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Photo courtesy Donna Ott

Ketterlinus Elementary School students were welcomed by first responders on the first day of school.

## St. Johns County goes back to school

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewsline.com

For the first time in three years, St. Johns County students returned to school on Aug. 10, the earliest date allowed by state law and the preferred date by school district officials since it allows students to complete the first semester prior to winter break. Due to some minor construction delays, the county's newest school, Beachside High School, opened a few days later on Aug. 15.

"From everything I've heard, the first day of school around the county went smoothly," School Board member Patrick Canan said. "Kudos especially to everyone at Beachside High School for work-

**SCHOOL** cont. on pg. 2

## Second Alarmers: Saying thank you to First Responders

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
mail@floridanewsline.com

David Kirschbaum grew up in Philadelphia, becoming a volunteer firefighter when he was 40 years old. It was something he wanted to do most of his life and his energy for the job earned him the "Rookie of the Year" award.

"It is an amazing feeling to be able to help someone in their time of need," said Kirschbaum, who served for 10 years.

When Kirschbaum became a St. Johns County resident in 2006, he took that same energy to local firefighters, looking for a chance to both support and thank them for a job well-done. In 2015, he created the 2nd Alarmers Association of St. Johns County to do just that.

"The organization's focus is on providing whatever services to the firefighters we can give while the first responders are on the scene of an emergency incident," said Kirschbaum. "We do not do any firefighting, medical or rescue work, but we do provide the firefighters with the means to rehydrate as well as refill and replace their air tanks once they have exited a burning structure."

There are currently 30 members of the



Photo courtesy David Kirschbaum

2nd Alarmers members who volunteered to help with Covid paperwork at a vaccine site, Solomon Callhoun Center.

organization, some with a firefighting background, some with none; however, all members have the same mission: take care of first responders.

"My motto is 'you can take care of the fire, we take care of the firefighters,'" said Kirschbaum. "We like to fill in the gaps."

Member Lee Gilbert has been volunteering for five years, and he is willing to go

to any call even when it takes him 50 minutes to get there. Gilbert lives in the southern part of St. Johns County.

"Anything we can do to help make the job easier," he said. "I would not be doing this if I did not feel appreciated."

Gilbert has an emergency services background that began when he was just 15 years old as a fire cadet. He was a volunteer firefighter for 38 years and retired in 2013 as a 911 Communications Supervisor in Virginia.

Kirschbaum, who lives in the north end of St. Johns County, said he was familiar with 2nd Alarmers from his time in Philadelphia, but very few places have such an organization. When he first approached St. Johns County fire stations with the idea, he sensed some skepticism initially. Once the idea was approved, the group grew and became very much accepted. Kirschbaum said he is deeply touched anytime he is thanked by firefighters, and he is constantly trying to find more ways to help.

"The biggest reward I get is when a firefighter comes up to me and shakes my hand and says thank you. It takes



Photo courtesy David Kirschbaum

Dan Nichols providing water to a firefighter after he came out of a residential structure fire.

**Second Alarmers** cont. on pg. 5

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**SCHOOL** cont. from pg. 1

ing all weekend and getting the doors opened to students on Aug. 15.”

According to the school district, the student count for the St. Johns County School District on the first day of school, Aug. 10, was 43,409, an increase of 1,665 students or 4 percent over last year’s first day number of 41,744. This count only includes approximately 34 percent of all kindergarten students, since schools stagger the kindergarten start date over a three-day period. St. Johns County continues to be one of the fastest growing school districts in the state.

At Gamble Rogers Middle School, with an expected attendance of about 900 students this school year, Principal Brian Wilson was pleased with the new school year as well as the shift to a more tradi-

tional schedule, rather than the modified block schedule of the past few years.

“We had a wonderful first day of school. There was a lot of positive energy exhibited by students and shared by our staff,” Wilson said. “Last year we were unable to meet with large groups of students at the beginning of the year due to continued contract tracing related to Covid protocols. This year we were able to meet with each grade level on the second day of school to share school-wide expectations and positive behavior incentives.”

Also noteworthy at Gamble Rogers, Wilson said shifts of the school’s human resources have resulted in smaller class sizes, especially for sixth graders.

At Ketterlinus Elementary School near the historic downtown area, city police and firefighters were on hand to welcome students back to school.

Jennifer Gamble, assistant principal of Sebastian Middle School, said that the first day at her school was also a success.

“Students were greeted by teachers and staff and there were smooth transitions between classes with plenty of support for students to find their way,” Gamble said. “Teachers focused on getting to know their students and building relationships with ice breaker activities and reviewing expectations. Guidance department was on hand to assist students with schedules. Students were smiling as they were going home for the day and when asked about their favorite classes, many said, ‘all of them!’”

This year, Sebastian Middle School will



Photo courtesy Brian Wilson  
Gamble Rogers Middle Schoolers on the first day of school.

implement its Single School Culture in all classes. There is an alignment of expectations and procedures for all students so that students feel safe and can focus on learning. All teachers review the Single School Culture with their classes. Additionally, new teachers in Dance, Theatre, STEM and Core Classes are excited to be a part of Sebastian team. Finally, Sebastian Middle School will be having more clubs on Tuesdays and Thursdays as well as having more special events that reward students for having good character.

“The preparation from administration, teachers and support staff to welcome students on the first day was amazing,” said Superintendent Tim Forson. “As I visited schools it was wonderful to see the excitement of students as they greeted school staff, engaged with friends and started getting acquainted with their teachers.”

School district staff will continue to monitor attendance numbers, balance classrooms and refine bus routes in the coming weeks.



Photo courtesy Donna Ott  
Friends on the first day of school at Ketterlinus.



Photo courtesy Jennifer Gamble  
Sebastian Middle School's sixth grade STEM class, where students are engaged in TinkerCAD and some flight simulation.

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450 State Road 13 North  
Suite 106 PMB 101  
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**

Linda Gay

Linda@FloridaNewsLine.com

(904) 607-5062 cell

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## BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

### Meet DeeDee!



**Breed:**

Shetland Sheepdog

**Favorite Activities:**

Carrying around my squeaky hedgehog toy

**Favorite Treat:**

Blueberry Greenies

**Favorite Friends:**

My family, especially my mama

**How did she get her name:**

DeeDee was a rescue. She had been named by her previous owners.

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

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## MYSTERY PHOTO

?

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?

Last month's Mystery Photo was Scarlett O'Hara's.

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Answers  
to our Puzzles  
PG 8

CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Answers: A. canine B. bark C. care D. owner

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# September

## Community Calendar What's Happening in St. Augustine

**6th:** **Tuesday Movie Night featuring "Jungle Cruise"** will be held at the Southeast Branch of the St. Johns County Public Library, 6670 US Highway 1 South, on Sept. 6 beginning at 5:30 p.m. Registration at [sjcpls.org](http://sjcpls.org) is required for these events.

**7th:** **"Give Me a Break! How Respite Care Can Support You and Your Loved One,"** a free workshop offering information about the different types of respite care available, associated costs, and what to ask or look for in a respite care provider and presented by Caregiver Coalition of Northeast Florida, a program of ElderSource, will be held from 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. on Sept. 7. The program will be presented both in person and online. Registration via Eventbrite (<https://bit.ly/3pnSK3b>). Call (904) 391-6603 for more information.

**12th:** **Romp and Rhyme Storytime** will be held at the Southeast Branch of the St. Johns County Public Library, 6670 US Highway 1 South, on Mondays, Sept. 12, Sept. 19, and Sept. 26 at 10:30 a.m. Sing songs, dance with scarves, bounce along to rhymes, and read interactive stories to begin your little

one's lifetime love of reading.

**12th:** **The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable** will meet on Monday, Sept. 12 at 12 p.m. via Zoom. The meeting will feature guest speaker Bill Lazar, executive director of St. Johns Housing Partnership. Email [info@sjcroundtable.org](mailto:info@sjcroundtable.org) to register for the meeting or visit [www.sjcroundtable.org](http://www.sjcroundtable.org) for more information about the St. Johns County Civic Roundtable.

**13th:** **Beaches Go Green Eco-Cinema Series continues with Part 3: Endangered Mermaids** on Sept. 13 at the St. Augustine Yacht Club, 442 Ocean Vista Ave. in St. Augustine. Gates open at 6 p.m. and the show starts at 7 p.m. Visit [beachesgogreen.org](http://beachesgogreen.org) for more information.

**13th:** **AAUW St. Augustine Branch** will hold a branch general meeting at 4 p.m. on Sept. 13 at the St. Johns County Main Library, 1960 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd. in St. Augustine. At 5 p.m., St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes will discuss rules and changes for the upcoming November election. Contact Maxine Burns

at [mmmburns@yahoo.com](mailto:mmmburns@yahoo.com) for more information.

**15th:** **Mystery Authors Panel** will feature four mystery authors to discuss their writing and will be moderated by author Nancy Quatrano. The event will be held at The Waterworks next to the Main Library, 1960 N. US Highway 1 South, from 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 15. This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Main Library and is free and open to the public.

**15th - 17th:** **Annual Jacksonville Quiltfest** will be held at the Prime Osborn Convention Center in downtown Jacksonville from Sept. 15 - 17, daily from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. with admission price of \$14 per person. More than 400 quilts will be on display as well as special exhibits, vendors, small charity auction quilts, a quilt sale room, a quilt appraiser, and more. This all volunteer event is hosted by six sister quilt guilds. Visit [www.quiltfestjax.com](http://www.quiltfestjax.com) for more information.

**17th:** **The Northeast Florida Chapter of Sisters in Crime** will meet on Sept. 17 at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd.

(FOL Room) on Saturday, July 9. Doors open at 10 a.m. and the meeting starts at 10:15 a.m. The program is "Mini-Workshop #1: Streaming Consciousness: A tool for helping the development of your writing skills." 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](http://www.nefloridasistersincrime.org) for more information.

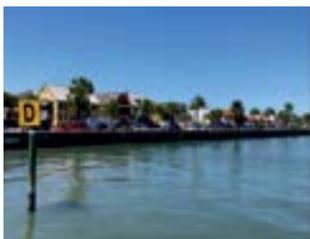
**24th:** **GTM Research Reserve** will host its monthly Beach Cleanup on Saturday, Sept. 24 from 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. No registration is required; meet at the Visitor Center, 505 Guana River Road in Ponte Vedra Beach where gloves and trash bags will be provided. Visit [gtmnerr.org](http://gtmnerr.org) for more information.

**29th:** **Fall Book Sale hosted by the Friends of the Southeast Branch Library** will be held Sept. 29, Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 at the Southeast Branch of the St. Johns County Public Library, 6670 US Highway 1 South. Hours are 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. on Thursday and Friday and 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Saturday.

Welcome to the new

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**Guest Column**

**General Election: Important upcoming dates**

By St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Now that the August Primary Election is behind us, it's time to focus on the quickly approaching November 8 General Election. It's not too early to begin preparing. Here are some important dates:

- Sept. 24: Vote-by-mail ballots mailed to overseas and military voters
- Sept. 29: Vote-by-mail ballots mailed to domestic voters who request them
- Oct. 11: Last day to register to vote
- Oct. 26 – Nov. 5: Early Voting
- Nov. 8: Election Day with polls open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Eight early voting locations will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily in St. Johns County. Locations will be announced soon. Early voting dates include two Saturdays and a Sunday, so you can vote at your convenience.

Because the General Election is an open election, party affiliation does not matter. All voters receive the same ballots, all candidates and parties are listed on the ballot, and voters may vote for

whomever they choose. Several retention questions regarding the Supreme Court Justices and the 5th District Court of Appeal Judges will appear on the ballot. There will also be three constitutional amendments on the ballot and one local referendum. Sample ballots will be mailed to all voters approximately three weeks prior to the election, so you will have plenty of time to study your ballot and prepare to vote.

For those of you who missed the opportunity to vote in the August Primary but plan to vote at your precinct on Election Day, it's important you remember things have changed since the 2020 General Election. Due to the 2020 Census and the 2021 redistricting process, St. Johns County has new voting districts, new precincts, and some new polling locations. If you plan to vote on Election Day, be sure to verify your polling location as it may have changed.

My staff and I look forward to serving you and we will make it easy for you to vote. For more registration and election information visit our website at [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) or call the office at (904) 823-2238 for assistance with any questions.



Photo courtesy David Kirschbaum  
Lee Gilbert waiting to help repack hoses at a fire.

**Second Alarmers** cont. from pg. 1

my breath away. It is not expected, but it certainly makes me feel very proud," said Kirschbaum, adding that a new truck, not yet in service, has the 2nd Alarmers logo on it which is a true honor.

The 2nd Alarmers are alerted to an emergency incident through a text message and arrive on scene in personal vehicles. They are available 24/7 all year long, he said.

"It is not uncommon to get called out in the middle of the night," he said.

Members also help at trainings, at THE PLAYERS, and assisted with paperwork when Covid vaccines were first administered, logging 5,000 volunteer hours during that time.

"We all really worked as a team," he said.

"We have a great group of volunteers."

Kirschbaum noted that no money from the county is used for the organization, and there are no member dues. Kirschbaum said the group conducts its own fundraising efforts and does accept donations to buy things like electrolyte powder and towels for the firefighters. The group also purchased a wagon to use on site to hold air bottles.

The 2nd Alarmers also help wrapping toys for the Firefighters for Families organization during Christmas time. Again, the group is eager to help in any way, said Kirschbaum.

*[Author's note: Kirschbaum said the organization is always looking for new members (21 years of age and older). The first step is to fill out an application with St. Johns County. For more information, email Kirschbaum at [2ndalarmers@gmail.com](mailto:2ndalarmers@gmail.com).]*



**St. Johns County School Board Member Patrick Canan, District 5**

**Q: Can you share any insight on the first day of school in St. Johns County?**

A: Everything went well. I do have some statistics to demonstrate the growth we are seeing in our county. As of the fourth day of school this year, we have 48,384 students. Last year, on the fourth day of school, we had 45,369 students, which is an increase of 3,015 students in just one year or a 6.65 percent increase.

**Q: Have you visited the new Beachside High School?**

A: I did visit Beachside High School early in the week before it opened on Aug. 15. They were working on punch list-type items as well as getting internet working. Also, they have been having trouble getting supplies of asphalt, so they were still working on the parking lot. It looked to me at the time like they still had a lot to do. But work continued all weekend and they were able to open the doors on Aug. 15, as planned (still after the Aug. 10 start date of the other schools in the district).

I traditionally visit all the schools in my district on the first day of school, but this year was unable to do so. I

plan to visit them during the second week of school.

**Q: Can you tell us what changes have been made and what directions given to teachers with regard to compliance of the newly signed HB 7?**

A: Yes, directions have been given to our teachers from the district and they are aware of these new requirements. I can say that I sympathize with the teachers, as it appears to me that they are somewhat on edge about what they can and cannot say. This is a vague law that offers unclear direction.

**Q: Have school libraries removed any books as a result of HB 1467?**

A: There hasn't been a lot of direction on this to our educators because the Department of Education is heading up the process and will be training the state's media specialists themselves later in the school year. At this time, the acquisition of new materials is on hold; we've asked the media specialists not to order any new titles. Any removal of titles is happening through the committee process already in place.

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

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

**St. Johns County Tax Collector Dennis**

**Hollingsworth and staff wish you a happy birthday!**

Remember to renew your vehicle registration and tag, or boat registration and decal before midnight on your birthday (or the expiration date on your auto or boat registration).

Generally, auto and boat registrations expire annually on the birthday of the first owner listed on the registration. This applies to passenger cars, recreational vehicles, light trucks under 7,999 lbs., small trailers, motorcycles and boats.

Some exceptions include company owned vehicles which are renewed in June; some lease vehicles; and truck-tractors, semi-trailers, trucks over 7,999 lbs., and nine-passenger automobiles for hire which must be renewed in December.

Vehicle registrations and tags may be renewed 90 days prior to their expiration.

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

**Q. You recently presented the county's annual financial report to the Board of County Commissioners. What was the takeaway message?**

A. The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2021 is a detailed 272-page analysis of the county's financial condition at the end of the last full fiscal year. The big picture message from our independent auditor is that St. Johns County is in a very healthy financial position overall. The full report is online at [stjohnsclerk.com/county-annual-financial-report/](http://stjohnsclerk.com/county-annual-financial-report/) and in mid-September, our public-friendly "snapshot" version, the Popular Annual Financial Report, will be available online and in print.

**Q. How did the recent Passport Saturday special event go? Any surprises?**

A. We had a great turnout, with nearly 700 residents and visitors coming through our doors, so we're excited about doing it again soon. We processed nearly 200 passports. Perhaps the biggest surprise was that many people didn't realize we process passports Monday – Friday on a walk-in basis at the courthouse location, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., and by appointment at our annexes in Julington Creek and Ponte Vedra. Our passports webpage has all the details: [stjohnsclerk.com/passports/](http://stjohnsclerk.com/passports/).

**Q. Is St. Johns County having any issues with jury duty scams?**

A. We receive calls regularly from residents who've been contacted by scammers impersonating law enforcement or our staff, claiming that they missed jury duty and must pay a financial penalty. Some claim there's a warrant out for the resident's arrest. Scammers may even use the real names of local officers and be quite realistic, so the phone call can sound very real. A few things to remember: We'll never phone, text or email a resident to request payment for failure to appear for jury duty. When residents don't respond to a summons for jury duty, we contact them through an official letter sent through the U.S. Postal Service. Before penalties would be imposed, you would be required to appear in court, where a judge would order any penalties. And you'd never be asked by our office to pay using gift cards. Please report scams to the Florida Office of the Attorney General. For information about jury duty, call (904) 819-3629.

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

A. Our office number is (904) 819-3600 or call me directly at (904) 599-8688 if I may ever be of service. The Richard O. Watson Judicial Center is located at 4010 Lewis Speedway in St. Augustine.

## Guest Column

### Property taxes in St. Johns County and the importance of homestead exemption

By St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer, CFA

I have had the honor and privilege of being the St. Johns County Property Appraiser for the past five and a half years. During this period our county has grown dramatically, from 141,000 assessed properties in 2017 to 162,000 assessed properties in 2022. During this time, taxable values in the county have increased 71 percent, from \$24 billion in 2017 to \$41 billion in 2022. What does this mean to you as a property owner? Simply put, your taxes have increased. With no change in the millage rates set by the taxing authorities, your taxes have increased because your value has increased.

While there are several exemptions from property tax available to homeowners, the most important is Homestead Exemption, which is available to all homeowners who own and reside in their property as their primary residence on January 1 of the tax year and receive no other homestead tax benefit in Florida or the United States. Homestead Exemption reduces the taxable value of the property by \$50,000 and places a 3 percent cap on the amount that taxable value can increase each year. The assessment cap limitation on non-homestead properties is much higher at 10 percent.

Property appraisers in Florida's 67 counties are bound by law to appraise your property at just market value as of January 1 each tax year. Your taxable value each year is your just market value less any assessment cap limitations, less Homestead Exemption.

For example, if you owned a homesteaded property on Jan. 1, 2017 with a just market value of \$250,000, your taxable value was \$200,000 (\$250,000 just market value less \$50,000 homestead exemption), and your property taxes were approximately \$2,500. Moving forward to Jan. 1, 2022, based on the increase in the market value of properties in St.

Johns County, your just market value would now be \$462,500, your taxable value would be \$237,500 (\$462,500 less \$50,000 Homestead Exemption, less \$175,000 homestead assessment cap limitation at 3 percent) and your property taxes would be approximately \$3,000, an increase of 20 percent.

If this same property was not homesteaded, in 2022 your taxable value would be \$402,268 (\$462,500 just market value less \$59,873 non-homestead assessment cap limitation at 10 percent) and your property taxes would be approximately \$5,000, a 61 percent increase. You can see the importance of the Homestead Exemption limiting your tax increases due to increases in value (ad-valorem).

More than half of the properties in St. Johns County do not receive Homestead Exemptions. Most of these properties are businesses and residential rentals where tax increases are most certainly passed along to consumers.

Without action by the taxing authorities on millage rates during times of significant growth and market value increases, property taxes increase. And as the example above shows, this increase can be significant.

My office is constitutionally mandated to ensure that you receive all exemptions you are entitled to. Detailed information on exemptions, TRIM notices, tax bills and a tax estimator are available on our website at [www.sjcpa.us](http://www.sjcpa.us). You may also view property record and valuation information and apply for Homestead Exemption online.

*[For purposes of calculations, the millage rate used in the examples above was 12.5. Millage rates vary by municipality and taxing district and do not include CDD fees and other non-ad-valorem fees. Market value growth over the period is 85 percent.]*

## Briefs

### St. Augustine Port, Waterway, and Beach District to contribute toward Genovar Property Purchase

In a unanimous vote by the St. Augustine Port, Waterway, and Beach District, during its Aug. 9, 2022 meeting, \$1.5 million will now go toward funding the purchase of the Genovar property. The contribution by the St. Augustine Port, Waterway, and Beach District demonstrates the widespread support behind St. Johns County's decision to acquire approximately 31 acres on the San Sebastian River, known as the Genovar property, for the future development of a public boat ramp and related uses. During the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners meeting on Aug. 2, 2022, commissioners voted to purchase the property for \$17.5 million.

"I'm thankful for the continued support and partnership from the St. Augustine Port, Waterway, and Beach District. The generous contribution toward purchas-

ing the Genovar property ensures our vision for greater deep-water access and recreational facilities becomes a reality," said St. Johns County Board Chairman Henry Dean, District 5 Commissioner.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to benefit the residents of our District as well as the county as a whole, not just by improving waterway access, but also by adding to the county's growing stock of outstanding public parks, and by ensuring that this extraordinary property remains largely preserved in its beautiful, undeveloped state. We applaud the county for their vision and tenacity in securing the Genovar property for public use and look forward to working together on future improvements," said Matt Brown, chairman of the St. Augustine Port, Waterway, and Beach District.

Closing on the property could occur as early as December 2022. Once the

**Briefs** cont. on pg. 9

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# Life

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## Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
mail@floridanewsline.com

### Branan Ward

Branan Ward grew up in St. Augustine, has moved five times in his life within St. Augustine, and has been married to his high school sweetheart Jackye for 38 years. His background has proven to be the key to his business success, recently marking 15 years in business as the Ward Design Group. It all began when Ward created a website for a large organization that he worked for at the time as a technical director. He learned about graphic design, layout, print, video, and video editing. He then began to transfer old VHS tapes to a digital format for people, editing and cleaning up old home movies during the process. It was a side hobby that turned into a business — something that would become a familiar theme for Ward over the years. Ward continued to concentrate on video work and website development, creating his video company “Laugh and Cry Media” in 2007. Through a networking group that he had joined and a mentor’s advice to choose between video work and website development, Ward narrowed his focus. “I had to pick a lane. So, I decided to build websites. It became a renewable source of income, and I really enjoyed it,” said Ward, 56. Then the early 2000s hit, and social media presented another opportunity for Ward to help his clients, this time through digital marketing. “This directly affects the business owner’s bottom line,” he said. “It was another opportunity for me to



Photo courtesy Branan Ward

take care of folks.” Eventually, Ward’s business expanded even further and became somewhat of a family affair. Jackye, whose family is deaf, became a licensed sign language interpreter within the medical field once their children were grown. When grandchildren came along, Jackye retired as an interpreter but still wanted to be busy. “She was always a maker,” said Branan. Hippiie Wick Chick, Jackye’s health and beauty company, was a natural development.

**Q: Describe Hippiie Wick Chick and The Hippiie’s Husband.**

A: Hippiie Wick Chick is an all-natural health and beauty company with hand-made natural candles, apothecary items and gifts. Over the years, we have developed a little following. That’s when I decided that I wanted to do something a little more physical. I tried wood-working and found that I was good at it. My hobby turned into a revenue stream, so I created a specialty wood-working business. It was a complement to what my wife was doing, so I named it “The Hippiie’s Husband.” I go out of my way to find exotic wood to use from places such as Brazil and Africa.

**Q: What is your approach to business and life?**

A: I focus on showing up and always taking care of folks. What helps me sleep at night is I really do get a charge out of helping people. That has been an overriding theme in my life. I am on a personal mission to make things better.

**Q: You have been involved with the area Business Networking International (BNI) group for 13 years. How has this been helpful to you?**

A: We have the largest chapter in the country with 90 – 100 people attending the meetings. I have gotten most of my business through the relationships that I have built at BNI. It is a great place to find referrals, and, with such a large group of people, someone is always bound to know the person you might be inquiring about.

**Q: You belong to another networking organization called Karen D. Nutter’s local Mastermind group. What does this entail?**

A: There are only six of us in the group by invitation only. It is all about problem-solving, and it is very private. We help each other out, and it is a very rich experience for us. It is another opportunity for me to give me experience, my suggestions, and my advice and to receive it back as well. That makes me tick.

**Q: Talk about the volunteer work that you do.**

A: I am the chairman of the board of directors for Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Johns County. I have been a member for six years now. I have done video work for St. Francis House and the Boys & Girls Club of St. Augustine. I love to be able to share my creativity and my marketing side with the community.

### Get to Know ...

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

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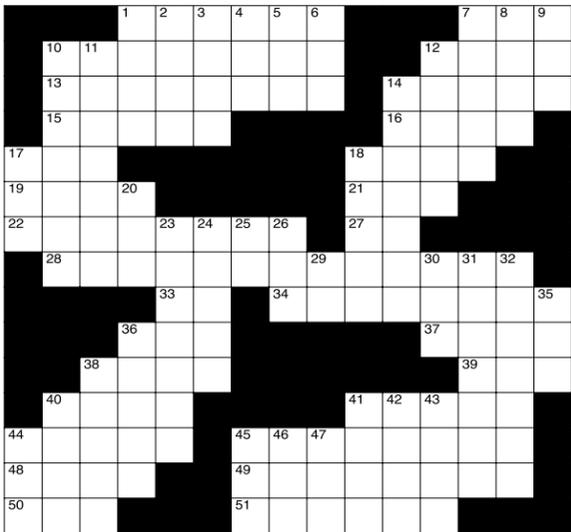
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# Puzzles

Answers on page 3  
Provided by MetroCreative



### CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Grievous
- 7. Queens ballplayer
- 10. Honorable title
- 12. Created
- 13. Grillmasters do it
- 14. Wartime German cargo ship
- 15. Cocoplum
- 16. Hebrew calendar month
- 17. British thermal unit
- 18. Brews
- 19. One of Thor's names
- 21. Decorative scarf
- 22. Clothes
- 27. - \_ : denotes past
- 28. A way to address a lover
- 33. Commercial
- 34. Utters repeatedly
- 36. Google certification (abbr.)
- 37. Taxis
- 38. Belgian village in Antwerp
- 39. Talk excessively
- 40. Broad volcanic crater
- 41. Surgical instrument
- 44. Listens to
- 45. Revelation of a fact
- 48. Paddles
- 49. Heard
- 50. Tooth caregiver
- 51. Metric capacity units

### CLUES DOWN

- 1. Protein-rich liquids
- 2. Musician Clapton
- 3. Wine
- 4. When you hope to arrive
- 5. Something one can get stuck in
- 6. Midway between east and southeast
- 7. Mothers
- 8. German river
- 9. Israeli city \_\_ Aviv
- 10. Discharged
- 11. Areas near the retina
- 12. Greek mythological sorceress
- 14. Very unpleasant smell
- 17. " \_\_ Humbug!"
- 18. White poplar
- 20. Journalist Tarbell
- 23. Teachers
- 24. One older than you
- 25. Long Russian river
- 26. Run batted in
- 29. Beloved Hollywood alien
- 30. Holiday (informal)
- 31. Furniture with open shelves
- 32. Argued
- 35. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- 36. Cars have them
- 38. Volcanic craters
- 40. Made of fermented honey and water
- 41. Shelter for mammals or birds
- 42. One who utilizes
- 43. Moves swiftly on foot
- 44. Builder's trough
- 45. Architectural wing
- 46. 12
- 47. Pacific Standard Time

## GOOD DOG WORD SEARCH

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

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

### WORDS

- AGILITY
- APRON
- BALANCE
- BARK
- BEARD
- BELLY
- BREED
- BRINDLE
- CANINE
- CAPE
- CHAMPION
- CLUB
- CRATE
- CROUP
- DOCKED
- DOG
- HOCKS
- NEUTER
- PET
- SHOW
- SPAY
- TAIL
- VETERINARY
- WITHERS



Solve the code to discover words related to dog ownership. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 15 = E)

- A. 21 8 17 25 17 15  
Clue: Companion animal
- B. 7 8 23 24  
Clue: Dog sound
- C. 21 8 23 15  
Clue: Provide for health
- D. 22 14 17 15 23  
Clue: One who has a pet

## Pantry Raiders

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

# Stir up dinner quickly

The lazy days of summer have started to fade away, and individuals and families will once again be beholden to more rigid schedules packed with activities. When time is of the essence, finding opportunity to cook delicious meals at home can seem challenging. But there are plenty of recipes that whip up in no time and won't disappoint hungry families.

This recipe for "Speedy Beef Stir-Fry with Chunky Vegetables" from "300 Stir-Fry Recipes" (Robert Rose) by Nancie McDermott is one such meal. It evokes the tastes of a favorite Asian restaurant without the need to order takeout.

### Speedy Beef Stir-Fry with Chunky Vegetables

Serves 4

- 1 tbsp. dry sherry or Shaoxing rice wine
- 1 tbsp. water
- ½ tsp. soy sauce, optional
- 2 tsp. cornstarch
- 8 oz. lean boneless beef, thinly sliced
- 3 tbsp. chicken stock
- 2 tsp. soy sauce
- ½ tsp. granulated sugar
- ½ tsp. salt or to taste
- 2 tbsp. vegetable oi
- 2 tsp. chopped garlic
- 2 tsp. finely chopped fresh ginger root
- 1 ½ cups baby corn
- ½ cup sliced water chestnuts
- ½ cup frozen tiny peas

1. In a bowl, combine sherry, water, dark soy sauce, if using, and cornstarch and stir well into a smooth paste. Add beef and stir to coat well. Set aside for 10 minutes.

2. In a small bowl, combine chicken stock, soy sauce, sugar and salt and stir well.

3. Heat a wok or a large deep skillet over high heat. Add oil and swirl to coat pan. Add garlic and ginger and toss well until fragrant, about 15 seconds. Add beef mixture and spread into a single layer. Cook, undisturbed, until edges change color, about 1 minute. Toss well.

4. Add chicken stock mixture, baby corn and water chestnuts. Cook, tossing occasionally, until beef is cooked through, about 2 minutes more. Add peas and cook, tossing once for 1 minute more. Transfer to a serving plate. Serve hot or warm.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative  
Speedy Beef Stir-Fry with Chunky Vegetables

## HUGS restocks schools' emergency food pantries

By Brette Reiman  
mail@floridanewslines.com

To kick off the new school year, local all-volunteer nonprofit HUGS St. Johns restocked emergency food pantries at more than 13 St. Johns County schools and after-school programs, thanks to a generous donation from the Winn-Dixie Gives Foundation. The HUGS pantries serve hundreds of food-insecure children every month by providing kid-friendly, grab and go items that students can discreetly bring home as needed.

"It gives me great relief to no longer worry about whether families have food to eat when our doors are closed, and I look forward to our continued partnership with HUGS," said Rona Welch, Unit Director, The Players Championship Boys & Girls Club, a HUGS Pantry Partner for three years.

According to HUGS volunteer food program coordinator, Holly Ross, "We tailor the program to each school's needs by providing after-school snacks and meals, weekend meals or late-arrival breakfasts. We are so thankful for the incredible support from Winn-Dixie and in-kind donations from families, and also feel so fortunate to have a dedicated, high-energy volunteer team that delivers to schools each month."

With the addition of more school locations and the rise in food costs, the Winn-Dixie donation is impactful.

"As inflationary pressures continue to impact our communities, we want to do our part to aid organizations like HUGS that support families as they plan for the school year ahead," said Shawn Sloan, North Florida region vice president for Winn-Dixie. "We are grateful for this opportunity to serve our neighbors inside and outside of our stores to help restock pantry shelves and cultivate positive learning environments as students head back to class."

St. Johns County has more than 400 children considered homeless each year, and thousands more who are affected by poverty, domestic violence or parent incarceration.

"The help our Title 1 school receives from HUGS is invaluable to our students. By stocking our pantry with nutritious food that is easy to prepare, we are able to send food home with students each Friday who might otherwise have nothing substantial to eat until Monday morning. We are also able to add food to their backpacks midweek for our most food insecure students," said Julie Conoscenti from Gaines Transition School in St. Augustine.

Visit [www.stjohnshugs.org](http://www.stjohnshugs.org) or call (904) 580-4847 for more information about donating to or volunteering with HUGS food programs or clothing programs benefiting St. Johns County children.

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Westminster Woods on Julington Creek is seeking an ADON to direct and supervise, on assigned unit, the daily functions of the nursing staff. Must possess a current, active RN license in Florida & 3 years experience in LTC facility. Apply online through Indeed.

Located in World Golf Village, Westminster St. Septemberine is currently accepting applications for: Nursing (CNA, LPN, RN), Dining Services (Assistant Director, Supervisor, Cook, Baker, Dishwasher, Server), Receptionist (On-call), Housekeeper, Maintenance. Please apply online at: [www.WestminsterStSeptemberineFL.org](http://www.WestminsterStSeptemberineFL.org)

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**Briefs** cont. from pg. 6

property is under county ownership, staff will begin the process of conceptual planning of the site, including community and stakeholder input to ensure the best use for the vast property.

**Tour of Homes tickets to go on sale**

Tickets for the Garden Club of St. Augustine 2022 Tour of Homes will go on sale on Oct. 1.

The 2022 Tour of Homes will be held on Sunday, Dec. 4 beginning at 12 p.m. This year, there will be six decorated homes to visit along with the Tea and Boutique at the River House, 179 Marine Street.

Visit [www.gardenclubofstaugustine.org](http://www.gardenclubofstaugustine.org) for more information.

**Type O blood urgently needed**

OneBlood is experiencing an increased need for Type O blood. Multiple hospitals throughout OneBlood's service area are experiencing high usage of Type O blood and it is putting increased pressure on the blood supply.

"It is vital that a robust supply of Type O blood is available at all times. OneBlood is urging all eligible donors with Type O blood to please visit a OneBlood donor center or Big Red Bus blood drive as soon as possible," said Susan Forbes, senior vice president of corporate communications and public relations.

Forty five percent of the U.S. population has Type O blood, making it the blood type in the highest demand by hospitals. Additionally, Type O blood is the blood type used to help save trauma patients.

"Summer is a challenging time for blood donations. Despite the challenges, the need for blood does not stop. Every day patients in local hospitals depend on blood donors to survive. To ensure a ready blood supply is available, it requires donors to donate on a regular basis," said Forbes.

Visit [oneblood.org](http://oneblood.org) or call 1-888-9DONATE to find a donation center near you.

**Ponte Vedra Writers group welcomes Southern Gothic author**

The Ponte Vedra Writers group will meet on Saturday, Sept. 24 at the Ponte Vedra Library at 10 a.m. to hear Darlyn Finch Kuhn speaking on "Weird Characters, Strange Places, and Tough Times: Writing NEW Southern Gothic."

Traditional Southern Gothic literature has earned its place in the literary canon through classic works by authors like William Faulkner, Harper Lee, Carson McCullers, Tennessee Williams, Flannery O'Conner, and Shirley Jackson.

At the September meeting, the group will discuss how current writers are rediscovering this fascinating sub-genre dealing with disenfranchised voices in warped communities — not necessarily set in the American South. This workshop examines several much-beloved Southern Gothic works, moves into current examples, and ends the day with attendees generating new material of their own that embodies some of the characteristics of the Southern Gothic Revival.

**Realty company donates backpacks and school supplies to local students**

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty branch offices

recently donated hundreds of backpacks filled with school supplies to Northeast Florida children during the company's 23rd annual Backpack Challenge.

The backpacks filled with school supplies were donated to Northeast Florida schools and family/youth-centered organizations including Dreams Come True of Jacksonville, Doctors Inlet Elementary School in Clay County, Grace United Methodist Church in Lawtey, Hugs Across the County St. Johns, Mayport Elementary School in Duval County, Operation New Hope, John A. Crookshank Elementary School, R. B. Hunt Elementary School, Osceola Elementary School and South Woods Elementary School in St. Johns County, and Trinity Foundation of Florida.

During the campaign, monetary donations as well as new backpacks and school supplies for local students in kinder-

garten through grade 12 were collected at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty offices throughout Northeast Florida. The company used the donations to purchase additional backpacks and school supplies, and also encouraged donors to purchase backpacks and school supplies online via Amazon wish lists and ship directly to the charities.

"Words cannot express how much we appreciate the numerous donations and generous funding we received from our Realtors, employees, clients and the community during The Backpack Challenge," said Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty Founder and Chairperson Linda Sherrer. "It is so important for students to have the tools they need for success, and we truly appreciate the support to help make a difference in the lives of children and families in our communities."



The St. Augustine and World Golf Village offices donated to John A. Crookshank Elementary School, R. B. Hunt Elementary School, Osceola Elementary School and South Woods Elementary School in St. Johns County. From left, Realtors Carolina Erlandsen, Eddie Darcel, Laura Kelly and Managing Broker Tracy Glochau.



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
The "Jane Austen."

# Travel

## River cruising on the Seine: Paris and Normandy

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewsline.com

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Most Seine River cruises start in Paris, then head into Normandy toward the English Channel. Guests take excursions to explore Normandy's highlights: Rouen Cathedral, the 950-year-old Bayeux Tapestry, and the stirring WWII D-Day landing sites. Honfleur is the last stop before turning around, and the climax of the return route becomes Claude Monet's House and Gardens.

When I saw the Riviera River Cruises itinerary, I knew this trip was for me — an art, history, wine and cheese lover. I flew to Paris and boarded their ship, the "Jane Austen," which carries a maximum of 140 passengers. I prefer fewer people and the smaller river cruise to mega ocean-liners. The cruise commenced with dinner in the evening. After a late sunset, the captain moved the boat near to the small replica of the Statue of Liberty and the glittering Eiffel Tower in the distance. It's magical to see the illuminated icon sparkling like a fireworks display.

The next morning, we reached the village of Les Andelys, seeing Chateau Galliard on the hillside. The buildings are ruins of Richard the Lionhearted castle built between 1196 – 1198. Riviera took guests on an excursion to the site in the afternoon; then, we walked downhill into the charming town with half-timbered buildings.

The cruise moved to the medieval city of Rouen in time to see the evening sound and light show projected onto the cathedral's façade. The explosion of vibrant colors and technological mastery mesmerized the audience, who watched in stunned silence. Incredible! The following morning guests took a guided walking tour of the city, learning about the cathedral's long history and Joan of Arc. Joan was burned at stake in Rouen after her trial. A modern church stands on the site, architecturally unappealing to me, but once side, aglow with a wonderful wall of stained glass windows.

My cruise traveled to dock in Caudebec, and the guests were bused to Bayeux the following day. The little town contains another great cathedral, but its calling card is the priceless Bayeux Tapestry. Having done needlework in my younger years, I appreciated the intricate detail and symmetry throughout the 230-foot-long exquisite masterpiece. It tells the story of William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hasting.

The D-Day landing sites came next, starting at Pointe du Hoc. Here the U.S. soldiers climbed the steep cliffs while encountering enemy fire. The courage of these young soldiers overwhelms you when you see the bombed-out landscape and base of the German artillery guns. We moved on to Omaha Beach, another landing site. The sandy expanse surprised me; it was full of sunbathers and swimmers. A stunning memorial remembers the critical events along this lovely beach in 1944.

The last stop was the 172-acre American Cemetery, with 9,387 American War Dead graves. The cemetery honors those lost in the Normandy battles. It's an emotionally difficult place to visit, but one that keeps alive the memory of those who lost their lives during their brave fight for global freedom. We owe them much.

Honfleur, a medieval town with narrow cobblestone alleys and a central rectangular harbor in the middle of the old village, provided the next day's visit. It was market day, so overly crowded for my liking.

Monet's House and Garden named Giverny became a delight as we neared Paris. His colorful home features a yellow dining room and a blue and white tiled kitchen. Of course, the water lily ponds that he painted remain favorites.

The cruise returned to Paris, a city that never disappoints. Viva la France.

Visit [www.bylandersea.com](http://www.bylandersea.com) to read more of local travel writer Debi Lander's stories and travel tips.



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Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Chateau Galliard ruins.

# Gardening

## Useful habitats, invasive vines, and cool season veg

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewline.com

The wildflower garden in my front yard is shaping up quite nicely. As expected, a few of the original plants haven't survived and some have sown themselves around, as if to make up for the losses. Since volunteer plants seem to do well where they find themselves, I'll only move any that are in awkward places and try to find those alternative homes. I also have some small plants that I've grown from seed, but because the sun has been so harsh I'm waiting till the weather moderates before planting them out, and I'll wait on moving the volunteers too.

Now is a good time to consider possible tweaks to a garden or landscape. Plants can outgrow their spaces and pruning is not always the solution. For instance, some perennials can form sizable clumps after a few years and can be divided to produce two or more new plants. This technique is known as division (see <https://bit.ly/3bPeDp2> and <https://bit.ly/3Ptak0a>). As long as a plant has a spreading root system and does not grow from a single stem, it is likely a candidate for division.

So many natural areas around town are being swallowed up by new developments and the wildlife is left homeless — but individuals can make a real contribution to help support wildlife. Planning our plantings in “layers,” from the ground up to the tree canopy, we can make our yards into sanctuaries. Beginning at the ground level, leaves and natural mulch like pine straw should form the basis of our ecosystem or habitat. Ground dwelling invertebrates like worms and other little “creepy crawlies” — a term from my childhood — are among the creatures that transform dead plant matter into rich soil: the foundation. From there on up, add ground cover plants, perennials and sub shrubs, large shrubs, and small trees. If, and only if, you have the space, a larger tree would complete the picture. There's no need to dwarf a small property when smaller trees could supply shelter and food. These are the classic elements of garden design. For information on Florida-Friendly design, including how to cater to wildlife by incorporating native plants, please see <https://bit.ly/3QKBBMA>. For more articles on gardening with wildlife check out <https://bit.ly/3SRNz8W>.

One aim for the sustainability minded is to avoid invasive plants. My bugbear is cat's claw vine (*Dolichandra unguis-cati*), a vine that can envelop the tallest tree. It produces beautiful yellow tubular flowers, which is the other problem: the long lightweight seed pods are blown far and wide and the seeds germinate readily. Once established they grow fast, and their underground tubers make them hard to pull out. Check out <https://bit.ly/3STKPbw> for more information. But this is not the only invasive vine we have to deal with. For more information see <https://bit.ly/3zUsFxq>.

As the summer wears out its welcome, it's time to plan the fall vegetable garden. Don't be too quick to get things growing outside though. We are still looking at heat into October at least (<https://bit.ly/3zSxOGp>), and those wonderful salads and other leafy vegetables can rapidly bolt in hot weather.

The following classes will also be held in September: Sept. 7 and 10: Fall Vegetable Seed Starting Workshop: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fall-vegetable-seed-starting-workshop-tickets-384638593387?aff=ebdssbde> search. Sept. 6: Tips for the season: <http://events.jaxpubliclibrary.org/event/6872925>. Sept. 14: How to Water Your Landscape and Lawn: <http://events.jaxpubliclibrary.org/event/6717612>.

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# Nutrition Check

## World Alzheimer's Day and the food/brain connection

By Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RDN  
mail@floridanewline.com

This month, World Alzheimer's Day will be recognized on Sept. 21. There is a lot of recent and emerging research on the food-brain connection and the importance of food on the aging brain's ability to function, remember and think. This topic is so important to the state of Florida that Gov. Ron DeSantis appointed a University of North Florida Department of Nutrition faculty member, Dr. Corinne Labyak, to the Alzheimer's Disease Advisory Committee.

Much of the research is showing that there are dietary patterns that can show promising results and others report that there are specific nutrients that contribute to brain health. I'm going to break down some of the latest research:

### Dietary Patterns:

- DASH Diet/Mediterranean Diet/MIND: Each of these dietary patterns help to support lowering blood pressure. These dietary patterns emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, seafood, and unsaturated fats. It is recommended to limit foods with high saturated fat and cholesterol (including butter, shortening, lard, and fatty cuts of meat). Want to learn more? Connect with a Registered Dietitian to talk about your dietary patterns and ways to improve. (Find one at [www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert](http://www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert))

### Specific Nutrients/Individual Foods:

- Omega-3 fatty acids (particularly DHA): Studies have shown that supplementation (approximately 2 grams) can help improve learning and memory, and others to help slow cognitive decline.

- Vitamin D supplementation: Studies have shown that daily supplementation (approximately 800 IU) can help improve cognitive function. Additionally, Vitamin D deficiency is associated with an increased risk of Alzheimer's.

While there is still a lot to learn about the food-brain connection, it is important to take care of your health and improve your dietary patterns to support optimal brain health during aging periods.

### Learn more and find references at:

- National Institute on Aging ([www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-do-we-know-about-diet-and-prevention-alzheimers-disease](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-do-we-know-about-diet-and-prevention-alzheimers-disease))

- Alzheimer's Association ([www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/food-eating](http://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/food-eating))

- USDA Dementia and Alzheimer's ([www.nutrition.gov/topics/diet-and-health-conditions/dementia-and-alzheimers](http://www.nutrition.gov/topics/diet-and-health-conditions/dementia-and-alzheimers))

*Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RDN, LDN, CLC, FAND is an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Brooks College of Health, University of North Florida.*

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By Scott A. Grant  
mail@floridanewsline.com

# PopHistory

## Rescue at Sea (or how a 450-year-old Italian admiral came to reside in Fernandina)

Shortly after 11 p.m. on the night of July 25, 1956, Alexander and Elisabeth “Bess” MacKerell were enjoying their last night aboard the “Andrea Doria.” They were with friends in the first-class lounge near a life-sized bronze statue of the famous Italian admiral for whom the ship was named. The horrifying sound of metal ripping into metal interrupted the frivolity. Dessert plates and champagne glasses tumbled to the ground and shattered.

“Andrea Doria” was the pride of the Italian Line and was considered the most beautiful ship afloat. She was named for a 16th century Italian admiral — Andrea Doria commanded a wing of the Christian Fleet at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. It was there that the united Christian fleet defeated the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. The battle was so significant that Pope Pius V announced the result before messengers arrived. He claimed he had a vision of the great victory from God.

Aboard the ship that carried his name, it quickly became apparent that something was horribly amiss. In the fog off Nantucket, the ship had collided with the “Stockholm,” the pride of the Swedish Line. Although the “Stockholm” was only about half the size of the “Doria,” she was equipped with a heavy steel bow designed to break ice. That

heavy bow now tore into the side of the Italian ship leaving a giant hole and ripping a young girl from her berth. She would later be found alive and well amongst the wreckage.

“Andrea Doria” listed hard to starboard rendering most of her lifeboats inoperable. She was sinking. Nearby ships rushed to the rescue. Three long hours went by before they began to abandon ship, women, and children first. Alexander and Bess MacKerell, my grandparents, went to their stateroom to collect their life vests and raincoats.

Crew directed my grandmother into a lifeboat. The women were instructed to leave their shoes in a large pile before descending. My grandmother was proud that she decided her shoes might come in handy later and stuffed them into the pockets of her raincoat instead. She would be rescued by a US troop transport, the “Private Willie Thomas.” Bess would be the only woman aboard with shoes. Later she would be quoted in an AP story that ran nationally.

Back on the “Doria,” my grandfather prayed. He prayed for strength for himself and for the rescuers. He was scared. He specifically prayed for strength to descend a rope ladder if he had to. He had never been able to climb the rope in high school.

Meanwhile, hours to the east and headed in the wrong direction, the “Ile de France,” pride of the French Line, heard the distress calls. Legend says that the home office forbade the captain turning around to render aid. Time was still essential in those days. Today we cruise for fun. Back in the old days, it was still a mode of travel.

Aboard the French ship, the captain, Baron Raoul de Beauden made a fateful decision. Radio transmissions indicated there were not enough lifeboats. Thinking to himself that “There but for the grace of God, go I,” the baron turned his ship around and made full steam back to the stricken vessel.

A thick fog lay across the Atlantic that night. The men still huddled onboard awaiting rescue could see nothing. As the “Ile de France” approached, they could not discern which radar blip to head toward. Then, miraculously, the fog began to lift. De Beauden maneuvered his ship near the “Andrea Doria” and turned on the bright advertising lights that were normally reserved for port. Giant letters spelling “ILE DE FRANCE” lit up the night.

Those lights piercing through the lifting fog were like a beacon of hope to those still aboard. It was at that moment that my grandfather knew that he would live. He made it down the ladder and from the luxury of the French ship, sent a telegram to my mother at their home in Merchantville, NJ saying they were both safe.

My mother was frantic. News of the sinking spread quickly. The 23-year-old felt an overwhelming need to

get to New York City and save her parents. She reached out to the most reliable man she knew seeking help. Leonard Grant was a young minister serving two churches in the already decaying inner city of Camden. He borrowed a 1956 Chevy Belair from his older brother. The car was two-toned, white and copper, and it was the first truly new car Uncle Hobie ever owned. Together, my mother and father raced to New York to rescue Nancy’s parents. A few months later, they became engaged. A few years later, I was born.

Part of the miracle of the “Andrea Doria” was that only 46 people died in the sinking. More than 1,700 lives were saved that night, almost half by the “Ile de France.” The ship settled on the bottom at a depth of 200 feet, in treacherous waters. Twenty-two more people died trying to extract her treasures. She became known as the “Mount Everest of scuba diving.”

In 1964, a successful dive led by Dan Turner managed to retrieve the statue of Andrea Doria from the main lounge. In order to salvage the statue, they had to cut Doria off at the ankles since the base was too heavy to lift. For decades, that statue resided at the Palace Saloon in Fernandina Beach. At first, he was inside. Later he was outside like a lawn ornament in cowboy boots. Recently, another dive team recovered the base, and the statue of Andrea Doria was sent back to Italy where he was reunited with his feet.

*Scott A. Grant is a local historian and fiduciary asset manager. He welcomes your comments at [scottg@standfastic.com](mailto:scottg@standfastic.com)*

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