stories of diverse individuals who demonstrate civic minded qualities, including first person accounts of victims of other nation’s governing philosophy. It will help them understand their responsibility for preserving and defending the blessings of liberty inherited from prior generations and secured by the US Constitution.

**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.

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**with St. Johns County Sheriff  
Rob Hardwick**

**Q: As coronavirus protocols are loosening, what community programs will the sheriff's office be starting back up?**

**A:** The first big one we are pushing is our Civilian Law Enforcement Academy (CLEA). This gives participants an insiders' perspective on law enforcement and how the criminal justice system works and includes things like a jail tour and meeting all the specialized units, like the dive team and the detective team. It meets every Tuesday night for three hours for two and a half months. My wife is in the first class since we started back up, which is meeting now. They graduate in June.

We also have our WAVE (Women Against Violent Encounters) program. This actually started back in the 1990s with the St. Augustine Police Department for Flagler College students. Now, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office is taking the lead, but we work in tandem with the St. Augustine Police Department and the St. Augustine Beach Police Department. Classes are taught over two nights for three hours each night and are hosted by homeowner associations, churches, and other groups all over the county. The first night is a lecture format and the second night is hands on training. All instructors are women law enforcement officers.

**Q: Do you offer any programs for senior citizens?**

**A:** This is an especially vulnerable population and our Community Affairs Unit, including Cpl. Greg Suchy and Deputy Tony Rodriguez have

been visiting all the retirement and senior living facilities in the county to present programs on fraud and scams, especially online, against the elderly. We are trying to get out in front of crimes and try to prevent them.

**Q: How would one go about requesting one of these programs for their group or at their facility?**

**A:** For any of our community programs, contact Cpl. Suchy with our Community Affairs Unit at [gsuchy@sjso.org](mailto:gsuchy@sjso.org).

**Q: What else is your office working on for community education?**

**A:** We are in the process of teaming up with Wolfson Children's Hospital to film some PSA videos regarding best practices to prevent drowning. The leading cause of unintentional death for children aged one to four and the second leading cause of unintentional death for children aged five to 14 is drowning. We hope these videos bring awareness to this. The number one factor in drowning is the lack of active supervision by adults. If your child is lost, the first place you should look is any nearby water source. We are hoping tips like this will keep our families safe.

**Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you with any questions or suggestions about this article?**

**A:** They can email me at [sheriff@sjso.org](mailto:sheriff@sjso.org) or call me at (904) 824-8304. Also, our website, [www.sjso.org](http://www.sjso.org) has a wealth of resources, from alarm registration to Crime Stoppers to our Neighbors app.



**with St. Johns County Clerk of Circuit Court  
and Comptroller Brandon Patty**

**Q: What can you tell us about your office's internship program?**

**A:** The St. Johns County Clerk's Office internship program is designed to expose college and high school students to a career in local government. This program will allow students to learn the vital roles the clerk's office provides to residents by maintaining official records, collecting and distributing county funds, and many other important functions performed to assist the judiciary in court proceedings. There is both a paid and volunteer internship program and a commitment of at least four weeks is required, though you may commit to a full semester if desired. For more information and to apply to the program, you can call (904) 819-3605 or email the Human Resources Department at [cochumanresources@stjohnsclerk.com](mailto:cochumanresources@stjohnsclerk.com).

**Q: Do you have an update on the mask policy for your office?**

**A:** The Clerk's Office falls under Supreme Court jurisdiction and health

screenings and masks are no longer required to access the courthouse for business; however, if you are appearing for a court hearing, a mask is required in the courtroom.

**Q: Do you have anything else to share with northern St. Johns County readers?**

**A:** Our office currently has various full-time positions open. To explore employment opportunities, visit <https://stjohnsclerk.com/employment-opportunities>. The benefits package is also available on the website.

**Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you or your office?**

**A:** A lot of questions can be answered by visiting our website, [www.stjohnsclerk.com](http://www.stjohnsclerk.com), which is most commonly used to pay traffic citations or search court records. A little known fact is that it also has an option to report government fraud or abuse, as the clerk's office is a government fraud/waste/abuse auditor. People can also call our main office at (904) 819-3600.

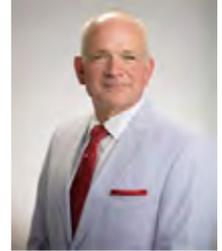


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# June

**What's Going On in St. Johns?**  
A modified calendar of events

## Community Calendar

**The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable** will meet on Monday, June 14 at 12 p.m. and feature Representatives Cyndi Stevenson and Paul Renner. This meeting will be via Zoom video conferencing. Email [info@sjcroundtable.org](mailto:info@sjcroundtable.org) to register for the meeting or for more information about the St. Johns County Civic Roundtable.

**The Jacksonville Camera Club** will meet at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 16 at Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran School, 6595 Columbia Park Ct. in Jacksonville. Olis Garber, an internationally awarded Master Photographer, will speak on wildlife and nature photography. Visit [jaxcameraclub.com](http://jaxcameraclub.com) for more information.

Team A.Maise will host the first annual **Baskets, Brews & BBQ** fundraiser on Saturday, June 19 from 2 p.m. – 10 p.m. at Ancient City Brewing, 3420 Agricultural Center Drive, Suite 8. Proceeds will benefit Team A.Maise, which supports patients and families in pediatric and neonatal intensive care units. Visit [www.teamamaise.org](http://www.teamamaise.org) for more information.

**Herbs from Nature's Garden** will be offered on June 19 at 10 a.m. Attendees will learn about traditionally used herbs to promote wellness and health as well as how to create their own tinctures, teas,

and salves. Included are guides, plant identification, lecture and herbal snacks. Pre registration is required via phone or text: (386) 972-1891.

**The All Star Quilters Guild** will meet at 10 a.m. on Monday, June 21 at the First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. The program is "BOM or MOB," presented by Sunnie Malesky. No refreshments will be served due to Covid 19. Bring your own mask. New members are welcome. Visit [www.allstarquilters.org](http://www.allstarquilters.org) for more information, including options for joining the meeting via Zoom. Be sure to also see the raffle quilt under the "Service" tab.

**First Coast Florida Lifestyles Newcomers Recreation Card Club** will host lunch/card playing at a Mexican restaurant/Dunkin' Donuts next door in St. Augustine on Sunday, June 27. Arrival is at 1:15 p.m. for lunch and card games will be played beginning at 2 p.m. Masks must be worn while playing cards and one item must be purchased at Dunkin' to satisfy restaurant management. Call the club organizer at (904) 829-0643 (no texts) to RSVP or for information about the club. The club is open to both men and women and is a smoke- and drug-free club.

**Athletes** cont. from pg. 1

healthy habits and increase physical fitness in their lives," Jill Benavides said. "COVID isolation was overwhelming for kids, but No Excuses Running Club gave them a chance to keep some things normal. As soon as the CDC said we could open up last year, we did."

Jill Benavides has had a lifetime love of running. Her father was a middle distance runner who ran a 4:20 mile and she ran in high school. Her favorite local race is the Gate River Run. Zeke Benavides has run a couple of marathons, but considers himself the cross training specialist for the club while Jill Benavides, also the Fruit Cove Middle School head coach for the past eight years, is the running specialist.

Jill Benavides stressed that this summer's program, which runs from June 11 through August 13, is not just for Fruit Cove students. This will be the first summer that they have included elementary students and so she expects the program to grow.

"Last summer, we had 118 students in seven groups that were tailored to the athletes' exact goals," Jill Benavides said. "Students

sign up for the whole two month period and can come and go during that time."

The program is held at Plantation Park, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. with designated group training days as well as specified training programs depending on the athlete's goals. She said they would be offering summer program participants the opportunity to compete in several local track meets throughout the summer.

"Skills learned in the program can be used in any sport," Jill Benavides said. "Running can help you with your other sport or it could be your passion."

Jill Benavides, also a teacher at Fruit Cove, said she likes to incorporate character in her coaching. She and Zeke Benavides see themselves as not only coaches, but encouragers and trainers.

"I always say that runners should leave a meet better than they came," she said. "It's about being a better person as well as being a better runner."

To register and receive all forms, contact [noexcusesrc7@gmail.com](mailto:noexcusesrc7@gmail.com).



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**with St. Johns County Property Appraiser  
Eddie Creamer**

**Q: Can you go over the ad valorem tax roll calendar?**

**A:** Yes. It is important for people to become more involved in this process. First of all, my office is constitutionally mandated to create the tax roll for all the taxing authorities in the county. By statute, we begin with the valuation process, which lasts from Jan. 1 through July 1. It's during this time that we approve and apply exemptions and come up with a market value for the property.

**Q: Can you explain more about market value?**

**A:** Florida is a "market value" state, so we are required to appraise properties at market value, based on current sales of like properties. We appraise in arrears, so for 2021 values (beginning on Jan. 1, 2021) we use 2020 recorded sales.

**Q: What happens on July 1?**

**A:** On July 1, we submit the preliminary tax roll to the Florida Department of Revenue and to each of the taxing authorities in the county. This triggers two things: first, the Florida Department of Revenue reviews it for accuracy and fairness and if they find any errors, they send it back to us for corrections. Secondly, the county taxing authorities put together their budgets for the following year and determine their millage rate by July 31. They then provide to us their proposed millage rates.

**Q: What is the next step?**

**A:** Our office takes these proposed millage rates, along with last year's millage rates, and calculates the rollback rate. We put all these in the TRIM (Truth in Millage) Notices and mail them out to homeowners in August (this year it

will be on Aug. 13). The TRIM Notice also contains the dates and times of each taxing authority's budget hearings, all of which need to be concluded in the 25-day period (this year, it will be by Sept. 7).

**Q: What is important about this time period?**

**A:** This is really the critical time for citizen involvement. At these budget hearing meetings, citizens can ask questions, get details and determine if the government is truly meeting their needs ... and if they are doing so efficiently. After these meetings, the boards of the taxing authorities vote to accept the budget and that's why citizen input is critical. After approval, the taxing authorities notify us that they've set their millage rate. At this point, it is too late for any changes. On Oct. 1, we submit the information back to the Florida Department of Revenue and to the county's tax collector, who then sends the tax bills to the people at the beginning of November.

**Q: Do you have anything else to share?**

**A:** It's important to note that this year's tax roll will be up about 50 percent over 2016. Citizens need to be asking their local government what are they doing with this money and how are they serving my needs?

**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](mailto:Eddie@sjcpa.us) or call me at (904) 827-5500.



**with St. Johns County Commissioner  
Christian Whitehurst, District 1**

**Q: Can you comment on the potential for privatizing the St. Johns County libraries?**

**A:** During commissioner's reports at our April 6 meeting, Commissioner Jeb Smith brought up the possibility of privatizing our public libraries. I believe he thought we might be able to save money and still have the libraries run as they are now. I had never heard of this, but I and the other commissioners asked for more facts and directed staff to investigate.

I'm not sure how I feel about something like this, but the facts would really have to be overwhelming for me to vote for it. Additionally, I'm not sure how much support it would get from staff and the other commissioners. To date, we haven't heard anything from staff about this again. At this point, I don't think such a change would be imminent or would receive support.

**Q: Can you give an update on Project Breeze, which we discussed last month?**

**A:** The identity of Project Breeze is no longer confidential; it has been revealed to be the PGA TOUR. The project will be the TOUR's broadcast home where they will produce all their digital content. This project would be good for St. Johns County because not only will 135 jobs be retained, but they expect to add 45 more jobs by 2035. Part of the initial ask by the PGA TOUR a few years ago was to get tax abatement on their global home in Ponte Vedra Beach. This agreement is already in place. So, by adding this new project, the entire incentive package will go from \$23 million to \$16 million. Basically, we would be paying less incentive — and we all understand the benefit of having the PGA TOUR in our community.

Whitehurst cont. on pg. 11



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

**Q: Do you have any updates on High School III?**

**A:** I have several updates. First, we've announced the Programs of Choice for the school's Academies. I'm very excited that we will have an additional AICE program, like the one at St. Augustine High School, to serve students in the northern part of the county. Additionally, the three brand new academies will be: Global Logistics and Supply Chains; Software Development; and Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences. I think all three of these will give excellent additional choices for our students and lead to strong career fields.

As far as construction goes, several of the building slabs are down and the tilt wall construction forms are being constructed. Everything is on schedule for a fall 2022 opening.

We will finalize the zoning at the June 8 school board meeting. There is still time for parents to look at the zoning proposals on our website and send comments via email for staff and board members to see.

Finally, we are happy to announce that Greg Bergamasco has been named principal of the new school. He most recently was principal at Gamble Rogers Middle School and has previous high school experience.

**Q: Do you have any other principal changes to announce?**

**A:** We welcome Ashley McCormick, most recently the assistant principal at Hickory Creek, as the new principal at Durbin Creek Elementary. Angie Fuller will be moving to Valley Ridge Academy as its new principal.

**Q: Is there an update on the walking safety issue for students from the St. Johns Forest neighborhood?**

**A:** The process for re-examination of the walk zone has begun. A team with members from the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, the Florida Department of

Transportation, St. Johns County, and the School District are working to determine if it is still an acceptable walk zone or if not, if any improvements are needed to make it acceptable. I'm not sure how long this process takes, but we will wait to hear their determination.

**Q: Last month we discussed the dress code. Has anything happened since then [as of interview date of May 13]?**

**A:** As he does every spring, Senior Director Paul Abbatozzi will bring to the school board proposed updates to the Student Code of Conduct for our consideration at our May 25 workshop. I anticipate that there will be suggested changes to the dress code.

**Q: Do you have an update on the district's mask policy?**

**A:** Our mask policy and health and safety protocols are slated to be an agenda item at the school board's June 8 meeting. Right now, our district is very busy considering all the latest information coming out about mask usage, as well parent input. Parent input is very important to us; you can express your views at any of our meetings or via email or phone call.

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

**A:** I'd like to recognize Elyse Sorroco of Creekside High School, who has been named a Presidential Scholar by the US Department of Education — one of only 161 students in the United States to receive this honor. We are very proud of her.

Finally, we are looking forward to graduation. I am most delighted that we will have in-person graduation this year at TIAA Bank Field. Congratulations to the Class of 2021!

**Q: How can our readers contact you?**

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

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# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## Market Insight



### A House Divided

By Scott Grant  
ScottGrant@StJohnsBusinessMonthly.com

On May 22, 1856, Congressman Preston Brooks strode onto the floor of the US Senate with malicious intent. Brooks was stalking Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. The Congressman from South Carolina and his accomplices waited as the chamber emptied and the ladies seated in the upper gallery went home. They did not want to offend their fragile feminine sensibilities.

Two days earlier, Sumner, an abolitionist and a Republican, had given a speech attacking slavery. The speech was incendiary. Sumner's rhetoric was filled with offensive sexual imagery that inflamed the South. Senator Stephen Douglas listened in disgust and remarked, "That damned fool is going to get himself killed."

Stephen Douglas was one of the two sponsors of the legislation Sumner was riled up about, The Kansas-Nebraska Act. That compromise was the nation's last feeble attempt to reconcile its irreconcilable differences. The sin of slavery would not be absolved in the halls of Congress.

Two years later, in 1858, Douglas would run for reelection in Illinois against Abraham Lincoln. Douglas won. The two engaged in a series of famous debates that would captivate the nation. Lincoln's prophecy that "a house divided cannot stand," would galvanize one section of the country and horrify another. Two years later, in 1860, Lincoln and Douglas faced each other again, this time for President of the United States. Lincoln won.

During his anti-slavery speech, Sumner attacked Senator Andrew Butler, the co-sponsor of the act. In addition to some untoward implications, Sumner made fun of Butler's speech impediment. The South Carolina Senator had recently suffered a stroke that had slurred his speech.

Preston Brooks was Senator Butler's cousin. He considered Sumner's remarks a slander against his family. His Southern

honor demanded revenge. At first, he considered challenging Sumner to a duel, but rejected the idea because he considered the Republican from Massachusetts to be unworthy and no gentleman.

Brooks decided to give the man a beating instead. He approached Charles Sumner at his desk in the nearly empty Senate and raised his cane. "Mr. Sumner," he declared before bringing the cane down on the defenseless Senator, "I have read your speech twice over carefully. It is libel on South Carolina, and Mr. Butler, who is a relative of mine."

Brooks beat Sumner mercilessly. Sumner hid under his desk. Brooks continued to lash the Northerner. The cane broke into three pieces. Brooks continued to throttle the bloodied Senator with the biggest piece. Eventually, Sumner attempted to flee up the aisle with Brooks and his slashing cane in close pursuit. When Sumner collapsed, Brooks grabbed him by the lapel and lifted his head so he could beat him some more.

The attack caused a national uproar. "Has it come to this?" a New York Paper asked. "Are we to be chastised as they chastise their slaves?" In the South, papers praised the attack. The Richmond Enquirer suggested Sumner should be beaten "every morning."

Southern Senators took to wearing pieces of the shattered cane on chains around their necks. Across the South, fans sent Congressman Brooks hundreds of canes. One was inscribed, "Hit him again!"

Five years later the country was at war. Some say we are still fighting that war today.

*Scott A. Grant is a local columnist, author, speaker, and historian. By day he is a fiduciary asset manager and president of Standfast Asset Management. He welcomes your comments or questions at scottg@standfast.com.*

## Hospital earns highest mark for patient safety

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridaneWSline.com

Baptist Medical Center South received an "A" rating in the spring 2021 Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades, a national distinction recognizing achievements in providing the safest health care for patients.

"To receive an 'A' patient safety rating shows our consistent and unwavering approach to making sure our patients receive the safest, highest quality care in all situations," said Hospital President Nicole Thomas, FACHE. "Our dedicated team members and physicians make safety their No. 1 priority each and every day."

Baptist Nassau, Baptist Beaches and Baptist Jacksonville also received 'A' safety ratings.

Baptist South's safety and quality protocols have been further enhanced since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis through a number of additional measures. Separate respiratory care units for COVID-19 patients, designated staff and equipment for COVID-19 rooms, and the use of

advanced UV technology for decontamination are among the many safety reinforcements the health system has implemented.

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade assigns an A, B, C, D or F grade to hospitals across the country based on their performance in preventing medical errors, infections and other harms among patients in their care. Developed under the guidance of a national expert panel, the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade uses 27 measures of publicly available hospital safety data to assign grades to more than 2,700 U.S. acute-care hospitals twice per year. The Hospital Safety Grade's methodology is peer-reviewed and fully transparent, and the results are free to the public.

The Leapfrog Group is an independent national watchdog organization committed to health care quality and safety. The Safety Grade is a letter grade assigned to all general hospitals across the country and updated every six months, assessing how well the hospital prevents medical errors and other harms to patients.

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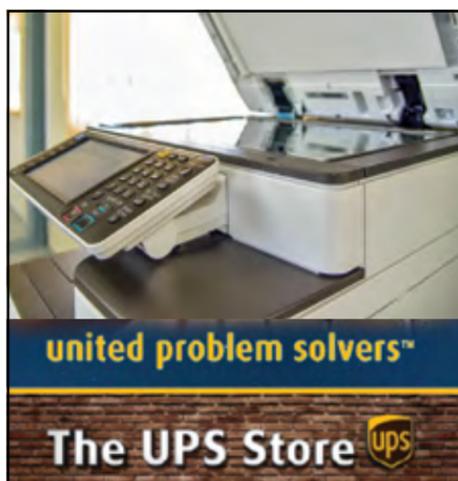


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**Briefs**

**Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach presents Sound Connections® Music Therapy Summer Clinic**

The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach (CCPVB) will present Sound Connections® Music Therapy Summer Clinic for children with special needs from Monday, June 14 until Friday, July 16 at Cunningham Creek Elementary, 1205 Roberts Road in St. Johns. Sessions include Uke Can Do It for high school students, ExSEL through Music for upper elementary and middle school students, ComMUSICate for elementary students, and Crescendo! for preschool students.

Classes will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays at various times. The cost per child is \$225 per class for 10 sessions, and \$40 per child for 30-minute private instruction, along with private, customized individual music therapy sessions by appointment. Visit the registration pages for details, hours and enrollment at <https://tinyurl.com/j74mws9h>.

According to the American Music Therapy Association, music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a qualified professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. Board-certified therapists formally evaluate each student's needs and write specific music therapy goals that reflect the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students are seen in classroom groups, small groups, and in individual sessions where therapists address the academic, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical goals of the students.

For more information about Sound Connections® Music Therapy Summer Clinic, call Minda Gordon at (904) 280-0614, ext. 1205 or email [MGordon@ccpvb.org](mailto:MGordon@ccpvb.org) or visit [www.ccpvb.org/arts-outreach/outreach-programs](http://www.ccpvb.org/arts-outreach/outreach-programs).

**Newcomers of North St. Johns welcomes new members**

With a variety of activities geared to all ages and interests, the Newcomers of North Saint Johns is a great way to step back into social events with a new best friend. Special interest groups include "Shopping and Lunch at Town Center" the first Thursday of the month; "Let's Do Lunch" gatherings held monthly at local restaurants in St. Augustine and

Jacksonville; Wine Socials for members and their spouses, significant others or singles; a "Book and Brunch Club" reading a variety of novels and non-fiction selections; plus, foursomes that play a weekly game of 18-holes at South Hampton Golf Course.

In addition, Newcomers of North Saint Johns also has a friendly Bunco game and luncheon held monthly at Cad-dyshack in World Golf Village; Canasta group meeting the second Wednesday of the month and a Mah Jongg group that plays every first and third Monday of each month at Cimarrone Golf Club with beginners welcome.

Newcomers of North Saint Johns is accepting applications now. Annual dues are just \$25. Contact Sue Aird at [sjaird@comcast.net](mailto:sjaird@comcast.net) for more information.

**New St. Johns County Art in Public Spaces exhibit features members of the foster care community**

St. Johns County's Art in Public Spaces program will host the "Experience and Expression" art exhibition through July 5 at the County Administration Building, 500 San Sebastian View. Launching during National Foster Care Month, this exhibition features artwork by youth in St. Johns County's foster care community and is hosted in partnership with the St. Johns County Cultural Council, the St. Johns County Family Integrity Program, St. Augustine Youth Services, Fostering Connections St. Johns, and the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program.

Visitors are invited to view the exhibit from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Visit [www.historiccoastculture.com](http://www.historiccoastculture.com) to learn more about the St. Johns Cultural Council.

**Sunscreen and insect repellent needed**

Summer weather brings the challenge of sun burns and biting insects. Homeless individuals living out of their cars, on the streets or in the woods can benefit from donations of sunscreen products and insect repellent.

As one of its initiatives, St. Johns CARES will be hosting a drive for these items, which can be dropped off at locations such as Home Again St. Johns on State Road 207 and St. Francis House in St. Augustine.

Briefs cont. on pg. 11



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Is it mobile responsive?	Yes.	Additional \$\$\$ Most web designers charge extra for a mobile site
How much for ongoing updates?	Easily make updates yourself, or we will do it for you.	\$75/hour (approx.) Average hourly rate for web designers
What about SEO? (Search Engine Optimization)	Included.	\$100-300/hour (approx.) Average hourly rate for SEO
How long until my new website is live?	Go live in as little as 1 week!	60 - 90 days (approx.)
The bottom line	Affordable pricing, must-have features, reliable support and a fast and easy setup process.	Thousands of dollars upfront, hundreds of dollars a month, pay for updates, and months to build.

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# Card players meet weekly at local restaurant



Photo courtesy Terry Brickhouse

Every week, this group plays "Hand, Knee, Foot" card game. A variation of Canasta, it is a points-based game, which is ideal for seasoned players of card games. The group welcomes new members. Join them at Gators Dockside in Fruit Cove, at 12 noon on Wednesdays. If interested in joining, call (904) 230-6962 and leave a message.

**Briefs** cont. from pg. 10

If you hold a neighborhood drive for these items, contact [president@stjohnscares.org](mailto:president@stjohnscares.org) or call (904) 507-7740 for assistance in picking up and delivering a collection of these items.

### St. Johns County job openings now posted on GovernmentJobs.com

St. Johns County is transitioning to a new employee recruitment and selection system that will streamline and expedite the evaluation, interviewing, and selection processes for all job applicants. As of May 17, 2021, all St. Johns County

job openings will be posted on [GovernmentJobs.com](http://GovernmentJobs.com).

This will allow the county to deploy a strategic recruiting program where applicants will be able to track the hiring process and upload supporting documents, including resumes and cover letters, in a variety of digital file types. All prospective job applicants must create a [www.governmentjobs.com](http://www.governmentjobs.com) account to apply for open St. Johns County positions. Contact St. Johns County Human Resources at (904) 209-0635 or [BCChiring@sjcfl.us](mailto:BCChiring@sjcfl.us) for more information.

**Whitehurst** cont. from pg. 7

**Q: What is the latest [as of interview date of May 14] on the Helow property, located on County Road 210W along a new extension of Veterans Parkway?**

**A:** This is still very much on my radar. There is a community meeting scheduled for May 17 and the project will go to PZA (Planning and Zoning Agency Board) on June 3.

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

**A:** I believe we are all still coming to grips with the devastating murder of

Tristyn Bailey. As a commissioner with two young daughters, my wife and I had to come to the realization of the fact that even in a great community like ours, terrible things can still happen. At the next county commission meeting, I plan to discuss with the other commissioners what would be appropriate to memorialize Tristyn Bailey's life. We want to show support for her family and that we are all grieving together.

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

**A:** Readers can email me at [bcc1c-whitehurst@sjcfl.us](mailto:bcc1c-whitehurst@sjcfl.us) or call me at (904) 584-5348.



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Learn how to register online for Florida's free VPK program by scanning the QR code, or visiting [DeerwoodAcademy.com/VPK](http://DeerwoodAcademy.com/VPK).



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From left to right...

- Victoria Miller - MPAS, PA-C
- Leslie Janik - MSN, APRN, ACNP-BC
- Monica Bye - DNP, APRN, FNP-BC

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## Volunteer Opportunity!

*Help Older Adults Make Informed Medicare Decisions*

SHINE - Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders - is a volunteer program that provides older adults and persons with disabilities free and unbiased counseling on their health insurance options.

ElderSource needs more SHINE volunteers! All training is completed online through virtual classes. This is a volunteer opportunity where you can really make a difference in the lives of older adults. Volunteers are wanted for Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns and Volusia counties.

**Bilingual volunteers are needed!**

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## ElderSource seeks volunteers from Duval and St. Johns counties

By Andrea Spencer  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto:mail@floridanewslines.com)

ElderSource, a nonprofit organization that works to empower elders and their caregivers to age with dignity and independence, is currently recruiting volunteers in Duval and St. Johns counties to help people understand their Medicare benefits. Volunteers are a vital part of ElderSource's SHINE program (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders), which helps elders make informed decisions about their Medicare health benefits and other health insurance issues.

Leon King, a Duval resident living in Mandarin, has been a SHINE volunteer for two years and touts how this program is not only important to seniors, but a fulfilling volunteer opportunity.

"I enjoy guiding them through the many choices they have when signing up for Medicare," he explained.

King has assisted approximately 500 people with their questions and problems about Medicare and related programs. He gets the greatest satisfaction finding someone that qualifies for the Extra Help program from Social Security or the Medicare Savings Program from Medicaid.

"These programs can make a huge difference in the life of a person with low income," King said. "When I can tell someone that they will have an extra \$148 in their monthly Social Security check because the Medicare Savings Program will be paying their Part B premium or tell someone that the Extra Help program will be paying for that prescription drug that they cannot afford, that makes all the training and effort worthwhile."

SHINE is the only program of its kind that offers free and unbiased counseling on Medicare and health insurance issues. Volunteers receive basic training on Medicare, Medicare Part D (prescription drug program), Medicare Supplement Insurance and Medicaid, and in turn, serve as counselors to their peers on how to understand and capitalize on these insurance benefits. Computer experience is helpful, but not necessary, to be a volunteer.

Upon completion of the training, volunteers provide much-needed counseling with



Photo courtesy Eldersource  
 SHINE volunteer Leon King.

seniors to secure these complicated health insurance benefits.

While SHINE volunteers are very busy during Open Enrollment (the period of time from Oct. 15 to Dec. 5 when Medicare beneficiaries can make changes to their plans), they counsel people year-round. Thousands of people turn 65 every day, making SHINE volunteers an invaluable resource to the community.

"Being a SHINE volunteer has allowed me to help others while working from home. You can spend as little or as much time as you wish helping people with problems and answering questions," said King. "I would encourage anyone that enjoys learning and helping others to volunteer with the SHINE program."

ElderSource is a nonprofit organization that provides information and resources to seniors, adults with disabilities and their caregivers so they can live well and independently. ElderSource, funded by the Department of Elder Affairs through state and federal grants, impacts the lives of over 12,000 seniors living in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns and Volusia counties. SHINE is a program of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, funded through a grant from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and operated in partnership with the state's 11 area agencies on aging.

To become a SHINE Volunteer or to receive more information call ElderSource at (904) 391-6644.

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**St. Johns County School Directory**

# Life

travel • pantry raiders • gardening  
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## Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewsline.com

### Laurie McGovern

Julington Creek Plantation resident Laurie McGovern said although her family's relocation to Florida from Boston was sudden and unexpected, they consider themselves "true Floridians" now and find it "cold" when the temperature is in the 60s. Born and raised in Massachusetts, Laurie, husband Matt and son Matthew planned to stay in New England — until Matt's diagnosis with genetic (non-alcoholic) liver failure in 2016 caused them to reconsider because their research showed it would be much quicker for Matt to get a needed liver transplant in Jacksonville at Mayo Clinic. Today, about four years later, Matt has had the transplant, Laurie has become very active with the community and local social media (she and a friend started the Dogs of JCP Facebook group), Matthew will graduate from Creekside this year, and they have adopted two more rescue dogs for a total of four in the family.

**Q: How quickly did your move to St. Johns actually come about?**

**A:** Within about two months, we sold our house in Boston and bought a house here. We didn't know anything about the area except what we learned online. We moved here in February 2017 and Matt got his transplant in October of that year. For that time and a while afterwards, my only focus was for him to get better. I didn't get the chance to meet people personally, but I joined several Facebook groups. So many people I didn't even know reached out and offered to help. We knew at that point that we had made a good decision to move here. We felt very supported.

**Q: How did you come to start the Dogs of JCP Facebook group?**

**A:** We brought two rescue dogs with us when we moved here, Lou and Taya. Since we've lived here, we rescued Ellie and Kira. Kira has an interesting story in that she was born with cinnamon roll ears and came from a rural shelter in Georgia. She was a bit of an internet sensation because of her ears and we were so happy to get her. So animals have always been my passion and, along with my very good friend Keri Robishaw, who is also originally from Boston, I started the Dogs of JCP group for fellow dog lovers.

**Q: How did you get involved with Birch Island Veterinary Center?**

**A:** I was a veterinary technician back in Massachusetts several years ago because I knew at a young age that I wanted to work with animals. Due to some physical limitations, I am no longer able to do the physical work required, which is why when my veterinarian friend Dr. Deanna Greer opened her new practice and asked me to help out, I jumped right on board. I manage Birch Island Veterinary Center's social media accounts, event planning and miscellaneous tasks.

**Q: What do you think of the local wildlife in Florida?**

**A:** I truly love wildlife and Florida's is much different than Boston's! I tend to be the go-to for friends who have snakes or turtles they want relocated



Photo courtesy Laurie McGovern  
Laurie McGovern with husband Matt and dogs Ellie, Taya, and Kira. (Lou is not pictured as he was feeling camera shy.)

from their homes. I've helped a big snapping turtle move along from a neighbor's home and encouraged a very long rat snake to seek out a different residence than my friend's backyard. I've also stopped to help turtles cross the street and once was involved in rescuing a potbelly pig that someone abandoned at a local movie theatre. Swimming with manatees is on my bucket list and I hope to do that sometime soon.

**Q: How would you best summarize your move to Florida?**

**A:** We took a chance on a community we knew nothing about and on a surgery we weren't sure would even happen — and it has all paid off and then some. We feel that Julington Creek welcomed us warmly and embraced our journey. We really feel like a part of the community.

**Get to Know ...**

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

**Wildlife** cont. from pg. 1

HAWKE founder Melanie Cain-Stage has been a licensed rehabilitation specialist and educational permit holder since 1980; HAWKE was established in 1987 and it is now located in Elkton. HAWKE is licensed by the State of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Federal US Fish and Wildlife Service to rehabilitate injured and orphaned wild birds, mammals, and reptiles including endangered species. They also have special permits to possess permanent wildlife for educational programs. These birds and animals cannot be released back to the wild.

"We have a hurricane-proof center with a feed room, intensive care and quarantine room, a huge hospital room with medical equipment, operating table and even a tornado room," Cain-Stage said.

HAWKE's facility is set up for endangered species and all kinds of other difficult species such as eagles and falcons, all raptors and turtles, plus river otters and even bobcats. It is the only professional center with flight cages and an otter compound.

"We rely on donations so that we can maintain this top notch wildlife facility in this county — and we need your help," Cain-Stage said. "Otherwise the closest one is the Volusia County Marine Science Center, which also has a rehabilitation department."

Visit hawkewildlife.org for more information or to make a donation via PayPal. Some animals are available for "adoption" via financial sponsorship. You can also send a check to HAWKE Inc. P.O. Box 188 Elkton FL 32033.

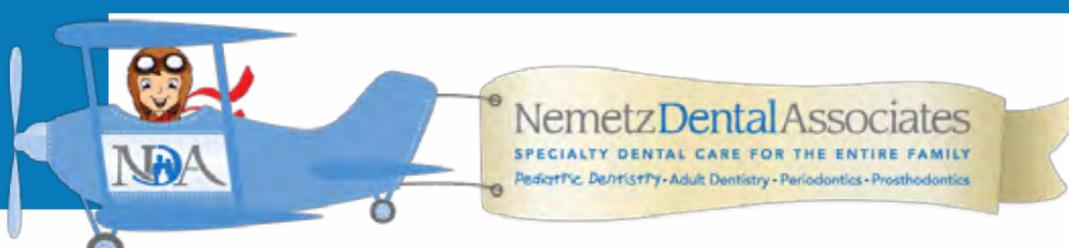
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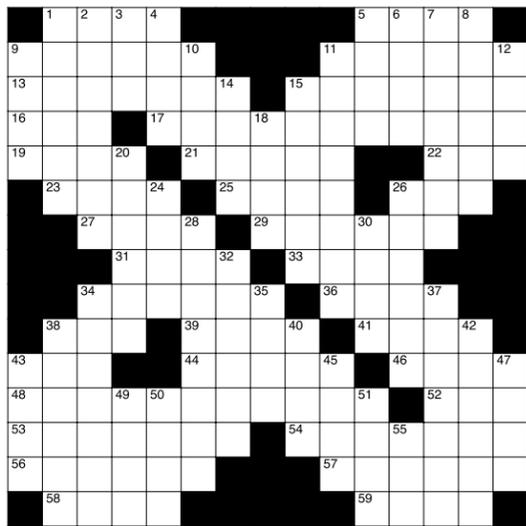
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# Puzzles

Answers on page 3  
Provided by MetroCreative



### CLUES ACROSS

1. Partner to "flows"
5. French industrial city
9. Diagrams
11. Diplomat
13. Hires
15. Hawaiian island
16. Set aflame
17. Very happy
19. Blue dye
21. Small terrier with short legs
22. One thousand cubic feet (abbr.)
23. Northern pike genus
25. Expression of annoyance
26. Female deer
27. Casella and Kellerman are two
29. Actor's lines to audience
31. Days (Spanish)
33. Close a person's eyes
34. Cloaked
36. Comedic actor Rogen
38. It's all around us
39. Neutralizes alkalis
41. Native people of New Mexico
43. No seats available
44. Famed "Air Music" composer
46. Fit of irritation
48. Psychic phenomena
52. Knicks' first-rounder Toppin
53. Seed used in cooking
54. "WandaVision" actress Hahn
56. Samples food
57. In a lucid way
58. Stair part
59. Adieux

### CLUES DOWN

1. Type of moth
2. A Christian sacrament
3. It lends books to Bostonians (abbr.)
4. Turn away
5. Impersonal
6. Shortly
7. Indigenous Alaskans
8. Subtle difference of meaning
9. Sicilian city
10. Put in harmony
11. Administrative divisions
12. As happily
14. Horse mackerel
15. Muddy or boggy ground
18. Monetary unit of Italy
20. Construction site machine
24. 22
26. Tracts at the mouths of rivers
28. Earnings
30. Insect repellent
32. Runner-up
34. Musician
35. Serious or urgent
37. Esteemed one
38. Where rockers play
40. Work furniture
42. Greek prophetesses
43. Quantitative fact
45. Missing soldiers
47. Minute
49. This (Spanish)
50. Maintain possession of
51. Assault with a knife
55. Holiday text message greeting

## FELINE FRIENDS WORD SEARCH

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

### WORDS

- ABYSSINIAN
- AEGEAN
- BALINESE
- BAMBINO
- BIRMAN
- BOBTAIL
- BOMBAY
- BURMESE
- CHARTREUX
- CURL
- DONSKOY
- HAVANA BROWN
- JAVANESE
- KORAT
- LONGHAIR
- MAINE COON
- MAU
- MIST
- OCICAT
- PERSIAN
- REX
- RINGTAIL
- SHORTHAIR
- SPANGLED

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Solve the code to discover words related to cats.  
 Each number corresponds to a letter.  
 (Hint: 5 = C)

**A. 23 10 9 18 24 10**  
 Clue: *Relating to cats*

**B. 5 9 6 20 25**  
 Clue: *Curved, pointy nails*

**C. 21 2 8 8**  
 Clue: *Low, vibrating sound*

**D. 25 5 8 6 26 5 13**  
 Clue: *Mark the surface*



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**Pedro Menendez drafting and masonry students excel**

Thirteen drafting and masonry students from Pedro Menendez High School participated in the Skill-USA state competition in mid-March. Four students placed in the top three and all finished in the top 10 in the state. Pedro Menendez took the top four spots in the Architectural Drafting competition and second place in Technical Drafting, while Masonry competitors finished fourth, fifth, and sixth in the state. Pictured are masonry students Matt Dickerson (fifth place), Luke Johnson (sixth place), Owen Wine (fourth place) and Architectural Drafting student Amanda Goodwin, who placed second.



Photo courtesy Chris Cofield

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## Julington Creek girls train and run a 5k



Photo courtesy Heidi Karl

The Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida group that meets at Julington Creek Elementary held their 5k run on May 4. This is a program for girls in third through fifth grade. It encourages girls of all abilities to recognize their individual strength and celebrate connections with others by blending physical activity and skill development. Julington Creek participants were coached by Lisa Henson and Teresa Taylor and trained twice a week for eight weeks as they worked toward their goal of completing a 5k run. Visit [www.gotrnefl.org](http://www.gotrnefl.org) if you would like to learn more about this program.

## Scouts team up with Friends of Alpine Park for service project



Photos courtesy Robert Presley

By Robert Presley  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Boy Scout Troop 225 is a boy-led troop; the scouts learn to run their own meetings, plan their own events, and manage their own projects, while adults provide coaching and training to allow the boys to learn through active engagement and leadership within the troop and service within the community.

Recently scouts in Troop 225, in conjunction with the Friends of Alpine Park, demonstrated commitment to service through a community conservation project at Alpine Groves Park. Eleven scouts, along with a number of parents, met at the park on April 24 and worked to clean up and beautify the grounds around the historic farmhouse. There were service opportunities for scouts of all ages. Scouts mulched the Ruth Harris Bennett Butterfly Garden, younger scouts helped pick up debris and moss, and older scouts trimmed up

dead branches and cleaned up around the farmhouse in preparation for the Bartram Bash event which was held on May 15.

Founded in 2012, the Friends of Alpine Park, a not for profit 501c3 organization, consists of dedicated park-goers with the mission to “preserve and enhance the natural beauty and history of Alpine Groves Park.” The group meets every even-numbered month, on the first Saturday of the month, at 9 a.m. at the farmhouse. New members are welcome.

Troop 225 meets every Monday at 7 p.m. at Geneva Presbyterian Church located at 1755 State Road 13 North in Fruit Cove. The troop dates back to the early 1980s, making it one of the oldest troops in northern St. Johns County. Since its inception, Troop 225 has provided the opportunities and support for more than 100 young men to earn the rank of Eagle Scout.

## Timberlin Creek students improve classrooms' indoor air quality

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Timberlin Creek Elementary third grader Henry Distelhorst has always had a passion for creating healthy environments. Upon starting school this year, he wanted to help improve indoor air quality in classrooms because he heard about the increase in cleaning chemicals being used. Through his research he found that indoor air quality is three to five times worse than outdoor air.

“Cleaning chemicals pollute the air because the products release dangerous compounds continuously, even after the cleaning chemicals are applied to the surface. These dangerous compounds are called VOCs,” Distelhorst said.

With the increase in chemical cleaners being used in the schools this year, Distelhorst recruited two peers, June Florencio and Nate Gunn, from Timberlin Creek Elementary to create an initiative to improve air quality in each classroom and create healthier learning environments. Upon learning of the negative effects poor air quality had on learning and health, the students presented a solution to the school's principal.

“Negative effects from VOC exposure includes decreased student performance, increase in absenteeism, and health issues, such as headaches, worsening asthma and allergy symptoms, and decreasing the function of the immune system,” said Distelhorst.

The students' initiative involved placing two detoxifying, non-allergic plants (spi-



Photo courtesy Laura Distelhorst

Henry Distelhorst, Nate Gunn, and June Florencio with their detoxifying plants.

der and snake plants) in each classroom to remove harmful toxins.

“Plants naturally clean the air by removing VOCs from indoor air,” Distelhorst said. “Plants absorb these harmful particles when they take in CO2. They also reduce the number of airborne microbes.”

The students selected these plants because they are hardy and easy to care for. To carry out this initiative, students fundraised all the money to purchase detoxifying plants for each classroom from Ace Hardware of World Golf Village. To raise money the students walked dogs, mowed grass, sold plants and seeds they harvested, and were supported by members of the community, many of whom sponsored a plant. Once they raised the money, they potted and delivered all the plants. Before placing the plants in the classrooms, they educated the staff and all the students about their project. Now each kindergarten through fifth grade classroom at Timberlin Creek Elementary School has two detoxifying plants and are on their way to healthier classroom air.

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# Fishing

## Capt. David's Fishing Report

By Captain David Lifka  
mail@floridanewslines.com



Photo courtesy Andrew White

Gavin White of Switzerland caught this largemouth bass with his father, Andy, on a recent fishing trip in Durbin Creek. He caught it casting a top water frog.

School is out and summer is here and the kids need to get out of the house, at least for a little while. We've got nearby parks, ball fields, skateboard parks, neighborhood pools and neighbors with pools, and most of all water. Creeks, ponds, lakes, springs, the St. Johns River, and the Atlantic Ocean are all within walking, biking, or a fairly quick drive, and all these bodies contain fish. With all this easy access to water, fishing is a sport, an activity, or even an event that the whole family can enjoy, especially the kids. Wherever there's water, there's probably fish.

Getting the kids out of the house and beginning fishing can be as simple as visiting a neighborhood pond. A fishing pole, line, and hook and a piece of bread or worms is all that is needed. Bream, bass, and catfish are the usual catches, and great fun for the kids to catch. Not too much more is needed after that to fish a nearby creek, the river, or the beach. No boat required.

Fishing is an activity for the kids and

family that offers much more than just "wetting a line." It has been a great source of escape, relaxation, sport, and adventure for many. It is an outdoors experience of nature and its wonders. Fishing provides the chance to learn more about weather, tides, birds, animals, and the fish that inhabit our waters. Getting the kids out of the house and into fishing this summer could become a pastime for many more summers to come. It's definitely worth a try.

Just a reminder that new flounder regulations are in effect that have increased the minimum size from 12 inches to 14 inches with the daily bag limit being

reduced from 10 fish to five fish. Also, a new Federal Boating Safety law requires that the "kill switch" be attached to the operator of a vessel 26-feet or fewer when on a plane. Finally, on June 1, shrimping in Duval, St. Johns, and Clay counties will reopen.

Fishing Report: Reds on docks in Orange Park areas of the river, striped bass in Doctor's Lake on docks and U.S. 17 bridge. Plenty of whiting at the beach; many still good sized. Largemouths in area creeks.

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

## Bears, Birdies, & Bogeys at BTHS



Photo courtesy Kristy Mattice

Students in the Entrepreneurship Strand of the VyStar Academy of Business at Bartram Trail High School.

By Kristy Mattice  
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Entrepreneurship Strand of the VyStar Academy of Business was challenged by the question: What kind of business can you create on campus, from idea through execution, in this year of uncertainty? All five classes came together to design, build, and run a nine-hole miniature golf course on the Bartram Trail High School campus for the month of May.

The classes began the project at the start of April by participating in the naming of the business, selection of the charity, golf hole design, and overall goals of the business. The students' then selected the aspect of the business they were interested in working in. For each of the four weeks of planning, each department of the business had a deliverable, just as they would in real life.

Some of the departments the students had to pick from were course management, design and layout, construction management, marketing, sales, IT, the customer experience, merchandising, finance and sponsorships, prizes, and pricing.

Bears, Birdies, & Bogeys had its grand opening on Monday, May 3. The students decided on two levels of play, one for fun, and the other for competition. Each week the competition changes, with the potential for first, second and third place prizes. There is even a faculty bracket. In addition, the course offers Croc jibbitz, BTHS bracelets, vinyl stickers, magnets, and concessions.

Bears, Birdies, & Bogeys is on its way to a profit goal of \$2000, with all the proceeds going to St. Jude's Children's Hospital. The students will finish the school year with a win in the classroom and on the green!

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# Travel

## Death Valley days

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewslines.com

From my younger days, I recall the television show “Death Valley Days” and its sponsor, 20-Mule Team Borax. The popular series ran from 1952 – 1970, becoming television’s longest-running western. Perhaps somewhere in my subconscious mind, those memories nudged me to go visit the place.

Death Valley National Park, in southeastern California, claims the highest recorded temperature on Earth (134 degrees). It receives just two inches of rain per year and is the largest national park in the lower 48. I found it rugged and fascinating, but some areas felt eerie,



Dante's Peak.

lonely, and frightfully abandoned.

I flew to Las Vegas, rented a car, and drove about two hours to Furnace Creek,



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Sunset at Zabriskie Point.

the park hub with a visitor center and park ranger station. Once you pass Pahrump, Nevada (yes, that is an actual city), the rock formations start appearing among the desolate wilderness.

Hotel choices are limited to the Inn at Death Valley, once the exclusive escape for Hollywood elites, or the 224-room Ranch. The Ranch provides a resort atmosphere with green lawns, a spring-fed swimming pool, playground area, tennis, golf course, riding stables, and bike rentals. Expect high prices in the middle of nowhere, but not as dear as the Inn, where room rates start around \$500 per night.

No surprise, Zabriskie Point, near Furnace Creek, attracts visitors for sunrise and sunset. Variegated mounds called Badlands overlap one another while others display deep erosion patterns. They all unite, forming a mysterious grand vista with snow-capped peaks in the distance. Tip: the wind blows forcefully as you near the overlook.

I drove on to Badwater Basin, the lowest point in the states, 282 feet below sea level. Salt crystals form on this 200-square mile stretch of land that was once covered in water. The polygon patterns beguile and change with weather conditions.

I walked out, nearly a mile, to where the white crystals cover the salt floor entirely. This 360-degree view mesmerized me, like spiderwebs stretching to infinity. Make the long walk, but be careful of the uneven surface.

Driving back, I passed the entrance for the nine-mile Artist’s Palette loop in the Black Mountains on the eastern side of Death Valley. The colorful, majestic

peaks look like a painter dabbed a brush across the surface. Another afternoon, I returned to see sunshine dance upon the vivid terrain.

To photograph a sunset, I made a long, switch-back drive to Dante’s Peak, the highest point in the park. Visitors peer a mile down to the fringes of mystical-looking Badwater Basin. The humbling mountains surround the summit and become a dramatic backdrop at twilight. I was hoping for a glorious sunset, but Mother Nature didn’t cooperate; however, I felt her ominous power of darkness on the 45-minute drive back.

Another early morning, I ventured 20 miles to the Mesquite Sand Dunes. Here, a wave-like stretch of sand formations ripples against more surreal mountain ranges. Walking proves difficult in the soft dunes, but the place begs for exploration. Look for windblown striations, strange freeform patterns, and small mesquite trees.

The Harmony Borax ruins, an outdoor museum, brought an explanation to the 20-mule team advertisements. The mineral was mined here from 1883 to 1889, but hauling it became too costly and the work conditions unbearable.

I planned to see Ubehebe Crater, another highlight, but it rests 60 miles from Furnace Creek. Be mindful of your gas tank; the only park fuel station sells petrol at excessively inflated prices. I loved the otherworldly landscapes in Death Valley, but not all the driving. Visitors need to spend a minimum of two days to appreciate the curious wonders of this sunny desert.

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