

Mandarin NewsLine

March 2022 Volume 16 Issue 5

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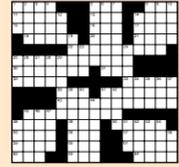
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Photo courtesy Rachael Sircar
Isabella Spence with her mother Silvana Spence and their new book.

Bartram Springs student and mom write children's book

By Rachael Sircar
mail@floridanewsline.com

What resides inside a little girl's dream of her future? A princess? An author? A scientist? An astronaut? A computer programmer?

When Isabella Spence dreams of her future, the options are multiple, and one of those dreams has become reality. At only nine years old, Isabella is an author.

When she was younger, Isabella used to ask her mom the hundreds of

Bartram cont. on pg. 2

St. Johns Riverkeeper wants you to "Get Your Feet Wet!"

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

The St. Johns River is a 310-mile national treasure that runs right through our area — and the St. Johns Riverkeeper is continuing their advocacy of it by implementing a new initiative this spring entitled "Get Your Feet Wet!"

"Our mission is to defend and restore the St. Johns River plus its tributaries and springs on behalf of all who enjoy it," said St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman. "We give the river a voice via advocacy, research and education."

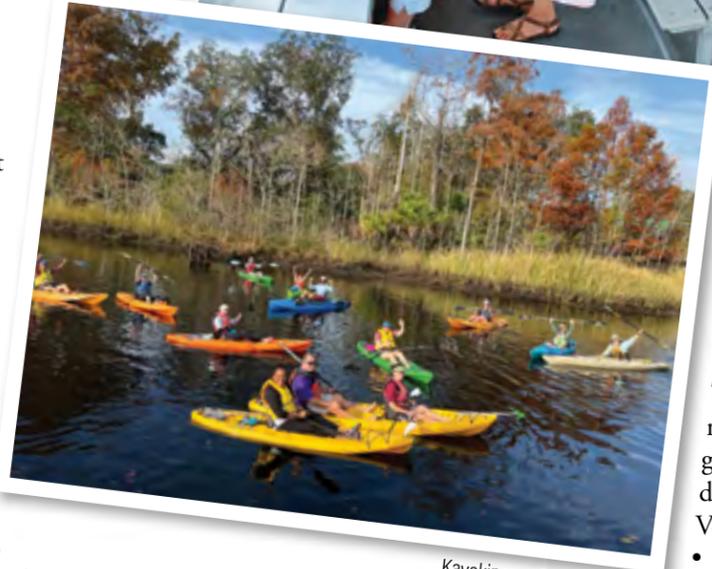
Rinaman said she feels it's important to get everyone out on the river because people will want to protect what they love — which will in turn solidify the commitment to the river's health and inspire people to be more river-friendly in everyday life.

To that end, the "Get Your Feet Wet" initiative includes partnering with other nonprofits, agencies, and businesses to offer a variety of unique outdoor experiences and opportunities to experience and learn about the St. Johns River. Offerings include eco-tours, hikes, paddling trips, and expert speakers throughout the watershed, from the headwaters at Blue Cypress Lake in central/south Florida to the St. Johns River estuary in the Jacksonville area. Highlights include:

- Paddles: Explore the river and enjoy its beauty up close from a kayak on a guided tour. These trips will be offered as far south as the headwaters of Blue Cypress Lake up to the backwaters of the Timucuan Preserve near the river's mouth.
- Guided hikes: Stretch your legs, discover new flora and fauna, learn about the history of the watershed, and enjoy beautiful scenery on a guided hike.
- The first annual Source to Sea Celebration in Palatka on Saturday,



Photos courtesy St. Johns Riverkeeper
River Taxi Eco Tour.



Kayaking on Pottsborg Creek.

St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman as the guest speaker.

- Tiny Dock Concert Series: Enjoy outstanding music while on board your boat, kayak, or paddle board, or the St. Johns River Taxi. This year's concerts feature local renowned artists from a variety of genres, including Jacksonville resident and finalist from NBC's "The Voice," Paris Winningham.
- Cleanups: Take in beautiful backdrops of the river's tributaries alongside like-minded neighbors while making the St. Johns River cleaner for all.

Events will be hosted throughout the watershed and are family friendly. The St. Johns Riverkeeper invites you to make a day trip to another part of the watershed or see something new in your own backyard. Attendees are encouraged to bring a friend — and make some new ones along the way.

"The goal of this initiative is to connect us," Rinaman said. "The river itself connects all of our counties and it's important for us to protect it for future generations."

Visit www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/events for more information about Get Your Feet Wet 2022.

March 12 will celebrate those who have paddled all 310 miles of the St. Johns River. The celebration includes several opportunities to explore the river, including a morning hike and paddle and an early afternoon boat trip on the Pride of Palatka II. The day will close with an awards ceremony and celebration at Azalea City Brewing Company.

- Speakers Series: On the fourth Thursday of each month, come aboard the St. Johns River Taxi to learn from experts about the history, ecology, and issues related to the St. Johns River and its tributaries. Voyages will launch from various locations in the Jacksonville area. On March 24 at 4:30 p.m., the boat will launch from the Jackson Street Dock in Brooklyn and will feature

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Bartram cont. from pg. 1

questions children are apt to ask. One of them was “What kind of scientists are out there?” As a first-grade teacher at Bartram Springs Elementary, Silvana Spence knew exactly where to turn, filling her daughter’s dreams with a delicious helping of reality. New worlds were opened through reading, research, and the exciting activities they would do at home. A big fan of STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, and Math), Spence encourages her daughters to ask all the hard questions and investigate that they may grow in knowledge.

“We would do science experiments during the summer amongst other activities,” Spence says. “Slime. Rocket vinegar. Elephant toothpaste. Snow. We

made videos too. Keeping them [Isabella and her sister, Victoria] engaged and excited.”

Every time Isabella would ask a question, Spence pictured it as a children’s story — a book explaining different kinds of scientists. She recalled the time when Isabella was four years old and the family took a trip to Kennedy Space Center. Concerned that they were on the planet Jupiter, Isabella called out, “I want to go back to Earth!” This was the spark Spence needed to begin thinking about publishing something that would encourage young girls to discover their dreams.

It took a while to bring the book to life. Since 2018, Isabella has been asking her mother, “Aren’t you going to finish the book?” As Spence was developing the plot, Isabella worked closely, drawing pictures and providing input and ideas for the storyline.

They found an illustrator, Darwin Marfil from the Philippines, and worked with him to create images that represented Isabella’s and Victoria’s personalities and expressions.

“It’s important that it looks like me,”

Isabella said, so Marfil made sure that each turn of the nose, every quirk of the eyebrow, was absolutely perfect.

In the back of the book are activities, including the Rocket Vinegar experiment that Isabella and her family did during the summer. There are also places to write facts about the solar system and the scientific method.

“We are planning a second book,” Isabella’s mother says. “It will be about coding.”

They would like to have many different books out there, showing that girls can dream about being many things, including scientists.

How does it feel to be a real author?

While Isabella still finds it surreal, her mom captures the notion well. “There is an imposter syndrome that hits you. Then you think to yourself, ‘I am not an imposter. I am an author.’”

“Bella the Scientist Goes to Outer Space” by Silvana and Isabella Spence, illustrated by Darwin Marfil, is now available in paperback through Amazon. You can follow them on instagram @bellathescientist and YouTube @bellabear



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450 State Road 13 North
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St. Johns, FL 32259
(904) 886-4919
www.FloridaNewsLine.com

Publisher

Mark Pettus
Publisher@FloridaNewsLine.com

Editor

Martie Thompson
Editor@FloridaNewsLine.com

Bookkeeper

Emily Whitehead
Accounting@FloridaNewsLine.com

Social Media

SocialMedia@FloridaNewsLine.com

Advertising Sales

Rebecca Thomson
Rebecca@FloridaNewsLine.com
(724) 968-7602 cell

Linda Gay

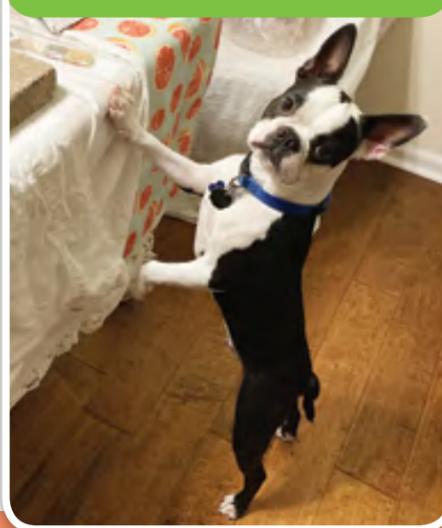
Linda@FloridaNewsLine.com
(904) 607-5062 cell

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Cosmo!



Breed:
Boston Terrier

Favorite Activity:
Running and playing
with his best friend, Beaver

Favorite Treat:
Ice cream

Favorite friend:
Beaver, a French poodle

How our BFF got his name:
From the character on Seinfeld, Cosmo
Kramer

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



Happy St. Patrick's Day!

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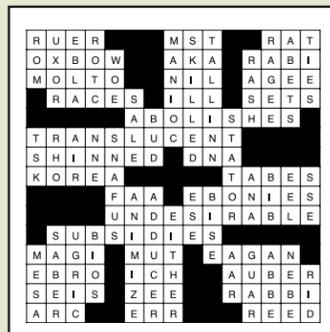


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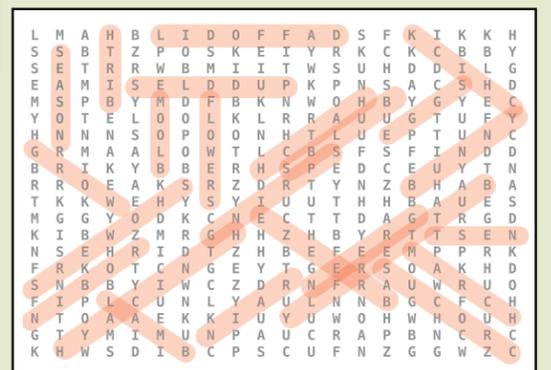
Last month's Mystery Photo was Hurricane's Grill and Bar on Julington Creek. Our winner was Tina Laun. Congratulations!



Answers to our Puzzles
PG 10



Answers: A. spring B. mild C. flower D. blooming



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March

What's Going On in Mandarin? A modified calendar of events

Community Calendar

Shuffleboard is played on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. at Mandarin Park. The courts are at the park entrance next to the tennis courts. Try to get there a few minutes early for court assignments. Beginners are welcome. Just show up (a few minutes before playing time), unless it rains.

Acoustic Jam Session is held on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in the Annex Building of Faith Baptist Church of Mandarin, located at 2955 Orange Picker Road. This jam is open to everyone and all levels of ability are welcome. Come to play with the group or just sit back and enjoy the music. For more information, contact Burt Coulliette at (904) 302-0423.

Playing HOOKie, a group for those who enjoy knitting, crocheting and looming (with all items donated to charity) meets every Wednesday from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the outside eating area at Belgian Sweet House Bistro, 12276 San Jose Blvd. (next to Harbor Chase). Visit the group's Facebook page (Playing HOOKie) or email playinghookie31@gmail.com for more information.

Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, March 1 at 6:30 p.m. in Mandarin Presbyterian Church's Fellowship Hall at 11844 Mandarin Road. Annette Paulson will be presenting EQ8, Electric Quilt's software for designing blocks and quilts. Mask-wearing requested. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

Lifetree Café will meet at the Mandarin Senior Center, 3848 Hartley Road, on Tuesday, March 1 and Tuesday, March 15 at 1 p.m. Lifetree Café events allow attendees to share thoughts and experiences on a wide variety of life and faith subjects. March topics are "How to live before you die" on March 1 and "The struggle to forgive" on March 15. Visit www.LTCJax.com for more

information including a video trailer about each topic.

The Jacksonville Camera Club will meet on March 3 and March 17. On March 3, Alex Diaz, UNF professor of photography, will be the guest speaker. On Nov. 17, the results for images entered in the first print contest of 2022 will be presented. Visit jax.jaxcameraclub.com for more information and meeting location updates.

Mandarin Garden Club will hold its annual \$1 Clothing and Jewelry Sale on Friday, March 4 and Saturday, March 5 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. each day. Gently used clothes, shoes and accessories for the family will be sold for \$1 each. Some boutique and jewelry items will be priced slightly higher.

Cash only is accepted and all CDC guidelines will be followed. The event features free parking and admission. The Masons' "Famous" Barbeque lunch will be for sale both days. The Mandarin Garden Club is located at 2892 Loretto Road. Visit mandaringardenclub.org for more information.

The historic buildings of the Mandarin Museum, including the 1875 Webb/Jones farmhouse, 1876 Barn, 1898 St. Joseph's Mission Schoolhouse for African-American Children, and Losco Winery log cabin will be open from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on March 5 and March 19 in Walter Jones Historical Park, 11964 Mandarin Road. The Mandarin Museum, also in the park, is closed for construction and renovation, but Gift Shop items (books, Mandarin Frogs, art prints) will be available on the front porch when the park buildings are open. The 1911 Mandarin Store and Post Office will also be open on March 19 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at 12471 Mandarin Road, just a mile west of the Walter Jones Historical Park. This building is on the Nation-

al Register of Historic Places. Visit www.mandarinmuseum.net for more information.

Northeast Florida AHEC announces free **Quit Smoking Now Classes**, which include free nicotine patches, gum or lozenges, to be held on Saturdays, March 5 – March 26 from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Williams YMCA, 10415 San Jose Blvd. Call (904) 482-0189 for more information or to sign up.

The Under the Oaks community music jam, hosted by the Mandarin Museum & Historical Society and North Florida Folk Network will resume underneath the beautiful trees in front of Mandarin Museum on Sunday, March 6 from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. If you play an acoustic instrument, feel free to join the song circle. If not, just bring a chair and relax and listen.

The Southern Genealogist's Exchange Society will hold a meeting on Saturday, March 12 at the South Mandarin Branch of the Jacksonville Public Library, located at 12125 San Jose Blvd. beginning at 10:15 a.m. The speaker will be Dr. Leslee Keys, presenting a program on the Plains Indians who were brought to Fort Marion in St. Augustine. The Southern Genealogist's Exchange Society is offering a one-year trial membership; applicants must be a resident of Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, or St. Johns counties and apply before July 30, 2022. Visit www.sgesjax.org for more information and to apply.

Jacksonville Orchid Society presents its annual show and sale, "Orchid Fantasy" on Saturday and Sunday, March 19 and 20 at the Mandarin Garden Club, 2892 Loretto Road. Hours are 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Sunday. The event will include displays of blooming orchids created by amateur and professional growers. Attendees can find out how easy

it is to grow orchids, start an orchid collection, and pick up your needed supplies. The Jacksonville Orchid Society is a non profit organization; attendance donations are welcome. Visit www.jaxorchidsociety.org for more information.

The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 10 a.m. on Monday, March 21 at the First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. The program is "Quilting with Wool" by Lynn Painter. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome but masks are required. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

The Mandarin Women's Club will host its monthly luncheon on March 24 at the Ramada Inn Mandarin. Melissa Nelson, State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit, will be the guest speaker. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. and the fashion show will begin at 11 a.m., followed by lunch. The luncheon cost is \$18 and must be received by Thursday, March 17. To make reservations and obtain payment instructions, call Susie at (904) 262-8981 or email her at spm104@aol.com. Visit www.mandarinwomensclub.com for more information on events, photos, and membership forms.

The Italian American Club of Jacksonville will hold its popular Spaghetti to Go on Friday, March 25 from 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. at the club building, 2838 Westberry Road. Visit www.iacofjacksonville.com or call (904) 586-2700 for more information.

The Jacksonville Gem and Mineral Society will host its 34th annual Gem and Mineral Show and Sale on March 25, 26, and 27 (10 a.m. – 5 p.m.) at the Jacksonville Fair Grounds. The cost is \$5 per day or \$8 for all three days. Visit www.facebook.com/JacksonvilleGemandMineral/ for more information.



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with Duval County School Board Member
Lori Hershey, District 7

Q: What can you tell us about the recently formed audit advisory committee?

A: The school board has created an audit advisory committee and each board member will select one person to serve on the committee. The first meeting of the committee is expected to be in May. If anyone in District 7 with finance/auditing experience is interested in serving on the committee, please reach out to me.

Q: Have you been able to visit schools this past month?

A: In January and February, I attended a few mid-year stakeholder reports of various schools' SAC committees. I visited one high school, one middle school and one elementary school and I was excited about the progression of student achievement in District 7. Plans are in place and being worked to get students on track and close achievement gaps. I look forward to positive outcomes at the end of the school year.

Q: What are the district's plans for its ESSER funds?

A: ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds are subgrants by the federal government to address the impacts COVID-19 has had on K-12 students, educators, and families. The superintendent has decided to make a large investment in the arts throughout the district using these one-time funds. In District 7, updates and renovations to things like school auditoriums and sound systems will take place, specific to each school, over the next six months to a year.

Q: Is there any other work being done in District 7?

A: One big project is that Crown Point Elementary School will be getting a new roof over the summer break.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

A: They can email me at HersheyL@duvalschools.org or call me at (904) 390-2375.



Photos courtesy Mary Eyley
Kim Hickox's kindergarten class celebrating the 100th Day of School.

Crown Point Panthers celebrate Literacy Week

By Mary Eyley
mail@floridanewline.com

Throughout the week of Jan. 24, Crown Point Elementary School students celebrated Literacy Week. Teachers planned various activities based on this year's theme, "Launch into literacy, blast off into new worlds."

Monday was also the 100th day of school and Crown Point Panthers participated in several activities to celebrate 100 days of learning. They stacked 100 cups, decorated 100th day hats, used 100 Cheerios and Froot Loops to craft necklaces, and much more.

Crown Point Panthers kicked off the week by decorating bookmarks. Tuesday's theme was "Reading is Cool!" Students wore their favorite pair of sunglasses. On Wednesday, "Read my Shirt" day, students showed off the words on their shirts. Thursday was "Drop Everything and Read" day. The Panthers had an exciting time reading different books and stories throughout the day. Friday was "Read with a Buddy" day. Students brought a stuffed animal from home to enjoy reading their favorite book with. Literacy Week was a blast!



Amanda Hildenbrand's first grade class celebrating Drop Everything and Read Day.

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Saturday, March 5th, 9am - 1pm

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with Jacksonville City Council Member Michael Boylan, District 6

Q: Are there plans to expand the dock at the Mandarin Park boat launch to help with overcrowding?

A: According to Brian Burket with the city's Department of Parks and Recreation, the city received a grant to extend the existing boater access dock at Mandarin Park by an additional 80 linear feet, which would double the stacking capacity on the dock and improve efficiency of launching and loading boats at this ramp during busy times. A construction contract has been issued and the dock is currently being manufactured and expected to be installed within the next month or so. Part

of this project is to construct a separate floating dock for launching kayaks, which has already been installed on the opposite side of the pier (east side) to provide safe separation between motorized and non-motorized vessels. This should also help alleviate some congestion and conflict at the boat ramp.

Q: What can you tell us about the land clearing taking place off of Claire Lane west of San Jose Boulevard?

A: Readers may recall that this area was at one point proposed for apartments, which didn't take place. The property is zoned RPI and what's going in there now are five buildings with a total of 24 units of office condos. The property is already properly zoned for this. There is a significant buffer between the project and Clairboro Road behind it.

Q: Do you have an update on your attempts to help alleviate traffic backup on San Jose Boulevard south leading to the Buckman Bridge?

A: I have heard back from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) that they will pull out one curb in front of the Target/Publix entrance and one curb at Hartley to create an additional access lane to the Buckman. I've been pushing for this for some time and FDOT has now agreed

to address it. The exact timeline is still to be determined, but this should help with through traffic going south.

Q: Do you have any background on Mayor Curry's recent announcement that curbside recycling will resume on April 4?

A: This is good news for residents. Basically what happened is that two companies that provide for the city's waste and recycling pickup are going into the contract review process. They are hopeful that this can help them attract and retain employees, especially those with commercial driver's licenses.

Q: Do you have anything else to share with District 6?

A: It's still in early stages, but I'm recommending that the city eliminate the Enterprise Fee (solid waste fee paid by residents) and roll it back into ad valorem tax where it belongs. We are exploring to see if this can be done without an increase to ad valorem. Solid waste pickup is a basic service that we provide to the community and it shouldn't be an additional fee.

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.



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Super Bowl volunteers reunite

By Sharon Weed
mail@floridanewsline.com

The Mandarin Ladies, NFL Super Bowl volunteers for the Super Bowl that Jacksonville hosted back on Feb. 6, 2005, were again at The Ale House on the Friday before this year's Super Bowl for another reunion. They had dug out their red uniform shirts from the back of the closet (saved for 17 years), found the ID badges and other bling to hang around their necks, and again found the back booth in the bar, after a seven-year break. The Mandarin Ladies drank a toast to Ellie, who they had lost during this time apart.

These ladies had so much fun and laughed so hard at so many things as volunteers

that on Super Bowl weekend the following year they decided to get together for lunch to reminisce. These reunions continued for 10 years. But then in this busy world, everyone went their own way,



Photo courtesy Sharon Weed
Diane Frisco, Kathryn Bullock, Beverly Smith, Ginny Brunzel, Sharon Weed, Marny Wills and Captain Terry Meier at Mandarin Ale House.

did their own thing and most didn't see each other very often; after seven more years, the urge to get together and laugh and maybe shed a tear or two was strong, so they restarted the tradition.

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Photo courtesy Mandarin Community Club
The Mandarin Art Festival grounds.

Mandarin Art Festival returns this Easter weekend

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Following a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mandarin Art Festival will return on Easter weekend, continuing a more than half-century-long tradition. Bringing together more than 100 local and national artist exhibitors, the festival also features food vendors, children's activities, live musical entertainment, a Children's Art Show, a Green Market featuring locally-produced consumables, and more. Established in 1968, the Mandarin Art Festival is the longest running event of its kind in Northeast Florida.

This year's festival will be held on Sat-

urday, April 16, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sunday, April 17, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Mandarin Community Club, 12447 Mandarin Road. Free offsite parking and shuttles are available.

Presented by the Mandarin Community Club, a local non-profit organization, the Mandarin Art Festival is a vital funding source for the club's preservation, education and beautification work in the Mandarin community, including the maintenance of the three historic properties under its ownership and care.

Visit www.mandarinartfestival.org and www.mandarincommunityclub.org for more information.

Hospital receives national 2021 Press Ganey Guardian of Excellence Award®

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Baptist Medical Center South has been named a 2021 Guardian of Excellence Award® winner by Press Ganey, the national leader in healthcare consumer and workforce engagement.

Press Ganey recognizes top-performing healthcare organizations achieving the 95th percentile or above for performance in patient experience, which is measured by consumer ratings and how likely they are to recommend the medical center to others.

“Being named a national leader in patient experience is a great honor and something we strive to achieve every day,” said Kyle Dorsey, FACHE, hospital president of Baptist South. “The fact that this award is based on feedback from our patients makes it especially noteworthy.”

The Press Ganey Guardian of Excellence Award® is a preeminent, competitive achievement for leading healthcare organizations. Presented annually, the award applauds hospitals and health systems that consistently sustained performance



Photo courtesy Baptist Medical Center South
Kyle Dorsey, FACHE, hospital president of Baptist South.

in the top 5 percent of all Press Ganey clients.

“Press Ganey is honored to recognize Baptist South as one of the nation's leaders in patient experience,” said Patrick T. Ryan, chairman and chief executive officer, Press Ganey. “This award reflects an unwavering commitment to earning the trust and loyalty of patients throughout unimaginable challenges. We are humbled by Baptist Health's incredible efforts, and their ability to adapt to imperatives of COVID-19 on top of the increasing demand for consumerism in healthcare.”



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Briefs

Survey to identify needs of older adults and caregivers

ElderSource, the Area Agency on Aging and Aging and Disability Resource Center for Northeast Florida is seeking input from the community to better understand the needs of older adults, persons with disabilities and their caregivers. Working with the Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida, the data will be used to identify what is important to older adults living in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns and Volusia counties in order to live and age well in their communities.

According to America's Health Ranking, 20.3 percent of Florida's population was over the age of 65 in 2020, ranking it in the top three in the United States. In a 2021 profile of older Floridians, 26 percent of the population is over the age of 60.

As an Area Agency on Aging and Aging and Disability Resource Center, ElderSource is required to submit an Area Plan to the Florida Department of Elder Affairs every three years that outlines and targets the needs and services to help people live and age with dignity in their homes and communities.

The 10-minute survey is open to every adult over the age of 55 and their caregivers living in the seven-county region. It can be accessed online by visiting the ElderSource website at www.MyElderSource.org. The deadline to participate is March 31, 2022. For more information about the sur-

vey and how to participate, call (904) 391-6692.

Registration open for tournament supporting suicide prevention & Teen Mental Health

The Patrick Heinold Foundation will host its fifth annual 3v3 basketball tournament at the Sports Edge Athletics, home of JJVA Gym (8457 Western Way, Jacksonville) on March 27, 2022. Competitors, ranging from fifth grade to adults, will participate in a fundraiser to promote suicide prevention through programs dedicated to the well-being and mental health of teens.

The Patrick Heinold Foundation's mission is to promote suicide prevention through programs dedicated to the well-being and mental health of the nation's teens. In Florida, suicide is the third leading cause of death for the 10 to 24 age group (AFSP Florida Fact Sheet, 2021). The best way to prevent suicide is through early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions.

Patrick Heinold, known to his teammates as "Pat," played on The Bolles School boys' varsity basketball team. Proceeds from this annual tournament and sponsorships from Fortegra, Jacksonville Orthopaedic Institute (JOI), Southern Association of Basketball Officials and Sports Edge Athletics home of JJVA, among others, have enabled the Patrick Heinold Foundation to present mental health speakers to Jacksonville-area teens, fund programs for educators to help identify teen

mental health needs, and build partner programs with the North Florida chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), Here Tomorrow and Young Life.

The team entry fee is \$80; visit www.patrickheinoldfoundation.org to register.

Mandarin Women's Club once again welcomes State Attorney Melissa Nelson

The Mandarin Women's Club will host Melissa Nelson, State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit as the guest speaker on March 24 at the Ramada Inn in Mandarin. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. and reservations for the luncheon are required.

Nelson took office on Jan. 3, 2017 where she leads more than 300 attorneys, staff, and investigators in their pursuit of justice. Her department is responsible for the prosecution of all crimes committed in Duval, Clay and Nassau counties. Nelson earned both her undergraduate and law degrees with honors from the University of Florida. She and her husband, Jason, live in Jacksonville where they raise their three children. After Nelson's presentation, there will be a Q&A session.

The luncheon cost is \$18 and must be received by Thursday, March 17. To make reservations and obtain payment instructions, call Susie at (904) 262-8981 or email spm104@aol.com. Visit www.mandarinwomensclub.com for more information about events,

photos, and membership forms.

Mandarin Toastmasters members meet; prepare for speech contest

Mandarin Toastmasters recently had a club contest where members competed for best speech. This contest was a warm-up in preparation for the winners to take their momentum to the next level, the District contest, and, if they excel there, to the International contest.

The club encourages all members, whether a club officer, or a regular attendee to continue their involvement — the professional and personal benefits are great.

One of the unique aspects of Mandarin Toastmasters is the high commitment from its members. This comes from the outstanding leadership and due diligence of each club officer in fulfilling their roles. The camaraderie is great between the young adults and the remaining members who are well into their career and/or retired and continue to stay involved.

Mandarin Toastmasters meets the first and third Saturday of each month from 10:15 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the South Mandarin Regional Library, 12125 San Jose Blvd. Visitors are encouraged to attend in person or via Zoom and the club is open to anyone who is interested. Send a message to toastmastersmandarin@gmail.com or visit the club website at <https://838510.toastmastersclubs.org> for more information.



Colorectal Cancer Screening: 45 is the New 50

"We have the tools, we just have to spread the word more and educate the population more, and if we do that, we can truly prevent colon cancer."

Turning 50 used to mean scheduling your first colonoscopy, but in response to cases of colorectal cancer increasing, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) has lowered the recommended age to begin colorectal cancer screening to 45 for average-risk individuals.



Wissam Shaya, M.D.
Family Medicine Physician

"The recommendations changed because at 50 we were already finding polyps and cancerous lesions in patients," explains Millennium Physician Group Family Medicine Physician Wissam Shaya, M.D.

Colorectal cancer is affecting more and more younger adults. In fact, rates for people younger than 50 have increased two percent each year since 1990.

"Lowering the age recommendation means more people will get screened, and more colorectal cancers can be detected earlier," says Dr. Shaya. "And the key to successfully treating colorectal cancer is to detect it earlier, and the key to preventing colon cancer in the first place is to detect and remove polyps before they become cancerous."

Only about two-thirds of American adults are up-to-date with colorectal cancer screening, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Colonoscopies remain the gold standard for screening, and most people should get one at least once every 10 years. Dr. Shaya recommends additional fecal blood tests between colonoscopies.

"In my experience, using those tests periodically, I've caught fast-growing cancer just two years after a patient has had a 'clean' colonoscopy," he says. "If they had waited 10 years for a colonoscopy, the prognosis would have been very different."

Dr. Shaya adds that there's no question that colorectal cancer screening saves lives.

"We have the tools, we just have to spread the word more and educate the population more, and if we do that, we can truly prevent colorectal cancer."

Life

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

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

Amanda Hildenbrand

Amanda Hildenbrand, first grade teacher at Crown Point Elementary, is her school's Teacher of the Year — in addition to being one of five finalists for the Duval County Teacher of the Year. Despite not being selected for the county designation, she calls the honor “amazing.” Hildenbrand was born in New York, but grew up in Brevard County. She earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of Central Florida and her master's degree in reading and elementary education from Grand Canyon University. She began her teaching career back in Brevard County and taught for five years before moving to Jacksonville with her soon-to-be husband, Kyle. She started working at Crown Point as a kindergarten teacher in 2018 and then looped up with her class to first grade, where she has remained. She and her husband have a hound-mix dog, Vinny, and are excitedly expecting their first child in April.

Q: How did you know you wanted to be a teacher?

A: My parents always gave back to the community, which they thought was important. They were part of the Jaycees as I was growing up and felt it was important to make a positive impact where you lived. I have two brothers, one older and one younger, and both



Photo courtesy Leonard's Studios
Amanda Hildenbrand with husband Kyle at the EDDY Awards.

are police officers. I decided at a young age that I could give back and make a positive impact by being a teacher. I think the personal connections you can make with students as well as making learning fun are so important.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: He was from Iowa, but came to my hometown for a wedding. We were actually introduced and set up by the bride. We had a long distance relationship and then he moved to Jacksonville, where he got a job — so we still had a distance relationship, just not quite as long. One year later, I moved to Jacksonville, too.

Q: What is one of your favorite things about teaching first grade?

A: One of my favorite things that this age group likes is when I do room

transformations. I've had a “Star Books Cafe” room (and Starbucks even donated cups and drinks!) and Spy Lab, which contained 100th Day of School activities. It's an honor to make these memories with my students.

Q: How did you find out you were a finalist for the Duval County Teacher of the Year and did you get to know the other finalists at this time?

A: First of all, when I came to school on announcement day, I noticed the celebratory pom poms in the hallway! I started teaching my class and then I walked everyone — Superintendent Greene, my colleagues, Jaxson de Ville and the cheerleaders and then my husband. I was so thankful I could share this with my students. Their smiles were everything to me.

After all the finalists were named, I emailed them all to reach out and introduce myself. We all got together a couple of times and had dinner before the Teacher of the Year banquet. They were such a supportive team and we all learned from each other. We shared throughout the process and calmed each other's nerves. They really made it so special and we plan to continue to stay in touch.

Q: What do you like to do in your spare time?

A: Well, my hobbies will be changing at the end of April [when the baby is due]! But Kyle and I like being outdoors a lot. We enjoy walking and I like to cook, especially chicken piccata. I also like to eat out!

Why do people kiss the Blarney Stone?

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Tourist attractions abound throughout Ireland, the Emerald Isle, and few are as popular as the famed Blarney Stone. When visiting the Blarney Stone, which is located on the grounds of Blarney Castle, visitors are urged to kiss the stone. But why?

The exact origins of the tradition of kissing the Blarney Stone are unknown, but History.com notes the practice dates back several centuries. Legend suggests kissing the stone helps people become more eloquent and persuasive, and indeed numerous accomplished orators, including former British prime minister Winston Churchill, are among the millions of people who have kissed the stone over the centuries.

Kissing the stone is no small feat, though it has become easier to do so in recent years. Prior to 2000, visitors to Blarney Castle who wanted to kiss the stone had to pull off an acrobatic feat without much support, leaning over backwards while lying down on their backs as the upper part of their bodies hung over the parapet's edge; however, guardrails were installed in 2000 to give visitors something to grab onto as they lean over the edge and kiss the stone.

Blarney Stone cont. on pg. 10

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Libraries have plenty of offerings for youth

By Jeremy Yates mail@floridanewsline.com

With Spring Break coming up, you might be looking for some books and family-friendly activities to keep everyone entertained and engaged.

Drop in at the Mandarin Branch Library to pick up free Make and Take Crafts (while supplies last). Between March 1 and 15, get all the pieces your children need to make a Johnny Appleseed Tree at home. March 15 through 31, we'll have St. Patrick's Day Wreaths.

Youth in grades four through 12 are invited to participate in the Jax Student Poetry Contest, which celebrates the city's upcoming bicentennial. Top winners from three age categories will win a cash prize!

Entries are due April 30. Get the prompt and submission guidelines at bit.ly/jax-200poetry.

Teen Advisory Board (TAB) meets in-person at both Mandarin and South Mandarin libraries as well as online Saturday, March 12 and March 26 from 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. It's a great way for teens who share interests to hang out together, volunteer, and make their voices heard.

And when TAB talks, the library listens! Over the last year, at least two new programs have been added as a direct result of these meetings, like Get Lit(erary), a monthly book "subscription service" and "swag bag." Get Lit(erary)'s virtual book club also changed from a Friday at 4 p.m. to one Tuesday a month at 7 p.m. as a

result of teen feedback. TAB is open to teens aged 12 – 17.

On Fridays at the Mandarin Library, stop by for Little Readers storytime (for children up to age five) at 10:15 a.m. or the encore performance at 11 a.m. We'll read stories together and add songs and movements to make it a wonderful time for all!

Little Readers at the South Mandarin Library can join us outside in the park every Thursday at 10 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. for a Pop-Up Storytime.

Junior Scientists at Mandarin Library explores STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) through crafts and activities. Junior Scientists for ages five through eight meet Wednesdays from

4 p.m. – 5 p.m. and Junior Scientists aged nine to 12 meet Thursdays from 4 p.m. – 5 p.m.

What would the world be without art? Help your Junior Artists learn and grow their artistic skills with fun craft activities every Saturday inside the South Mandarin Library. Younger kids (aged five through eight) are encouraged to attend the 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. program and older ones (ages nine through 12) the 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. program.

Registration is required for all programs. Visit jaxpubliclibrary.org or ask library staff for help.

Jeremy Yates is with the Jacksonville Public Library.

Nutrition Check

Ch-ch-ch-chia. Have you tried chia seeds?

By Caroline Jury BS and Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RDN mail@floridanewsline.com

National Chia Day is March 23. Chia is more than a fun plant you put on pottery, watch it grow and sing a catchy jingle. Many ancient civilizations, such as the Mayans and Aztecs, have used chia as a staple as early as 3,500 B.C. Today, you can find chia seeds in various spots in the grocery store such as in the rice/quinoa aisle, health/vitamin aisle, or the baking aisle.

Chia seeds and nutritional value
Though tiny, chia seeds pack a punch, they have high nutritional value that may be beneficial and protective for hypertension, cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Chia seeds are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, which have cardioprotective benefits. In addition, in only two tablespoons, these seeds contain nearly 10 grams of dietary fiber. Lastly, chia seeds are a good source of B

vitamins and several minerals including calcium, iron, potassium, magnesium, and zinc.

How do I eat chia seeds?
Chia seeds have little distinctive flavor, so they are easy to add within or on top of various foods. They can be added to cereals, baked goods, yogurt, salads — or you can make your own chia seed pudding in minutes. First, start with two tablespoons of chia seed, add half a cup of milk (any kind), mix well to prevent any clumps, and wait for a few minutes to help it set. There are limitless opportunities for pudding toppings, such as fresh fruits, nuts, honey, agave and even chocolate chips. It can also be stored in the refrigerator for up to two weeks, so you can make your chia pudding ahead of time and have a delicious snack when you get hungry.



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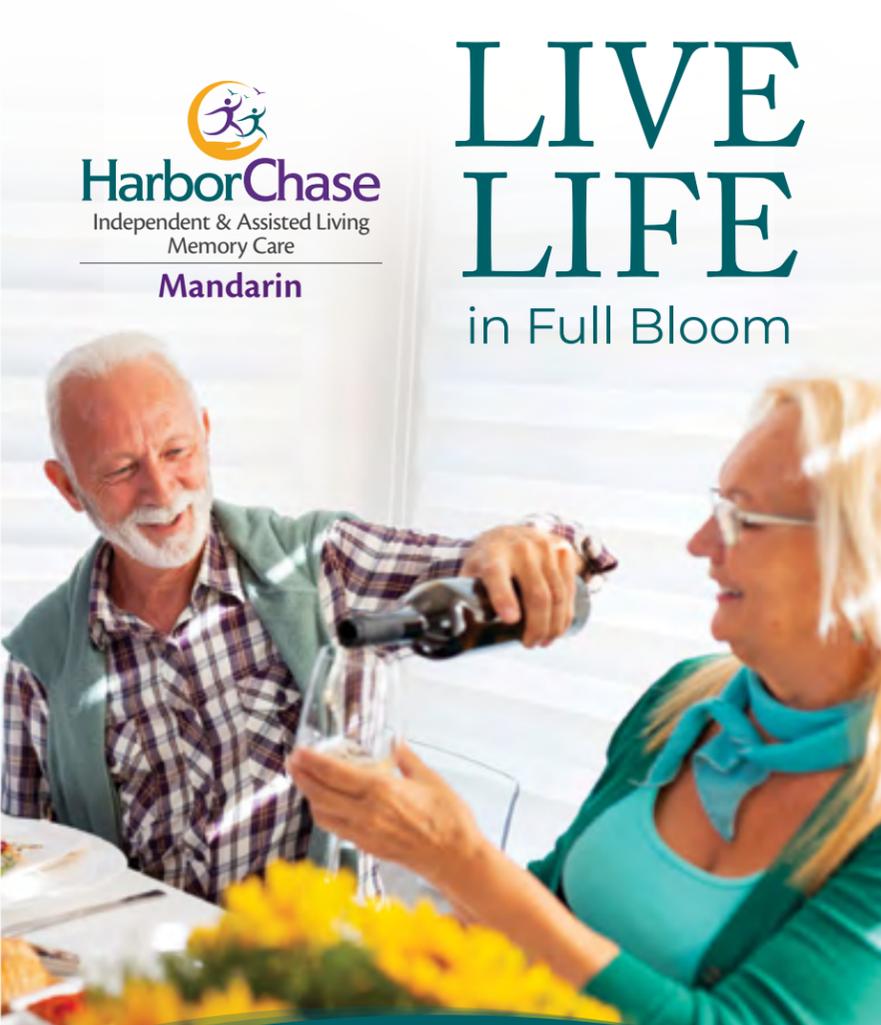
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Gardening

The gardening calendar and some economical tips

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale
mail@floridanewslines.com

The gardening calendar (<https://tinyurl.com/muu6h6me>) is a good guide to what we can do in our yards, but the weather is often a better guide in determining what we need to do; however, it is useful to know our average last frost date. When I found this website, <https://tinyurl.com/2p8tv52h>, I was surprised to find that in my area, fairly close to the river, it falls between March 1 and March 10. In past years I've always believed it was around March 16 – 19, which is quite a change.

Starting seeds indoors is a useful and economical way to get a head start on the spring vegetable garden and summer annuals. If the cost of grow lights is too high, perhaps this DIY set up constructed with PVC pipe might suit your budget: <https://tinyurl.com/mp-kzmx6x>. I use a similar frame, slotting the pieces together without adhesive to make it easy to take down and store. Even a full spectrum led bulb in a simple directional desk lamp can give a houseplant or a few small seedlings a boost without the expense of a fancy system.

If you have a compost heap that's been sitting for a while, now is a good time to check its progress. I generally throw on compostables and hope for the best, but I do aim for a mix of brown and green material and wet it down if dry. After a year or so, I use a large sieve to separate out the crumbly finished material. The sieve is a DIY item, fashioned from a square wooden frame to which is stapled with some wire mesh. It fits over my cart to catch the finished compost. The mesh is small enough to remove most material that hasn't fully decomposed, and this can either be added back to the heap or spread very lightly under mulch. For more efficient composting methods, check out <https://tinyurl.com/8d22d83k>. In Florida's heat, an efficiently managed heap can become finished compost in just a few months. Black gold!

Both saving seed and checking for plant volunteers save money. In spring it's easy to spot volunteer seedlings of perennials and annuals if you know

what to look for. Last year I planted some wildflowers, so I'll pull weeds rather than hoe them down, and work around small seedlings until they are large enough to identify. (I think we're all probably familiar with the weeds lurking in our yards!) When I find wildflower seedlings I'll either leave them alone, if they're conveniently placed, or move them carefully into small pots. Once they're a good size they can go back into a new garden bed, which will mean free flowers for me and sustenance for pollinators.

Some of my newer plants have been such a treat. I have some large-flowered rosemary, or scrub mint, *Conradina grandiflora*, a native which resembles a spreading, fine-leaved culinary rosemary. The plants were good specimens to begin with, and they haven't skipped a beat. One or two began flowering in early autumn and the others followed in profusion. The pale pink flowers are similar to rosemary, but larger. There are still a few flowers in early February. They don't need supplementary watering and flourish in sandy, well-drained sites. Pollinators love them. (*Conradina grandiflora* is endemic to Florida and endangered; it should only be purchased from a reputable nursery.)

Myrcianthes fragrans, Simpson's stopper, is a lovely evergreen shrub or small tree, graced with fragrant flowers and red fruits. Mine are supposed to be dwarf, but methods used in the horticultural trade to produce so-called dwarf plants aren't always permanent. Recently, with the unseasonably warm weather, they put on some beautiful red-tinged new growth. The last cold snap caused some minor damage, but I'll wait until after our last frost date before deciding if they need a little pruning: a useful guide.

A postscript: For information on the importance of helping our insects, see <https://tinyurl.com/262cws38>. While we may not be able individually to have much impact on global climate, we can try to protect the insects that pollinate our flowers and produce, starting in our own yards.

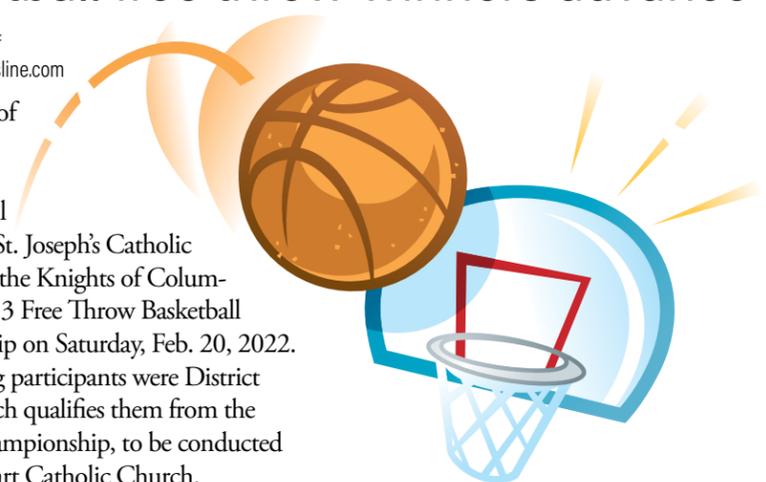
Basketball free throw winners advance

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Knights of Columbus St. Johns River Council 10850 from St. Joseph's Catholic Church held the Knights of Columbus District 13 Free Throw Basketball Championship on Saturday, Feb. 20, 2022. The following participants were District winners, which qualifies them from the Regional Championship, to be conducted at Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

In the Boys' Division the champions are Jace Brtek, age 10; Carson Brtek age 12; John Reed age 13; and Aidan Walsh age 14.

In the Girls' Division the champions are Aurela Hila age 10; Lauren Awwad age 11; Avery Condit age 12; Kate Reichard age 13; and Janella Villavicencio age 14.



Clothing, plants and BBQ at Mandarin Garden Club

By Joann Butler
mail@floridanewsline.com

Mandarin Garden Club members were informed of an urgent need in the local community recently — due to a fire, a local family had recently lost all their possessions and their house. So the Jar of Hope, a decorated jar, was passed around at the club's general meeting in January. Funds were collected in the jar and a large donation was delivered to the family. Members of the club also collected and donated bags of food, coats, shoes and other clothing and bedding items and delivered them to the family.

Don't forget about the Mandarin Garden Club's semi-annual clothing and plant sale on Friday and Saturday, March 4 and 5 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 2892 Loretto Road. Especially this year as so many people are struggling to take care of their families and having a hard time making ends meet, the Garden Club will offer items to the community at an affordable price. Gently used clothes, shoes and accessories for the family will be sold for \$1

each. Some boutique and jewelry items will be priced slightly higher.

Plants and accessories will also be on sale in the gardens. There will be lots of beautiful Mondo grass, lilies and agapanthus, as well as herbs and succulents that thrive in northeast Florida. All plants will be clearly marked with the names. Some master gardeners will be on hand to answer questions about your gardens. The Masons will have their "Famous" BBQ lunch available for sale both days.

All CDC guidelines will be followed. Cash only. Overflow parking will be next door at the Masonic Lodge.

The Mandarin Garden Club is a nonprofit organization that relies on fundraising to support the club, its charitable donations and its gardens, which have been designated a Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Habitat. Visit MandarinGardenClub.org for more information including a virtual tour.



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Fishing

Capt. David's Fishing Report

By Capt. David Lifka
mail@floridanewsline.com



Photo courtesy Jimmy Tomazinis
Striper caught in December off of Mandarin Point.

We are finally reaching the time of year where our portion of the globe starts leaning closer to the sun again. With that comes spring and eventually summer. But first comes spring. With spring comes a rebirth of nature such as plants, trees, flowers, birds, and more importantly (in some people’s minds) — fishing.

The month of March is the kickoff of a new fishing season. River, lakes, ponds, beach, jetties, inshore, and offshore will all have some kind of increased fishing activity. Certain species of fresh or saltwater fish will offer some of the best fishing of the year in the spring, while other species will begin to show and only get better as spring progresses to summer.

For folks that are new to fishing, spring is probably the best time of year to give it a try. Weather is usually mild and pleasant. Catching certain species such as whiting in the surf, or bream or bass in a neighborhood pond or creek are at their easiest.

Because of the many benefits that spring-time fishing offers, it's the perfect time of year to introduce fishing to the family or to oneself. Fishing is more than being about catching fish. It's family time, outdoor time, recreation time, time to take notice of the splendors of nature and recognizing all that it has to offer.

There are lots of different ways to get started fishing. One of the easiest ways is to find a friend already with fishing knowledge. Hiring a guide to take you fishing is yet another. Watching people and asking questions (especially if they are catching fish), or doing a little research online reading articles and watching YouTube videos.

Regardless of how you learn and what success you have, the fringe benefits and enjoyment that you may discover fishing will far outweigh never giving it a try. Springtime fishing is ready and waiting. Remember the old saying "A bad day fishing is better than a good day at work." For a lot of people, that saying holds true.

Fishing Report: Great surf fishing for whiting everywhere. Pompano will be on the increase, especially St. Johns County and Flagler County beaches. Bass bite continues in all area freshwater.

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

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

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Travel

New attractions to see in New York City

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewline.com

New construction, a seemingly never-ending process, occurs in all cities. On a recent trip to New York City, I saw work crews arrive before dawn to labor in unfinished skyscrapers and repair roads — but I also discovered a few newly-opened attractions I'd recommend seeing.

The Vessel, an unusual structure completed in 2019, soars 16 stories above Hudson Yards. From eye level, the building looks like the rear of a cruise ship, a series of horizontal platforms and inclined ramps. You'll find 154 intricately interconnecting flights of stairs — almost 2,500 individual steps and 80 landings. Make the effort and take the climb to earn remarkable views. Although that sounds like great exercise, my short trip didn't permit me time. I still found the structure fascinating and especially enjoyed its glittering glow from nighttime illumination.

The Shed stands next to the Vessel, a flexible, adaptable building resembling a mammoth soft-sided tent. It houses ever-changing works by emerging artists, musicians, theater productions, literature, sculpture, and dance.

The Vessel and Shed lead to the entrance of the High Line, a fantastic 1.5-mile pedestrian walkway over an old rail line. The elevated path stretches from Hudson Yards to the Meatpacking District. You stroll or jog along without the worry of crossing a street, encountering traffic



The High Line.

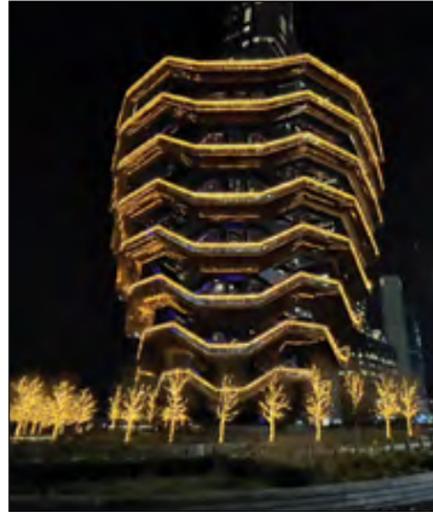
jams, or stopping at red lights. Many new apartment buildings have arisen alongside the older ones lining the walkway. One particular condo or office center featured bowed-shaped windows reminding me of old root beer candies.

Near the end of the High Line, pedestrians come to the Chelsea Market, the former National Biscuit Company factory building (where the Oreo cookie was created). The updated space serves as a food hall with gourmet shops, take-away or sit-down restaurants, gift shops, galleries, and more. Stop in for a cup of coffee, snack, or casual meal.

Continue down to the High Line's end, stop, then look right. You'll find an



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Little Island.



The Vessel illuminated at night.



The Shed.

Gaze across the river to see Hoboken. Look carefully in the distance, and you might spy the Statue of Liberty.

The Whitney Museum, featuring American modern art collections, lies across the street from Little Island. Browse a large selection of Jasper Johns work, Alexander Calder, and others.

While NYC can be tough on the wallet, the view of the Vessel, Shed, Little Island, and a stroll down the High Line are free — and most memorable. A quick getaway to the Big Apple always remains fun.

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

odd assemblage called Little Island. The new park was created utilizing pod-like containers, filled with soil, bushes, and trees, placed on stilts at the river's edge. The stilts resemble the backs of high-heeled shoes. The pods join together and create a unique green-like setting. People stroll around the grounds and, in the summer, sit at small tables or benches. They come to the amphitheater, with tiered seating and a stage facing the Hudson River, for performances.

Hike up to the highest point on Little Island, and you're blessed with a panoramic view of the Manhattan skyline.



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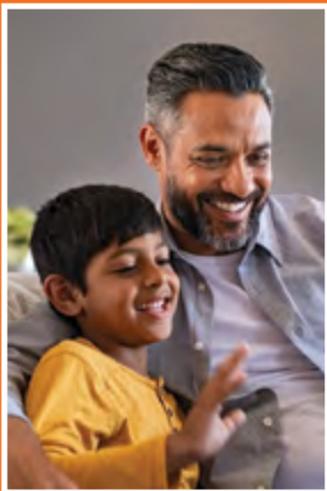
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