

Ponte Vedra NewsLine

APRIL 2022 Volume 9 Issue 4

Ponte Vedra, Palm Valley, Nocatee and South Ponte Vedra Beach

A Florida NewsLine Publication



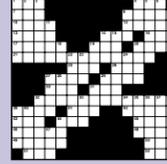
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Photo courtesy Jack Wilcox

Scouts setting one of the mile markers.

Nocatee Preserve Trail benefits from Eagle project

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The Nocatee preserve trail, a hidden gem in the community, is a 3.5 mile out-and-back hike, starting at Ponte Vedra High School and ending at the Nocatee paddle launch. It traverses several different ecosystems, including marshlands and swamps, and offers a unique insight into the natural world. With several mountain biking trails throughout the expansive preserve, it makes a perfect activity for a weekend afternoon.

On Sunday, Feb. 20, a group of volunteers from BSA Troop 23 in Nocatee helped to install mile

Eagle Scout cont. on pg. 10

Law Enforcement Club launched at Ponte Vedra High

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

St. Johns County Deputy Jared Monie, Ponte Vedra High's Youth Resource Officer, doesn't spend much time in his office. He likes to walk the hallways, chat with students, get in a few fist bumps and regularly attend sports games.

"I like to get out and mingle with the kids and talk to them. I ask them about their vacations and their weekend plans and things like that," said Monie, who has three children of his own. "Several of our kids have suffered injuries or have been hospitalized for various reasons. I will always call the parents and check on them and just offer any help that I can. I feel like kids nowadays need to know that law enforcement is in their corner, and that's what I try to do."

It is from this vantage point that Monie recently started the Law Enforcement Club at Ponte Vedra High with a dual-focus in mind: improve young peoples' perception of law enforcement and encourage students to consider a law enforcement career. This club is strongly supported by Sheriff Robert Hardwick.

"Engaging with the youth of our county is one of my top priorities as your sheriff," Hardwick said. "I am proud that our agency members are being innovative and finding multiple ways to make that happen as I believe it is vital to our success as a county."

Monie said the club is open to any Ponte Vedra High student at any grade level with no fees or requirements at this time. A few students have shown interest in the club and several students contacted Monie in response to the first meeting held in February. Meetings will be held monthly.

Freshman Paulina Sidhu attended the first meeting and has a strong interest in



Photo courtesy Karen Hughes

Sophomore Jon Hughes talks with Deputy Jared Monie at lunch recently about what he wants to do after high school.

the field of forensics. (Ponte Vedra High is the only high school in the district to offer forensics classes.)

"There are so many different paths and interesting careers that many people do not know about within law enforce-



Photo courtesy Michael Harrison

Deputy Jared Monie (left) with Athletic Director Michael Harrison cheering on the Ponte Vedra Sharks.

ment. I'm excited to learn about all the different paths one can take," said Sidhu. "Going on this journey with other club members will make it fun and interesting along the way."

Sidhu sees a larger purpose too.

"I would also like to help promote break-

ing the stigma of our police officers and law enforcement in general. They are human beings with a lot to offer," said Sidhu, who credits her uncle with sparking her interest in law enforcement and governmental relations. "My Uncle Nash Singh Sidhu was the Superintendent of Police in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He retired with the rank of Senior Assistant Commissioner and held the post of Deputy Director of Internal Security and Public Order. He is a well rounded and interesting person, not just a 'cop.'"

Sidhu is looking forward to learning from professionals in the field, especially in forensics. Sidhu explained that she would like to learn about on the job procedures such as how to analyze blood splatters.

Monie said field trips will be planned and will include visiting the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office and touring the main facilities while meeting different department directors.

Monie has been in law enforcement for 17 years, working in patrol, investigations, property crimes and internal affairs. He plans to share all that experience with club members and help guide them through career course choices.

Monie became an officer after hearing his dad's stories about being a police officer back in the 1960s and 1970s.

"I also grew up watching 'Cops' and all those other police shows, so I knew from an early age that was what I wanted to do," said Monie.

However, Monie said he never envisioned himself working as a Youth Resource Officer until it was suggested to him. His only request was that he wanted to work at a high school.

PVHS Law Enforcement Club cont. on pg. 11

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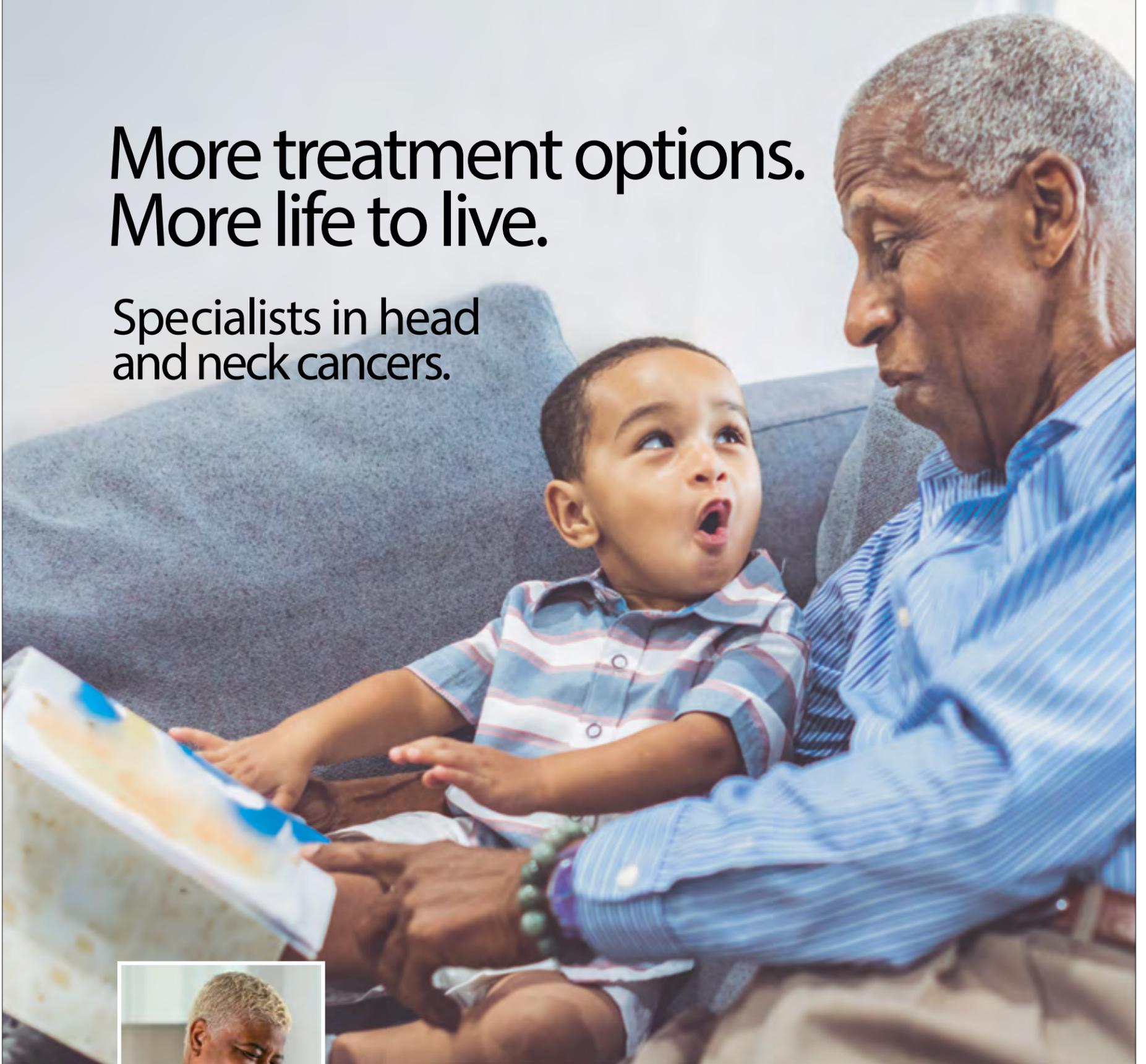
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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Amelia Grace!



BREED:
Pomeranian

FAVORITE ACTIVITY:
Playing fetch with mini tennis balls and sitting next to her mom at work

FAVORITE TREAT:
Apples

FAVORITE FRIEND:
Her mom

HOW MY BFF GOT HER NAME:
All my pets have middle names and I just thought it sounded pretty. We also call her Me-Me.

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 Ponte Vedra NewsLine. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in Ponte Vedra NewsLine! Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet.

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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Are you interested in promoting your business in St. Johns Business Monthly, a feature section included in both The CreekLine and Ponte Vedra NewsLine? **Call Linda 904-607-5062**

MYSTERY PHOTO

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

Last month's Mystery Photo was the FOP sign on Marsh Landing Boulevard. Our winner was Susan Shigo. Congratulations!

CRYPTO FUN

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Answers: A. mower B. weeds C. fertilize D. landscape

Answers to our Puzzles
PG 10

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Carolina Wren

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April

Community Calendar

What's Happening in Ponte Vedra

Council on Aging offers interest groups at the COA Center at Flagler Health+ Village at Nocatee. Meetings are free and self-guided except for the Caregiver's Support Group. Advance registration for clubs and meetings is required; email pbrunell@Stjohnscoa.com or call (904) 819-3234. Tuesday clubs include: Caregiver Support Group, 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.; and Widows and Widowers social group, second and fourth Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Wednesday groups include: Community Crafting, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.; and Genealogy Group, 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

6th: The Newcomers Alumnae monthly luncheon will be held on Wednesday, April 6 at 11 a.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Parkway. Numa C. Saisselin, president of the Florida Theatre, will give a presentation about the historic theater. The cost of the luncheon is \$23; email bartshar@comcast.net as soon as possible to reserve a seat. Visit newcomersalumnae.wildapricot.org for more information or to become a member.

6th: The Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library will host members of the Wright and Groshell families, who will share about the memoir "Hostage To Silence: I Know I Am Heard" by Brady Wright and featuring artwork by Gentry Groshell on April 6 at 6:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. In recognition of April as National Autism Awareness Month, representatives from the HEAL Foundation and Peace of Heart will discuss local efforts to support friends and family with Autism. The program is free and open to the public.

8th, 9th: UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County Master Gardener Volunteer Program is holding its annual fundraising spring plant sale on April 8 and 9, from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. at 3125 Agricultural Center Drive in St. Augustine. Cash or check only. Call (904) 209-0430

for more information.

9th: The Ponte Vedra Writers group will meet on Saturday, April 9 at 10 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Featured speaker Chris Gabbard used a deeply felt personal loss when he wrote his memoir and he'll discuss his journey in his talk, "Transforming a Cry of Pain into a Compelling Narrative." The meeting is free and open to members and non-members alike. Visit www.floridawriters.org for more information.

9th: Time Out Florida, with special feature Charlyn Thomasson and guest speaker Kelly Stigliano, will be held on Saturday, April 9 from 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at Renaissance Hotel World Golf Village. The cost for the program is \$25 and includes brunch. RSVP by April 2 to Jo (904) 860-4008 or jo.swallow@comcast.net. This program is presented by St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, Jacksonville Women's Connection, affiliated with Stonecroft.org.

11th: The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable will meet on Monday, April 11 at 12 p.m. via Zoom. The meeting will feature the annual State Legislative Delegation report on the outcomes of the latest legislative session and invitations to attend have been extended to Sen. Travis Hutson, Rep. Cyndi Stevenson, and Rep. Paul Renner. Email info@sjcroundtable.org to register for the meeting or visit www.sjcroundtable.org for more information about the St. Johns County Civic Roundtable.

12th: The Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library will present three different ensemble groups from Flagler College at the library on April 12 at the library: the College Chorale, the Chamber Choir, and the Cabaret and Acapella Ensemble. They will perform a wide variety of concert, musical theater, pop, jazz, and

contemporary music. The program starts at 6:30 p.m. and doors open at 6 p.m. The program is free to the public.

19th: The Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library Speaker Series will feature Raymond Wong, who will discuss "Protecting Your Privacy and Avoiding Cyber Crimes" at the library on April 19 beginning at 6:30 p.m. Wong will share his professional experiences working with Wall Street and Silicon Valley clients. He is currently retired, but works with the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office and teaches adult education courses at UNF. The program is free to the public.

19th: Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will meet on Tuesday, April 19 at 6 p.m. for Chat & Chew before the 6:30 p.m. meeting at Christ Episcopal Church, Room 106, 400 San Juan Road. The featured speaker will be A.G. Gancarski, political columnist who will discuss "What's Ahead in Florida Politics." Email janetkary@gmail.com for more information.

19th: The Newcomers of North St. Johns will host a meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, April 19 beginning at 11:15 a.m. at Al Dente's Ristorante Italiano, 90 Shops Blvd. in St. Johns. The event features games of bingo after lunch and great prizes. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members. All reservations must be received by April 8. Contact Sue Aird at sjaird@comcast.net to register. The Newcomers of North St. Johns offers a wide variety of activities, including smaller lunch groups, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, holiday parties, day trips and cultural events.

20th: Ponte Vedra Woman's Club will present "Women Protecting Themselves," a program of basic safety practices

by Cpl. Richard Miller of the Jacksonville Beach Police Department, on April 20 from 12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. at Southern Kitchen + Bar, 831 1st Street in Jacksonville Beach. Register for this event at www.pontevedrawomansclub.com. Everyone will order off the lunch menu.

21st: St. Johns County will host an Open House on the planned Palm Valley West boat ramp project on Thursday, April 21 from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane. Staff from St. Johns County Public Works and St. Johns County Parks and Recreation will be available to answer questions and share details about this future asset to the community.

22nd: The Northeast Florida Chapter of Sisters in Crime presents Michael Wiley, Shamus Award-nominated author who will discuss "Writing Killer Dialogue" at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. (FOL Room), at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 2, 2022. Bring your coffee and bring a friend. The group welcomes misters and sisters to learn more about writing, promoting, and enjoying crime fiction. Visit www.nefloridasistersincrime.org for more information.

23rd: GTM Research Reserve will host its monthly Beach Cleanup on Saturday, April 23 from 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. No registration is required; meet at the Visitor Center, 505 Guana River Road in Ponte Vedra Beach where gloves and trash bags will be provided. Visit gtmnerr.org for more information.

29th: The Savvy Job Hunters Ministry Zoom Workshop, "Getting Started with LinkedIn" will be held on April 29 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Email nwhite@christepiscopalchurch.org to register.

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with St. Johns County School Board Member Kelly Barrera, District 4

Q: Can you give your thoughts on the funding that the St. Johns County School District is allocated in the budget just passed by the Florida State Legislature?

A: We are very grateful to our local legislative delegation of Senator Travis Hutson, Rep. Cyndi Stevenson and Rep. Paul Renner who advocated for our school district and were successful in allocating \$11.4 million to us. We very much need these funds, especially in light of the 7.2 percent growth in the school district last year. We very much hope that Gov. DeSantis allows this funding to remain in the budget when he signs the final budget approval.



Photo courtesy St. Johns County School District
Beachside High School under construction in mid-February.

Q: What is a priority use for this funding?

A: We continue to work on our borrowing capacity and this \$11.4 million would be a big help in moving the timeline forward to build another new school. We already have K – 8 School “NN” planned to build in Shearwater, and we would like to move forward with K – 8 School “OO” in a location still to be determined. It’s important to note that the last K – 8 school that we built, Pine Island Academy, cost approximately \$44 million, and this was before the current labor and materials shortages.

Q: Did the school district receive any other good news from this legislative session?

A: Yes, we are also grateful that the base student allocation was increased this legislative session by \$214 per student to \$8,100. The lion’s share of that increase will go toward raising pay to at least \$15

per hour for all school related employees by the October deadline.

Q: Do you have an update on Beachside High School?

A: This school’s construction is moving forward, with interior work, curbing, and covered walkways all being worked on. We have learned that all academic areas will be

completed in time for the fall 2022 opening of the school, but the auditorium and some ancillary facilities might be delayed due to the materials and supplies shortage.

Q: What’s on the horizon for technology in St. Johns County Schools?

A: We have a number of tech upgrades that we are hoping to make next year. We received feedback from different focus groups, SAC committees, and task forces, as well as Florida Department of Education guidelines to make these determinations. Some of our plans include working on network switching, upgrading WiFi standards and equipment at 40 schools, continuing to expand our cybersecurity defense measures, purchasing new student computers and maintaining/replacing our current equipment.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

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



with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Can you explain the background and reason for the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office’s mounted unit, one of your newest specialty units?

A: As far as we can tell, the SJSO has never had a mounted unit; the City of St. Augustine had one in the 1980s and 1990s. Instead, the Sheriff’s Office utilized a posse, where locals who owned horses could be sworn in to help with special circumstances when needed.

A mounted unit has been a vision of mine since I was with the St. Augustine Beach Police Department and so I brought the idea with me to the SJSO. There were a couple of reasons that a mounted unit appealed to me: first, it’s innovative for marketing purposes and secondly, it’s a way to establish bonds with all communities — especially with kids, who might be intrigued by a horse. A sheriff’s deputy on a horse may be seen as less threatening to young children than a deputy in a police car. Also, in times of civil unrest, we know horses — which are massive creatures — are one of the best ways to control unruly crowds.

Q: So how did you set about establishing a mounted unit?

A: I wanted to budget for this unit without using any taxpayer dollars. It’s a public/private partnership with the horses themselves, as well as saddles and even the stalls they live in. We have two members of the mounted unit and both of their salaries are paid via the Sheriff’s Office like all the other deputies, since they are called in to perform other functions when they are not on mounted patrol.

Q: Whose expertise have you been able to utilize to get this unit started?

A: I identified one of our deputies, Johan Tschannerl, whom everyone calls “Deputy G.” He is a nationally known horseback rider in Europe and South Africa and has been a trainer here in the U.S. He and his wife Andrea did most of the fundraising for this unit themselves and he personally vetted more than 80 horses to find the two that were perfect for our program.

Q&A with Rob Hardwick cont. on pg. 6



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Guest Column

Elections FAQs

By St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

For this month’s article, I would like to address some frequently asked questions we receive on a regular basis at the Supervisor of Elections Office:

Can I register to vote or update my registration at my local public library?

Yes. All St. Johns County public libraries are voter registration agencies. Unlike most governmental agencies, they have business hours on Saturdays and in the evenings. Visit www.sjcpl.org for a listing of your local library branches and hours.

If I request a vote-by-mail ballot for the upcoming election and then move, will my ballot be automatically forwarded to my new address?

No. Vote-by-mail ballots are non-forwardable. They are returned to the Elections Office, and all future requests are canceled. It is your responsibility to keep the Elections Office up-to-date on your address.

My neighbor moved away and her husband died. If I call your office can I just tell you to take them off the voter rolls since they do not live here anymore?

No. Federal and state laws govern the removal of voters from the rolls. We cannot remove anyone from the rolls based on someone’s word.

There are a number of military bases in NE Florida and many St. Johns County residents are military or military dependents. How do members of our military and their families vote if they maintain their residence in St. Johns County, but are transferred elsewhere?

If they lived here, own property, and intend to return to the county, they are permitted to use their permanent St. Johns County address. Vote-by-mail ballots are sent to their (other/separate) mailing address upon request.

Are homeless people allowed to register to vote?

Yes. It is against Florida and federal laws to discriminate against a homeless person. A person who is homeless, or without a permanent “traditional” home, but intends to permanently remain in the county, can register using an address where their mail is received, including the post office, a church, or a shelter.

What about people who live on boats and in RVs? What can they use for their voter registration residence address?

A resident with a nontraditional abode who have or had physical presence in the county and intend for the county to be his or her permanent residence address for voter registration purposes could use the following addresses: 1) a place where mail is regularly received, 2) the general delivery address at a specific post office, or 3) the address for the campground or docking site if mail is received there.

I recently moved within the State of Florida. What do I need to do to update my address?

You may use the online voter registration system at www.registertovoteflorida.gov or simply call the Elections Office to make your change by phone. If updating your driver license, you can also update your voter registration at the same time. Additionally, you may complete a registration application at your local public library.

Sign up for my monthly e-newsletter to receive additional information from the Office of the Supervisor of Elections. Use the sign up link on the front page of the website votesjc.gov and submit your email address to subscribe. The best way to reach me is by email at voakes@votesjc.gov or call the office, (904) 823-2238. Don’t forget, our website is also a great resource, so visit it often.

Q&A with Rob Hardwick cont. from pg. 5

Q: Tell us about these horses.

A: Both horses came from the Amish Country in Ohio, from a breeder who specifically breeds horses for law enforcement. They are Percheron horses. We have Jackson, who weighs about 1,800 pounds and has been with us for about eight months and Mason, who weighs more than 2,000 pounds has been with us for about six months.

Q: What are the plans and goals for this unit going forward?

A: In addition to Deputy G, we have added Deputy Jacob Bradley, so we now have two full time deputies in our mounted unit. Deputy Bradley is currently undergoing an extensive, weeks-long training program by Deputy G and last week was the mounted unit’s first joint patrol. The goal is for them to be out on patrol or doing something proactive in the community around four to five times a week. We have already heard from the St. Augustine Police Department and the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office with requests for help for special events. We plan to have the

mounted unit patrol in all areas of the county, including in the Northeast, the Northwest, Nocatee, and Hastings in addition to St. Augustine. It’s important for the horses to be around crowds and learn how to deal with them — and it’s important for our citizens to see the horses and understand that the horses are working members of our Sheriff’s Office.



Photo courtesy St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office
Deputy Tschannerl and Deputy Stewart with MU Deputy Jackson at Cracker Day.

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 or call me at (904) 824-8304. Also, our website, www.sjso.org has a wealth of resources, from alarm registration to Crime Stoppers to our Neighbors app.

All Are Welcome!

Easter Sunrise Service on the beach at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club

April 17 6:30 a.m.

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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Business Briefs

Thompson earns 2021 Ameriprise Client Experience Award

Christopher Thompson has earned the 2021 Ameriprise Client Experience Award. Thompson holds Certified Financial Planner and Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor certifications and is an Associate Branch Manager and Financial Advisor with Ameriprise Financial, Inc. in Jacksonville.

Thompson was honored with this award because of his ability to consistently deliver personalized, goal-based advice and exceptional client service. Award recipients earned an overall client satisfaction rating equal

to or greater than 4.9 out of 5.0 and maintained stellar business results. The award represents an elite group of Ameriprise advisors recognized as leaders for their commitment to making a difference in the lives of their clients.

SCORE announces April workshops

SCORE is a national service organization that supports small businesses nationwide. SCORE has a network of more than 11,000 volunteers operating in more than 340 local chapters around the country. The organization is supported by the US Small Business Administration (SBA).

Among the offerings by SCORE for the month of April are the following:

- Deep Dive into Facebook, April 21, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. In this session on Facebook, attendees will analyze if Facebook is really the best platform to drive their particular business. Attendees will learn about different types of content, where to find free or inexpensive tools to organize and assist them, and ultimately how to build a content calendar to stay consistent and relevant to your audience. No fee. Hosted on Zoom; Registration Link: <https://score.tfaforms.net/17?EventID=a105a000005qfUp>

- Get Started with QuickBooks, April 27, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Learn about Quickbooks and why tracking your finances is important to being successful in your business. Attendees will learn the different types of QuickBooks subscriptions, determining the best one for you and the set-up options to help you get started right. No fee. Hosted on Zoom; Registration Link: <https://score.tfaforms.net/17?EventID=a105a000005qfUu>

Contact Melody Petraglia at melody.petraglia@scorevolunteer.org or visit jacksonville.score.org for more information.

More than \$54 million in state funding secured for St. Johns County

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The St. Johns County legislative delegation has secured \$54,777,323 in appropriations for critical county projects that will improve the quality of life for county residents. The state's budget includes dollars for road improvements, flood mitigation, special high growth-high performance funding for St. Johns County schools, septic-to-sewer installations, dune restoration, funding for the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, and assistance for charities helping homeless pregnant women in the county.

Sen. Travis Hutson, Rep. Cyndi Stevenson, and Speaker-designate Paul Renner worked diligently to secure this much-needed funding for St. Johns County.

"We have seen unprecedented growth in St. Johns County. I'm proud to have worked with Speaker designate Renner and Rep. Stevenson to bring these dollars home to address our critical infrastructure needs, which will relieve pressure on our roads and schools," Hutson said. "Although we are still subject to a veto, we are in a great position to receive funding that will help our county. This money is going to

make a huge difference."

Sidewalks on Palm Valley and St. Johns Parkway, four-lane construction for County Road 2209, and State Road A1A intersection improvements are among the infrastructure projects funded in this year's state budget.

"We are incredibly grateful for the strong and committed representation we have in Tallahassee. Every project funded by these appropriations is crucial to our county's future," said St. Johns County Administrator Hunter Conrad.

"On behalf of the St. Johns County legislative delegation, I am proud that our collective efforts allowed for legislative and budgetary victories benefiting local families, businesses, and our environment," said Speaker-designate Renner.

St. Johns County's coastal communities, such as the City of St. Augustine Beach would also receive a significant boost to fund drainage improvements and flood protection projects. The City of St. Augustine also secured budget approval for two significant projects, the West Augustine septic to sewer project and a new fire station on Anas-

tasia Island.

"This funding is going to make a difference for families and the people of St. Johns County for years to come. I look forward to discussing the items with the governor and continuing to work with our outstanding county delegation as we move forward," Rep. Stevenson said.

The St. Johns County projects and initiatives that have received appropriations include:

- High Growth, High Performing School Districts (SJCSD): \$11,422,223
- Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, Kramer Hall renovation: \$3,500,000
- EPIC Recovery Center Women's Substance Use Residential: \$750,000
- BRAVE: Be Resilient and Voice Emotions: \$3,000,000
- Flagler Hospital CAIR Center: \$8,015,100
- FACT TEAM serving Putnam and St. Johns County: \$3,000,000
- Ponte Vedra Beach, North Beach, and Dune Restoration II: \$1,700,000

- City of St. Augustine Beach flood reduction: \$90,000
- City of St. Augustine Beach resiliency and flood protection: \$1,200,000
- West Augustine septic to sewer: \$2,000,000
- City of St. Augustine Fire Station: \$500,000
- Flagler College Institute for Classical Education: \$5,000,000
- Alpha Omega Miracle Home Campus: \$3,500,000
- St. Johns Parkway (County Road 2209) sidewalk: \$800,000
- County Road 2209 (four lane road construction): \$8,000,000
- Palm Valley sidewalk: \$800,000
- State Road A1A corridor intersection improvements: \$1,000,000
- tag! Children's Museum: \$500,000

On March 14, the Florida Legislature voted to approve the state's \$112 billion budget, known as the General Appropriations Act, which will now head to Gov. Ron DeSantis' desk for his final approval.



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ST. JOHNS COUNTY
PROPERTY APPRAISER
Eddie Creamer



NOTICE OF CERTIFICATION OF TAX ROLL

Pursuant to Sections 193.122 and 197.323, Florida Statutes, Notice is Hereby Given that the Tax Roll for St. Johns County was Re-Certified to the St. Johns County Tax Collector on the 24th day of February, 2022, for the Collection of 2021 Taxes, to reflect all changes made by the Value Adjustment Board.

EDDIE CREAMER
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For additional information, please visit our website at www.sjcpa.us or contact us at (904) 827-5500

Briefs

St. Johns County Commissioners vote to place proposed sales tax on November ballot

At the March 15 commission meeting, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners voted 4 to 1 to send to referendum a proposed one-penny sales tax ordinance for voter approval on Nov. 8, 2022. Before election day, an independent certified public accountant will conduct an audit to examine several key factors. Those factors include the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the program and how the program will accomplish goals and objectives. The audit report will be available to the public 60 days before election day.

Should more than 50 percent of vot-

ers approve the proposed ordinance, the sales tax increase will begin for 10 years on Jan. 1, 2023. The proposed increase would take St. Johns County's sales tax from 6.5 percent to 7.5 percent of the sale of goods and services. For taxable personal property, the additional one-penny sales tax would only be collected on the first \$5,000. The additional sales tax would not apply to certain groceries, prescription drugs, medical products and supplies, or other goods and services exempt from taxation.

St. Johns County has developed a Frequently Asked Questions page regarding the proposed surtax increase. Visit <http://sjcfl.us/media/Surtax-FAQ.pdf> for more information.

St. Johns County changes Hurricane Evacuation Zones

St. Johns County's hurricane evacuation zones have been updated as a result of data improvements by the National Hurricane Center. The new zones are effective immediately. Those living in coastal, waterfront, and low-lying areas will see the most significant changes.

In preparation for the Atlantic Hurricane Season that begins June 1, residents and business owners are encouraged to review the updated map to determine changes to their evacuation zones by visiting <https://www.gis.sjcfl.us/MYEZ/MYEZ.html>. The county's "My Evacuation Zone" website provides evacuation zone information for St. Johns County addresses. Residents should take this opportunity to also familiarize themselves with appropriate evacuation routes.

There's a difference between evacuation zones and evacuation routes, and the new zone changes do not affect residents' evacuation route. Additionally, the evacuation zone does not impact FEMA Flood Zones or FEMA Flood Insurance rates.

Visit www.sjcemergencymanagement.org for more information.

Animal support ministry to hold raffle to benefit pet food donations

St. Francis Ministry for Animals at Christ Episcopal Church has announced a raffle donation item with 100 percent of the proceeds going towards the ministry's pet food support efforts for local animal organizations. Miriam's Jewelry in Ponte Vedra Beach has donated a stunning rose gold chain bracelet with .48 carat diamonds in a dogbone for all the animal lovers in our community; the retail value is \$2,000. Raffle tickets at \$25 each may be purchased at Miriam's in the Sawgrass Village shopping center, 260 Front Street, Ste. 610 from April 2 – 15. The bracelet will be on display at Miriam's during this period, and the winning ticket will be drawn at its close.

The ministry will also be present outside Publix in Sawgrass Village on Saturday, April 2, collecting pet food donations for shelters, rescues and pet food banks.

St. Francis Ministry for Animals has been in existence since 2012, with the mission of "helping people to help animals; helping animals to help people." The ministry's programs have included annual pet food and supply drives (6,486 lbs. of pet food were distributed in 2021 alone), a pet therapy program and offering special grants to animal-related nonprofits. Visit www.facebook.com/StFrancisCEC/ for more information.

BEAM continues to surpass 1 million in critical services

Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry (BEAM) has published its 2021 Annual "Gratitude" Report to showcase its collective impact last year within the Beaches community. The report provides comprehensive data on BEAM's wrap-around emergency

services and the demographics of the clients they assisted in 2021.

Major 2021 milestones include the BEAM Food Bank distributing more than 1.1 million pounds of food, or 924,608 meals, to local neighbors in need. More than 1,150 households received food pantry assistance and BEAM served 513 families each month through five different mobile pantry sites at high-need areas, like Mayport, which is considered a "food desert" by the USDA. BEAM Food Pantry appointments increased by 33 percent since 2019, with 11 percent representing military veterans and 33 percent of food pantry clients having at least one senior residing in their home.

"Despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID pandemic, BEAM continues to experience exciting progress and growth. We pride ourselves on meeting our clients where they are and finding innovative ways to address their greatest needs," said 2021 Board Chair Janice Kiernan. "But the work of BEAM could not continue without the support of our partners, especially our volunteers and our donors. Our community provides the backbone for all that BEAM is able to accomplish."

BEAM also subsidized more than \$1.1 million dollars in overdue rent and utility bills, keeping 1,011 families from losing their homes last year. Forty-three percent of financial assistance clients in 2021 sought out assistance for the first time, 35 percent received more than one month's assistance (with proof of loss of income due COVID-19) and 19 percent were single mothers.

Visit www.jaxbeam.org for more information.

Newcomers of North St. Johns announces April luncheon

Newcomers of North Saint Johns (NNSJ) will host its April luncheon on Tuesday, April 19, beginning at 11:15 a.m. at Al Dente's Ristorante Italiano, 90 Shops Blvd. in St. Johns. The event features games of bingo after lunch and great prizes.

As part of this special luncheon event, NNSJ members are encouraged to bring a children's book as a donation to the St. Johns County Public Library System. "The last time we had our book drive, we were able to collect more than 40 books to give to the Main Library in St. Augustine and also generated nearly \$175 in cash donations," said Lyn Whitlock, co-president of the club. "We hope we can exceed our last book drive!"

Doors will open at 11:15 a.m. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$30 for members with a guest price of \$35. All reservations must be received by April 8, 2022.

Contact Sue Aird at sjaird@comcast.net to register for the luncheon or for more information about membership. Newcomers of North St. Johns offers a wide variety of activities to get acquainted and have fun including smaller lunch groups, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, holiday parties, day trips and cultural events.



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Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewslines.com

Paul Bednar

Ponte Vedra Beach resident Paul Bednar is known in the area as “the Realtor with the dog.” It is a title that he does not carry lightly. As a volunteer Puppy Raiser with K9s For Warriors for the past four years, Bednar takes his service puppies in training with him everywhere and for good reason — socialization is key to a service dog. “Everything we do is for the puppy. We rearrange our schedules around the puppies,” said Bednar, who works for ERA Real Estate Davis & Linn. Bednar, who is from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has worked in finance and accounting management for 17 years. The Bednars also have a house dog, 12-year-old Bella.

While it costs \$25,000 to train a service dog for K9s For Warriors, everything is free for the wounded warriors (military veterans suffering from PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and/or military sexual trauma) who will ultimately be the dog’s owner. A lot of puppies come from breeder donations, owner surrenders

Get to Know ...

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



Photo courtesy Paul Bednar

and shelters. “The reward is knowing the puppy is going to be with the warrior for the rest of his life. It has been shown that warriors experience a great reduction in anxiety as a result of having a service dog,” said Bednar. “Our mission is to end veteran suicide. We want to continue to raise awareness for people to get involved.”

Q: How did you become interested in puppy raising?

A: It all comes back to real estate. I really enjoy working with active-duty military, veterans and first time home buyers. I really like that demographic. When you see their faces on the day of signing, it makes it all worth it. One of my mortgage lenders invited my wife Alicia and me to a

K9s For Warriors event, and that is when we decided to apply to become puppy raisers. We completed training classes and passed the home inspection. K9s For Warriors provides everything — food, medical care and support.

Q: Describe your role as volunteer Puppy Raisers for K-9s For Warriors.

A: As volunteer Puppy Raisers, we open our hearts and home to become the primary caregiver for the puppy until he/she is about 16 to 18 months old. Our responsibilities are to train the puppy (about 18 basic cues), socialize and expose the puppy to various public places and situations, provide a structured environment and ensure all medical needs are met. We are also Goodwill Ambassadors for the K9s For Warriors organization to promote and raise awareness when in public or at fundraising events.

Q: Talk about your first service dog.

A: Our first puppy, Beau, came to us in 2018. It really is like raising a baby with potty training and vaccinations. If a dog is misbehaving when you are out, you leave just like you would with a baby. We focus on the mission of bringing the puppy to a certain point. From day one, we were 110 percent vested in Beau (a Vizsla). We loved Beau, and we did everything in his best interest.

Q: Name the other puppies you have trained.

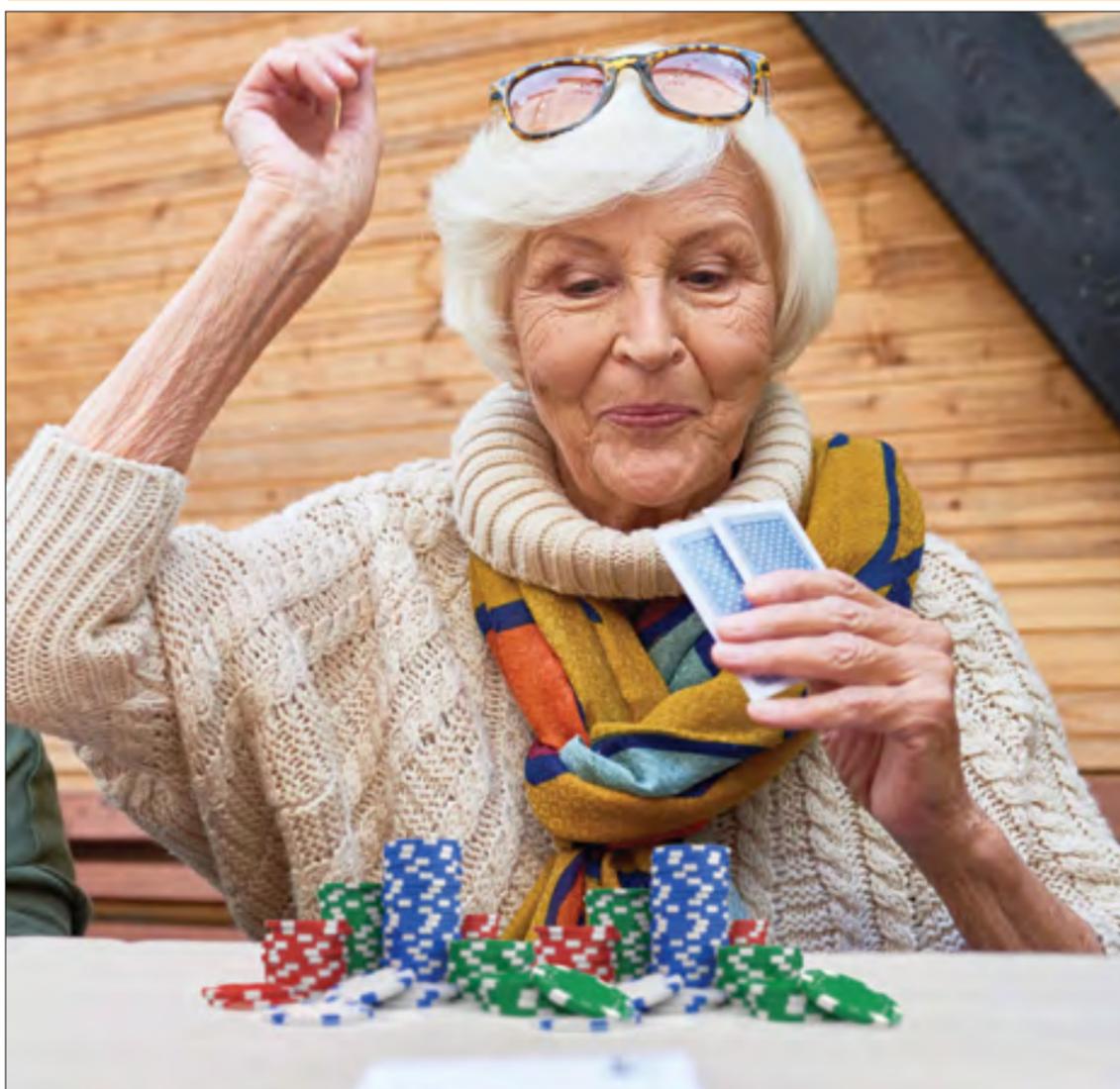
A: Our second puppy, Peanut (a white English Lab), came to us in 2019. Because of Covid, we ended up keeping

Peanut longer because socialization was limited. We kept him until April 2021. In 2020, we also received a Standard Poodle named Hunter. After he did not pass the hip evaluation to become a service dog, K9s For Warriors found a home for him as a “station dog” with the Daytona Beach Shores Police Department. He lives the life down there. On the same day that we dropped off Hunter, we picked up Winston, a black English Lab. Winston left our home at 14 months and has now been placed with his warrior. Currently, we have Max, a black Standard Poodle. He just turned one, and we will have him until June.

Q: How are you able to let the puppy go after all that bonding time?

A: Many people we talk to always ask us “how” we can let the puppy go; however, the question should be “why.” Dr. Suees is quoted “Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment, until it becomes a memory.” Sharing those moments with our puppies as we prepare them to become a battle buddy for life and serve a higher purpose in the fight to end veteran suicide becomes a lifetime of memories for us and is the “why” we continue to puppy raise and support this organization.

[Author’s Note: Bednar said there is a wait list for warriors to get a service dog and volunteers are needed. Anyone interested in learning more should contact Cindy Cope at K9s For Warriors at www.k9sforwarriors.org.]



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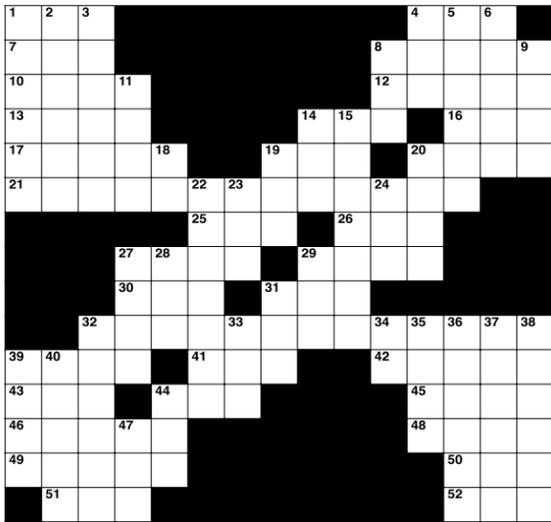


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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Runs PCs
- 4. An entertaining, eccentric person
- 7. Small, faint constellation
- 8. Indigo bush
- 10. Not excessive
- 12. African antelope
- 13. A way to fly a glider
- 14. Tough softly
- 16. In the course of
- 17. Early Mesoamerican people
- 19. A way to drop down
- 20. Mistake!
- 21. Housing developments
- 25. Baseball stat
- 26. No (Scottish)
- 27. Type of cuisine
- 29. British Army infantrymen (abbr.)
- 30. Marry
- 31. Buffer solution
- 32. Legendary rock band
- 39. Recording industry show
- 41. A way to consume
- 42. Lake in Botswana
- 43. Political action committee
- 44. Field force unit (abbr.)
- 45. Very eager
- 46. Excessive fluid accumulation in tissues
- 48. Nocturnal insect
- 49. Challenged to perform
- 50. Thus far
- 51. Famed NYC arena
- 52. Commercials

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Small, purple-black fruit
- 2. Baltimore ballplayer
- 3. Highly seasoned sausage
- 4. Split pulses
- 5. Northwestern Mexico town
- 6. Edible fruit
- 8. Upper-class southern young woman
- 9. Sums up
- 11. The most worthless part
- 14. Dash
- 15. Sufferings
- 18. Clearinghouse (abbr.)
- 19. Indian title of respect
- 20. Poems meant to be sung
- 22. Actor Cooper
- 23. Luke's mentor ___-Wan
- 24. Clumsy person
- 27. Figures
- 28. Polish Baltic coast peninsula
- 29. Old cloth
- 31. Explosive
- 32. Automobiles
- 33. 007's creator
- 34. The Volunteer State
- 35. Old Irish alphabet
- 36. Japanese city
- 37. Portrayed emotion
- 38. Observers
- 39. Mimicked
- 40. Polite reference to a woman
- 44. Male parent
- 47. Peter Griffin's daughter

GREEN THUMB WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- AERATION
- COMPOST
- CONTROL
- CRABGRASS
- DROUGHT
- ENRICHMENT
- FERTILIZATION
- GRASS
- GREENERY
- GRUBS
- HOSE
- IRRIGATION
- LEVELS
- MOLD
- MOLES
- MULCH
- PESTS
- PLANTS
- PRUNING
- RAINING
- RESEEDING
- SOIL
- WEEDS
- YARD



Solve the code to discover words related to lawn care. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 1 = E)

A. 20 6 18 1 16
Clue: Cuts grass

B. 18 1 1 23 15
Clue: Unwanted plants

C. 21 1 16 10 26 11 26 7 1
Clue: Feed greenery

D. 11 3 4 23 15 12 3 24 1
Clue: Visual features of a yard

Eagle Scout cont. from pg. 1

markers and a picnic table along the trail. The group was led by Jack Wilcox, as his Eagle project, at the request of St. Johns County. The mile markers have been long needed, as they not only help county workers get a better sense of direction on the trail for maintenance projects, but also help direct any potential emergency services who may need to respond to incidents.



Seck Lim (BSA district representative), Steve Jones (St. Johns County Parks and Rec), Manny H, Oliver W, Eric D, Ethan F, parents Tim and Sheri Wilcox, Jack Wilcox, and Cle W.

"I was initially only going to install the picnic table and replace the benches," Wilcox said, "but the county asked if I could install the set of mile markers. I wasn't thinking about doing the mile markers, as there was already a set along the trail, but they wanted them replaced as they were slightly inaccurate, a bit old, and not as consistent (only being every half-mile)."

The Eagle project was in the works for quite some time, with

the mile markers themselves needing to be engraved first on a prior workday. Another group of volunteers participated in that first workday, sealing and carving each wooden post in Wilcox's garage on a rainy Saturday morning in January. On the day of installing the mile markers, an employee from the county drove his truck alongside the volunteers as they dug the post-holes, inserted the markers, and dry-packed the hole with concrete. The group also replaced the top

boards on a bench, and installed a picnic table kit provided by the county in one of the ideal rest stops along the trail.

Wilcox said he's pleased with the finished project.

"I find it really important, as now there is something impactful I can leave behind in the community," he said.

In addition to trail maintenance, the St. Johns County offers several other volunteer opportunities across many of the amenities and sites that they manage. Anyone looking to help out can call the Parks and Recreation Department at (904) 209-0333. In addition, local BSA Troop 23 would love to help out on other projects that the community may need. If an organization is in need of some extra volunteers, or you are interested in joining the Troop yourself, reach out to the troopmaster at PatrickJohns.Troop23Nocatee@troopmaster.email.



Scouts installing a picnic table kit.

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PopHistory

By Scott A. Grant
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The Greatest Story Ever Told

Marine archaeologists recently discovered the wreck of the “Endurance” off the coast of Antarctica, at the bottom of the Weddell Sea. How that ship got there and what happened to its crew is one of the greatest stories ever told.

Ernest Shackleton was one of several early nineteenth century adventurer-explorers seeking to “discover” the South Pole. In 1908, Shackleton got closer than anyone had so far. He made it within 97 miles of the coveted pole.

Unfortunately for Shackleton, in 1911, the Norwegian Roald Amundsen and Shackleton’s fellow Brit, Robert Falcon Scott, engaged in an epic race to be first to the pole. Amundsen brought all the right people and all the right stuff. He easily made it there first, returning safely. Scott brought the wrong people and wrong stuff. Scott and his party faltered on their return and eventually died atop the Beardmore Glacier. The final entry in his journal began with the chilling words “Had we lived...”

What is an Antarctic explorer to do once the Pole has been discovered? Shackleton came up with the idea of leading an expedition that would march across the continent. Shackleton raised money for the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition and acquired a ship, the “Endurance.” In late 1914, shortly after the beginning of World War I, Shackleton and 27 crew members set out.

It was a particularly cold summer at the South Pole and as the “Endurance” approached Antarctica it became stuck in the ice. The ice swelled, as ice tends to do, ultimately crushing the “Endurance” and sending her to the bottom. Shackleton and his men, now trapped on the ice, began to march toward the open sea, dragging their three lifeboats behind them. They made less than a mile per day, but soon realized that the currents in the Weddell Sea were moving counterclockwise pushing the ice out to sea near an archipelago off the Antarctic coast.

They decided to camp on the ice and let nature do its work. And so, they floated northwest on the melting ice until it became too unstable. They loaded everything into their three lifeboats and rowed hard toward Elephant Island. Captain Frank Worsley got them there and for the first time in months, the crew of the Endurance set foot on dry land. But they were far from safe. No one was coming to their rescue. No one even knew they were there.

Shackleton had the largest of the lifeboats, the James Caird, fitted with a sail and decking. Together with Worsley and four others he set out to sail 800 miles across the most dangerous ocean in the world to the whaling station on South Georgia Island off the coast of Argentina. Getting to South Georgia was a little like finding a needle in a haystack. Along the way, they were hit by a monstrous rogue wave, but the Caird somehow stayed afloat. After 17 days at sea in the tiny boat, they made landfall on South Georgia Island.

But they were on the wrong side. Rather than risk the sea again, Shackleton determined to hike across the island and its 3,000-foot-high central ridge. Three members of the party were too weak to continue. Shackleton left them in a cave and set out to cross the island with Worsley and one other. As they approached the top of the mountain, both Shackleton and Worsley had the distinct impression that a fourth, unseen figure, was traveling with them. As they crested the summit, they realized to their dismay that the descent was going to be more difficult than the ascent.

They were exhausted. It was getting dark. The situation was desperate. So, they made the decision to place their lives in the hands of providence and slide down a large glacier on their butts, not knowing what awaited them at the bottom. The next morning, they walked into the Norwegian whaling station. Shackleton had torn his pants on the slide down the mountain. He apologized profusely for arriving at the manager’s house in ripped pants.

The three crewmen on the far side of the island were quickly rescued. Those stranded in Antarctica would have to wait three more months. Shackleton begged and borrowed the service of three ships; none of them made it through the ice. Finally, on his fourth attempt aboard the Chilean tugboat “Yelcho,” the waters cleared. As the heavy fog lifted, the 21 stranded crewmen saw something they had given up hope of ever seeing: a rescue ship.

Shackleton brought home all 27 members of his expedition. Miraculously, no one died. Five years later, Shackleton made another attempt. He died of a heart attack on South Georgia Island. He is buried there.

Scott A. Grant is a local historian and author. By day, he is president of fiduciary asset manager, Standfast Asset Management.

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PVHS Law Enforcement Club cont. from pg. 1

“As it turns out, it has been the best decision in my career,” said Monie, who has been at Ponte Vedra High School for one year.

Monie sees the club as a great way to mentor students and offer some direction, something he was lucky enough to receive throughout his career. He said he would have loved to be in a club like this when he was in high school.

“When I first became a deputy, my first sergeant and corporal (Sgt. Randy McCullough and Cpl. Chuck Griffin, both now retired) were instrumental in getting me where I am today as a law enforcement officer. They took the time to guide me and show me the right way of doing things. I always think about them, even to this day,” said Monie.

Email Deputy Monie at jmonie@sjso.org for more information about joining the Law Enforcement Club.

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PVHS Academic World Quest team makes nationals

By Sade Goodridge
mail@floridanewline.com

Sometimes, the sweetest of victories follow the greatest of trials.

Academic World Quest is a one-night trivia contest where students across the country are invited to put their global knowledge to the test. Before the event,

teams are provided with a study guide that contains articles and academic journals that pertain to United States international affairs. During competition time, the questions come exclusively from these sources. In teams of four, each group has 30 seconds to buzz in their answer in hopes of gaining enough points to win the meet. A winning team member, Roberto

Lachner, says, "It's not about speed, it's about accuracy."

To qualify for nationals, each region across the country holds a meet of its own. Ponte Vedra High School had multiple teams competing, with the winning team consisting of Lachner, Grace Nuri, Ella McCarthy, and Ben Black. Northeast Florida's regional competition was held in the University of North Florida's Hubert building and topics included climate change and cryptocurrency.

Ponte Vedra High School's Model United Nations and Academic World Quest team had been through many ups and downs; between troubles with sponsors and the emergence of the COVID-19 virus, the incoming presidents for the 2021 – 22 school year, Landon McIntosh and Sara Molloy, were rightfully nervous for the upcoming competition.

Yet, miracles do happen.

The year started with a record of 40 delegates to GatorMUN, a Model UN meeting that takes place at the University of Florida. Good fortune continued to the PVHS Academic World Quest team, with minimal preparation, qualifying for nationals.

After a tense couple of rounds, the PVHS team scored a victory. The prize includes suitcases with a duffel bag and a ticket to nationals in Washington, D.C. in April.

The event in D.C. will be a two-day affair where the competition consists of 10 questions per 10 topics. Despite the study guide material being quite tedious, the Ponte Vedra High School team still has high hopes for success. President Sara Molloy believes "working in a team brings higher levels of success."

With prizes on the line such as a \$3,000 scholarship, team member McCarthy feels



Photo courtesy Sade Goodridge
Ella McCarthy, Ben Black, Roberto Lachner, Grace Nuri, and the chairman of Academic World Quest Jacksonville.

confident in her team's success, saying, "Model UN helped."

Academic World Quest truly is a competition for those who have a greater interest in global affairs and the Academic World Quest Club highly recommends competing if one is interested in foreign affairs. The team's greatest advice? Study thoroughly and trust your team.

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Begin planning kids' summer recreation now

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Summer school recess will be here before you know it. Make sure you're prepared for camp and other recreational programs. Parents thinking ahead to swimming pools and days lounging on the beach can put their daydreams to practical use by planning ahead for their youngsters' summer vacations.

Youth recreational programs and summer camps can bridge the gap in care between the end of school and the day when classes resume. Due in part to high demand, parents who want to place their kids in summer rec programs or summer camps should be vetting such programs and camps well in advance of summer. The following are a handful of tips for moms and dads who want their kids to have fun and fulfilling summers.

- Ask for recommendations. Speak with fellow parents and trusted friends about where they send their children. Personal recommendations can be helpful, providing firsthand insight into a particular camp or program. Schedule appointments to visit camps that fall within your budget. Take your son or daughter along so he or she can get a sense of what camp will be like.

- Explore all options. Camps come in more flavors than ever before. Certain camps may be faith-based ministries while others may focus on particular sports. Band camps and art camps may

appeal to creative kids. Also, there are plenty of general-interest camps that offer various activities without narrowing in on any particular one.

- Inquire about camp schedules. While many camps are flexible, day camps do not have the same level of flexibility as after-school programs. Arrangements will need to be made if care is required after regular camp hours. Speak with camp staff to see which types of after-hours programs, if any, are available.

- Determine your camp budget. As varied as program offerings may be, camps also can vary greatly with regard to cost. Government-run camps may be less expensive than those offered by private companies. Find out if a particular organization subsidizes a portion of camp costs. Scouting programs often have a dedicated camp and may offer affordable options for scouts. Martial arts schools and dance centers frequently offer camp schedules.

If camp seems out of reach, look into local summer recreation programs at parks or schools. Such programs may not be as extensive as those offered by camps, but they can quell kids' boredom and keep children occupied during the day.

In addition to camp, remember to plan for some free days so children can just enjoy some downtime. Such days can break up the monotony of a routine and provide kids and families time to relax together.



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Nocatee residents collect donations for Ukraine



Photos courtesy Anna Dichev

Nocatee resident Anna Dichev, who moved to Florida from Russia in 2020, recently helped to gather supplies at her home, serving as a collection site for locals to donate to Ukraine. Diapers, wipes, medications, clothes and other baby supplies filled her garage and a warehouse space in March, and she plans to continue receiving items until there is no longer a need. Dichev said that Nocatee and surrounding residents generously donated to the cause and continue to do so. All items are being delivered to St. Augustine resident Margarita Bezkrornaya, whose company is continually sending items to a humanitarian group in Ukraine through FedEx/DHL. Email Dichev at anadicheva@icloud.com for more information about making a donation.

Newcomers Alumnae enjoy fashion show

Newcomers Alumnae held their popular Spring Fashion Show on March 2 at Marsh Landing Country Club. The annual luncheon event was sponsored by Lemon Twist, an upscale boutique located at the Sawgrass Village Shopping Center. The ladies in attendance enjoyed a showing of the latest Spring styles. Eight members of this local women's social club modeled sportswear and accessories from well-known designers. The event was moderated by Diana Edwards, owner of Lemon Twist, with assistance from Debbie Williams and Grace Edwards. Pictured are Donna Berger, Nancy Scott, Amy Pizzarello, Carla Downes, Sandra Bertoglio, Sharon Trumbull, Susan Geisler and Marilyn LoSchiavo. Newcomers Alumnae is a women's social group formed in 1998. Some of the activities offered are adventures and outings, book club, bunco, canasta, happy hour, lunch out, mah jongg, and wine socials. Luncheons are held the first Wednesday of every month, and they welcome new members throughout the year. Visit www.newcomersalumnaefl.wildapricot.org or email brookemeister@msn.com for more information.



Photo courtesy Maria Woodford



Think you're not at risk for lung cancer? Think again.

Unfortunately, if you quit smoking 15 years ago or less, you may be at risk for developing lung cancer. You could also be at risk even if you have no family history and no symptoms.

What can you do to reduce your risk and catch lung cancer early?

Consider a lung cancer screening. Early detection of lung cancer can save your life. If you meet the following criteria, you could be eligible for a low-dose CT lung cancer screening, which is covered by Medicare and many insurance plans.

- ✓ You are between 50 and 77 years old.
- ✓ You have a 20 pack-year history of smoking or more (this means 1 pack a day for 20 years, 2 packs a day for 10 years, etc).
- ✓ You are a current smoker or have quit within the last 15 years.

To see if this screening is right for you, talk with your primary care physician or go to baptistjax.com/lungscreening.

Baptist Health offers lung cancer screenings throughout Northeast Florida, including at **Baptist Medical Center Beaches**.



Travel

World's first theme park for preschoolers: Peppa Pig

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

I first encountered Peppa Pig, a children's TV show, when visiting my son and his family in Baltimore. My three-year-old granddaughter was watching, so I joined her. The charm of the animated characters speaking with British accents captivated me: Peppa, her brother George, and Mommy and Daddy Pig.

Preschoolers adore the show, and their parents approve; thus, Peppa gained a following and rose to fame. Now, she stars in her own theme park located in Winter Haven, Florida, adjacent to Legoland. I checked out the preschooler's playground, a Certified Autism Center, and found it "oinktastic," as Peppa might say.

Rides and attractions are sized for children five and younger and handicapped accessible, but some require a minimum height. Daddy Pig's Roller Coaster ranks as the most adventurous. Take a seat behind Daddy Pig's red car — and you're off. The caravan scoots participants up (not too high) and then rolls the vehicles down and around numerous swift curves. Once was enough for me, but Izzy Hough of Clermont, celebrating her fifth birthday, claimed the roller coaster as her favorite attraction in the park.

Grampy Rabbit's Dinosaur Adventure (very tame) gently rocks a seated child and adult around the dino quest grounds. High Striker slides seated riders

up and down a bench attached to a tower. You can ride in a boat or hot air balloon or let your kiddos pedal a tricycle (two sizes) within a confined path.

Allow time to explore the Fun Fair with traditional games, a playground with a giant sandbox, nature trail, maze, fort, and greenhouse.

Water's always a winner. Muddy Puddles Splash Pad tickles the piggies with cooling spray via sprouting fountains and watery showers. Here, I found Izzy's sister, Eden, sopping wet. Eden, celebrating her second birthday, was delighted. Eden's mom, Christina, suggested visitors bring towels for drying off.

The park gets direct sun, so bring plenty of sunscreen and hats. If you get hot (and you will), take a break and head inside to watch some episodes of Peppa Pig on the big screen. Peppa and her family also perform live shows on a stage covered by a tent throughout the day. Check the schedule for Peppa's personal meet and greet sessions.

You can save by purchasing single-day tickets online at \$30.99 instead of the \$35 price at the gate. Everyone two and older needs a ticket. I was pleased to



Peppa Pig.

hear you can bring food into the playspace, another way to keep costs down.

To avoid peak crowds (snort, snort), choose a weekday, arrive before the park opens at 10 a.m., or start your visit in the afternoon. Many families leave in the early afternoon.

I also spent a night in the Pirate Island section of the Legoland Hotel. Each room includes a king-size bed and a separate sleeping space (bunk beds with a trundle) for kids. Colorful pirate-themed murals cover the walls. Legos, of course — a container of them below the TV. The most fun thing about the room is following the treasure hunt that unlocks



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Park sign.



On the roller coaster.

hidden treats.

While you might need to rob a treasure chest to afford the hotel rates, the facility offers many advantages: you can park and leave your car for free, walk only steps to Peppa Pig or Legoland theme parks, go back to your room for nap time, and extend the day at the hotel's pool and waterpark. A mini-golf course and s'more fire pit are located on the property near the lake. Two restaurants await any hunger needs. The waiters serve complimentary breakfast at your table. The Shipwreck Restaurant serves bountiful family-style dinners — reservations suggested.

For a fun day and more information: VisitCentralFlorida.com.

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



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- Dorothy



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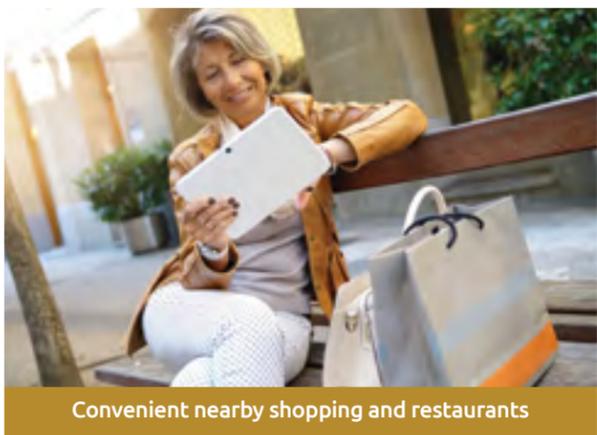
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