Dog Day Afternoon 2019 breaks attendance records

By Linda Gomolka
mail@floridanewsline.com

St. Johns CARES celebrated Dog Day Afternoon on Sunday, March 31 at Davis Pond Park in Julington Creek Plantation from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. The attendance broke all previous records with 864 people and 345 dogs at the event and $22,500 was raised for the St. Johns County Fire Rescue to purchase additional oxygen masks for dogs and cats.

Activities included dog washes, "pet-i-cures" (nail trimming), pet (and family) photographs, a canine obstacle course, a bounce house, face painting, balloon puppies, dog sketches, pet (and their people) specialty vendor booths, a demo by the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office canine unit, a visit from the St. Johns County Fire Rescue with their fire truck, baked goods for humans and dogs and hot dogs for humans.

Freedom Crossing Falcons soar through first year

By Heidy Brosofsky-Weaver
mail@floridanewsline.com

As Anderson, a 20-year veteran of St. Johns County Schools explains, FLIGHT school starts with Focus on a vision and a mission.

Then, there is Leadership. “Everybody is a leader. We are all responsible for each other, the building, and representing the school and families,” says Anderson.

Imagination is another key component. “We want students to try things. You learn from trying,” Anderson says. “You fail your way to success.”

As for Grit, it’s part of FCA’s everyday language. Whether it be video games, athletics, or math problems, the idea is to try and try again. “Every year is a do better ... not a do over,” says Anderson, the 2017 – 2018 St. Johns County Principals of the Year.

Freedom Crossing Falcons soar through first year

By Heidy Brosofsky-Weaver
mail@floridanewsline.com

The halls of the Freedom Crossing Academy may echo with the loneliness of summer, but if the walls could talk, one in particular would share the culture of this new school. Near Principal Allen Anderson’s office, an inaugural banner sprawls across an entire wall, proclaiming the school’s vision: ”Established in 2018 to Break Barriers." In addition, the banner features soul-stirring snippets written by faculty and staff, encouraging students to work hard, go after dreams, and soar like their falcon mascot.

Although all these messages are inspiring, first grade teacher Ashley McCombs’s note stresses the importance of having a vision “… because one day at least one child will be able to look back and be able to smile at something positive that happened to them in school no matter what is going on in their lives.”

Anderson agrees: “We treat every child like our very own child. We won’t give up on them even if they give up on themselves.”

To accomplish this vision, faculty and staff focus daily on building a family atmosphere. While old-fashioned smiles, verbal praise, and hugs are still high on the list, a hi-tech behavior system called LiveSchool unites students into multi-grade houses with names like Otutu, Ton Thong, and Kalpana. Third graders from Jill Loughran’s class eagerly explain how they earn points throughout the day for positive actions such as showing safety, respect, and responsibility. What’s more, they can watch these points accrue in real-time on monitors around the campus and celebrate victories.

“Instead of something fun happening at school we have our own LiveSchool,” says middle school student Makarenie Bartram, who is a member of the Meraki house. “It was a little nervous to start sixth grade at a new school, but it has been an awesome year where we quickly felt like one family.”

Bartram is a member of the band, track team, and undefeated girl’s basketball team.

From cheering for the undefeated volleyball teams to reaching new goals in the Principal’s Math Club, the culture strives to have fun tacking challenges, according to Anderson. “One positive thing I hear is that students want to come to learn and the staff wants to come to work.”

In fact, a group of teachers, faculty members, and administrators took fun to a new level when they transformed into Funky Falcons and flash mobbed students at a home basketball game. Wearing wacky wigs, Assistant Principal Melissa Lime, first grade teacher Julie Haden, and their fancy flock of dancers quickly became a hit with students. They even performed during FCA Spirit Night at the Jacksonville IceMen hockey game. As one member put it, “We’re dancing through barriers!”

Others might argue that “flying through barriers” might be a better motto considering the school’s mission: Falcons take FLIGHT.

As for Grit, it’s part of FCA’s everyday language. Whether it be video games, athletics, or math problems, the idea is to try and try again. “Every year is a do better ... not a do over,” says Anderson, the 2017 – 2018 St. Johns County Principals of the Year.

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Welcome to allergy season! It’s that time of the year when allergies are usually at their worst. When allergies or sinus issues cause nasal congestion, fatigue and ear pressure, it’s difficult to get through the day. How do you get rid of these symptoms and enjoy this beautiful time of the year? We can provide you with the answers you need, plus new options for relief that over-the-counter medications don’t deliver.

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HOW YOUR BFF GOT THEIR NAME: Since she was part Australian Shepard, our girls decided the name her after Bind Sue twins. We love her so much!

Do you have a cute pet? Send us your pet’s picture and the answers to the five questions above before the 15th of the month. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and you could win a Gift Certificate! Does your business cater to pets? Would you like to sponsor our contest? Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet or sponsor the BFF contest.

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June 1
Friends of Alpine Park meeting
9 a.m.
Meet at picnic table behind house at park; new “Friends” welcome

June 1
Bingo Night at St. Joseph’s
Doors open 6:15 p.m.; Games start 7 p.m.
Cody Center, 4152 Loretto Road
Open to the community; (904) 742-8777

June 3
Current Events Discussion Group
10 a.m. (repeating event on Mondays)
New location: Amenities Annex, 625 Market St., Palencia
advisoryb@yahoo.com

June 4
World Golf Village Toastmasters
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
First Florida Credit Union, 1950 County Road 210W
Worldgolfvillage.toastmastersclubs.org

June 4
First Coast Card Club – adult card players
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
St. Augustine Main Library, 1960 Ponce de Leon Blvd.
(904) 829-0643

June 5
Jacksonville Camera Club
6:45 p.m.
Shepherd of the Woods Church, 6956 Columbia Park Ct.
www.jaxcameracub.com (repeating event, first and third Wednesdays)

June 6
2019 St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Golf Classic
1 p.m. shotgun start
Slammer & Squire
Organize a foursome; call (904) 829-5681 or www.sjccambchamber.com

June 6
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7
6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.
St. Augustine Yacht Club near the St. Augustine Lighthouse
paj@mysafeboating.com

June 6
Rotary Club of Bartram Trail
7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. (repeating event on Thursdays)
Westminster Woods, 25 State Road 13
lancedmauleo@gmail.com

June 7
Rotary Club of St. Johns meeting
7:30 a.m. (repeating event on Fridays)
St. Johns Golf and Country Club House
www.rotaryjohns.org

June 7
Bartram Friday Book Club: “The Wife Between Us,” by Greer Hendricks
10 a.m.
Julington Creek Service Center, 725 Flora Branch Blvd.
(904) 827-6960

June 7
First Coast Newcomers Club Dinner/Trivia evening
6 p.m.
St. Johns Clubhouse, St. Augustine
Limited number; RSVP (904) 829-0643

June 8
Family sewing
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Guana Dam, 505 Guana River Road
(904) 823-4500

June 8
Northwest United for Progress Club
featuring Dr. Jennifer Cowart, providing medical care to all Americans
Social 6:30 p.m./Meeting 7 p.m.
2777 Race Track Road
nwjcp@gmail.com

June 9
Bartram Tuesday Book Discussion: “The Great Alone,” by Kristin Hannah
6 p.m.
Twisted Compass, 585 State Road 13
(904) 827-6960

June 11
Empower Yourself: Learn How Not to be Scammed, presented by ElderSource
12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
St. Johns County Council on Aging’s River House, 179 Marine St., St. Augustine
RSVP by June 5: (904) 391-6664

June 12
Dementia Support for Caregivers
3:30 p.m.
River Garden, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road
Repeating event on the second Wednesday of each month

June 12
Community Lunch Discussion: Preserving Independence at Home
11:30 a.m.
River Garden, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road
RSVP for lunch: lbl@rivergarden.org or (904) 288-7855

June 13
Palencia Bridge Club plays Party Bridge
11 a.m. – 1 p.m. (repeating event on Thursdays)
Donovan’s Irish Pub, 7440 US Highway 1
(904) 808-7326

June 13
Sunshine State Chevelles
Fruit Cove Cruise In sponsored by
2019 St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
June 6
SPORTS

June 15
Ancient City Chapter of Florida Writers Association meeting
10 a.m.
Main Library, 1960 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd., St. Augustine
Open to the public; twastaug@gmail.com

June 17
All Star Quilt Guild
9:45 a.m.
First Christian Church, 11234 San Jose Blvd.
www.worshipthree.com/allstarquiltguild or (904) 735-0506

June 18
St. Johns CARES meeting
6:30 p.m.
Celebration Lutheran Church, 110 Roberts Road
www.sjhcarnes.org

June 18
North Business Council of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
8 a.m. – 9 a.m.
Westminster Woods on Julington Creek, 25 State Road 13
Register at www.sjccambchamber.com or call (904) 829-5681

June 22
Traditional Healing with Nature’s Plants
10 a.m.
Garden of Eatin’, Lake Beluthahatchee
Pre registration required. (386) 972-1891

June 26
Veteran Benefits for Seniors, presented by Jeff Faulkner, NAVF
11:30 a.m.
River Garden, 11401 Old St. Augustine Road
RSVP for lunch: lbl@rivergarden.org or (904) 288-7855

June 28
Helping Hands of St. Johns County
10 a.m.
Faith Community Church, 3450 County Road 210W
jagosh@sjs.com

Have an event coming up? Email us at calendar@floridanewsline.com

June 1
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Summer reading and math volunteer opportunities
RSVP of St. Johns County is looking for community members to assist once a week in the summer reading or algebra programs in the St. Johns County School District. Hours are flexible, and even those who may be traveling can help out while in town. Orientation for reading volunteers is Thursday, June 6 from 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Fullerwood Auditorium, 10 Hildreth Drive in St. Augustine. Orientation for algebra volunteers is Monday, June 24 from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. at St. Augustine High School, 3205 Varrella Avenue in St. Augustine. Contact RSVP at (904) 547-3952 or Cheryl.Freeman@stjohns.k12.fl.us to make a training reservation or for more information.

INK!’s Make a Mark campaign spotlights teachers
INK!’s (Investing in Kids) Make a Mark campaign offers a way for people to share their appreciation for the special educators in their children’s lives. The six month project allows for an elementary, middle and high school St. Johns County School District teacher to be recognized for making their mark on students each month. Winners will receive a swag bag full of gifts and prizes from local businesses. If you know a teacher you wish to nominate for this award, visit INK-stjohns.org and complete the quick nomination form. Call (904) 547-7120 with questions or for more information.

ElderSource launches Virtual Caregiver Support Groups
ElderSource, the Area Agency on Aging and Disability Resource Center for Northeast Florida, has launched the Virtual Caregiver Support Group, giving caregivers a safe place to share information, ask questions, voice personal feelings and stories. The support group makes it possible for caregivers to connect face-to-face in real time with other caregivers using today’s technology. The groups, consisting of 10 – 12 participants, will last six to eight weeks (once a week) with each session lasting 60 to 90 minutes and facilitated by a skilled moderator, who will guide the participants through their conversations. Any caregiver living in northeast Florida can sign up; however, the group will be focused on those who feel they cannot leave their loved one to attend a support group, but would benefit from participating in one. For more information on how to participate or to make a referral for the Virtual Caregiver Support Group, email Louise Starmann at louise.starmann@eldersourceinstitute.org, or call Linda Levin at (904) 391-6610.

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Brandon Cummings of St. Johns successfully completed four years of challenging academic, physical, and professional military training, graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy on May 24 with a bachelor of science degree in economics with mathematics and a commission as a U.S. Navy Ensign. Cummings is a 2015 graduate of Allen D. Nease High School and the son of Peter and Tracy Cummings of Julington Creek. The Brigade of Midshipmen is comprised of approximately 4,400 students from every state in the union. Each year, approximately 1,200 young men and women are admitted to the Naval Academy’s incoming class. The U.S. Naval Academy’s more than 80,000 alumni include 73 Medal of Honor recipients, two Nobel Prize winners, and President Harry S. Truman.

Q: Last month we discussed Hallowes Cove and the developer of RiverTown’s request to amend the DRI and build a 250-slip marina. Can you give us an update? A: This issue is a good example of why I need to hear from people. I extend my thanks to those who responded about this issue. I heard from only one or two people in favor of allowing a marina, but many more who were against it. I especially thank those who were part of the historical process for this project and were able to point me in the right direction to research; it was very educational. I shared the overwhelmingly negative community response to the marina request with the developers and they withdrew the application.

Q: Can you shed some insight on the latest on the county’s tree ordinance? A: At the last Board of County Commissioners’ meeting we had a preliminary discussion on six to 10 significant modifications to the land development code and one was the tree ordinance, which is very complex. We do want to protect canopies of trees and St. Johns County is so diversified, with everything from moss covered oak trees to scrub pines to palm trees. There is no one-size-fits-all. Like with the Hallowes Cove issue, now is the time for people to weigh in. I prefer to hear specific questions or recommendations. Residents can contact the St. Johns County Growth Management Department directly to learn more specifics about the draft to the tree ordinance. It is worth noting that the tree ordinance does change from time to time and developments can be built according to the regulations at the time they were approved. So we have a broad spectrum of developments in proximity to each other with different rules.

Q: What is the latest on the county’s budget process (as of the interview date, May 16)? A: Budget hearings will be held the week of May 20. This is the draft request by departments for their budget next year, basically a first round. Commissioners will ask questions in an effort to be responsible with taxpayer money. We need to hear from the public about their wishes throughout June and July. We do expect the budget to be an increase over last year, due to an increase in revenue from the tax collector, but we will need to spend a great deal of money on mandates from the state and federal government, such as the new requirement for bilingual voting supplies and information for the Supervisor of Elections.

Q: Can you give us some background on the increase in cost of recycling for homeowners? A: At the last board meeting, we approved an increase in this cost to homeowners, which had not been increased for 10 years. It is due to basic supply and demand. China has been the primary receiver of recycled materials from the United States for many years, but lately the Chinese have found more and more garbage included with the recyclables the United States sends. So China reduced the amount they will pay for the recycled material and they reduced the percentage of garbage that they will accept as part of the recycled material. This resulted in an increased cost to the recycling company we contract with and ultimately an increased cost to the homeowner.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you? A: Readers can email me at bcc1jjohns@sjcfl.us or call me at (904) 615-7437.
Q: Can you give us some background on the bilingual ballot language requirements?

A: Last year, we were involved in a law-suit with 32 other counties in Florida regarding voters from Puerto Rico who evacuated to Florida as a result of Hur-ricane Maria. They are U.S. Citizens, educated in American schools, but Eng-lish is not their primary language. The 32 counties were required to provide Spanish sample ballots for the Nov. 6, 2018 General Election in all forms we make them available, such as on our website, mailed, or advertised at all polling locations.

We also were required to provide additional measures such as hiring additional bilingual poll workers, and be able to provide bilingual assistance as needed. We already had 16 bilingual poll workers, but were able to hire additional and a total of 58 bilingual workers who worked during early voting and at the polls on election day. Two of our 11 full time staff members are bilingual and available to provide Spanish language assistance anytime.

Now, the judge has moved forward and ordered ballots and all voting materials to be in English and in Spanish for the March 17, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary Election.

Also, in a policy decision, Gov. DeSan-tis has directed that all Florida coun-ties must provide ballots and voting materials in English and in Spanish for all future elections. Presently, there are 14 counties with at least 5 percent of their voting age population identified as Spanish speaking that do this; now all counties will be required to comply, regardless of the percentage of their population that is Spanish speaking.

Q: What exactly will you have to do to comply?

A: Pretty much all materials in the Elec-tions Office will have to be in English and in Spanish, to include ballots, absentee envelopes, provisional bal-lot envelopes and secrecy sleeves, voter information cards, voter registration applications, voting instructions, voter information guides and pamphlets, Notification of Election, polling place changes and signage and all information available on the Supervisor of Elec-tion’s website. We will need to provide a toll-free Spanish-language hotline with at least one bilingual employee for the purpose of translating or otherwise as-sisting voters.

Basicall, all notifications, announce-ments and informational materials about all stages of the electoral process, including materials concerning the opportunity to register, voter registra-tion deadlines, times, places and subject matters of the elections, the absence and early voting processes, offices up for election, candidates who have qualified and local issues or referenda and an-nouncements applicable to elections in the county will need to be available in English and in Spanish.

Q: What will this all cost?

A: We received the court order on May 13 and I have ordered staff to deter-mine the cost to replace everything in the office, including our precinct signs and supplies for the polls. My budget is due to the Board of County Commiss-ioners on May 31. I present my office’s budget in person to the board on June 18. There will definitely be a cost to the taxpayers and we are working to determine what it is. We are under a federal judicial order and a Secretary of State directive in addition to the Florida policy Administrative Rule from the governor. There are no additional funds coming from the state to comply with this order.

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

A: Readers can email me at voakes@sjcges.com or call me at (904) 823-2238.

Q: What can you tell us about this site?

A: It is a beautiful piece of property, fully cleared. It is pastureland. At 68 acres it is a bit smaller than some sites, but since it is all uplands, it will work just fine.

Q: So is this the Silverleaf site out of the running?

A: No, we are still pursuing that site. But this new site will house our next high school, as previously stated by the district. Silverleaf was never intended to be next in line, since the growth/stu-dents are not there quite yet.

Q: Do you have any legislative updates now that session has ended?

A: We are much more pleased with the amount of money we received this year versus last. The base student allocation, which is the flexible money we can use for teacher and staff salaries and new programs, was only 47 cents per student last year. This year, we are to receive $75 per student.

We are also pleased that legislation has gone through with an alternative pathway to graduation via career and technical education. This will allow students to substitute some classes, such as higher level math, with still challeng-ing classes that will point them more quickly to a career. We are thankful to Sen. Travis Hrusko who was the Senate sponsor of this bill.

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

A: I’d like to talk about RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) of St. Johns County, the county program which supplies volunteer mentors and tutors to students throughout the school system. Whether it is someone who can read 30 minutes to a kindergartner or someone who can tutor a struggling middle school student, there are adults in our community with a lot of experi-ence who can help our kids. If anyone is interested in learning more about volunteering, they can contact Cheryl Freeman at RSVP at (904) 547-3952.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

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

Q: Can you tell us something about the new site?

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WGV Five Star Tigers win tournament

The WGV Five Star Tigers won the Ormond Beach 13 U invitational on April 7. The Tigers won three games in a row on Sunday and defeated the Longwood scorpions 21 - 6 in the championship game, led by home runs from Colin Ulrich and Marc Mitchell. The Tigers made it to the championship game by a stellar, no hit pitching performance by Gabe Gerhardt in the semi final game against the East Coast Gators. Blake Warner went seven for seven over the course of the three games with Colin Ulrich, Will Braig, Marc Mitchell and Ayden Ramos batting over .600 respectively. The Tigers are comprised of Colin Ulrich, Austin Pankey, Colin Hartman, Willie Braig, Marc Mitchell, Blake Warner, Philip Furakawa, Gabe Gerhardt, Hudson Dye, Justin Osbourn, Ayden Ramos and Tyler Dellbrugge (not pictured). They are coached by Ernie Dye, Adam Ulrich, Kevin Dellbrugge and Steve Pankey.

Q: Can you give us some background into the homestead exemption audit?
A: Right now, we have 71,000 homesteaded properties in St. Johns County and some are very old. They have never been audited. If something happens that could affect homestead exemption (such as death, divorce, or remarriage) within the state of Florida, we have a good system to discover it. But it’s not so for out of state properties. Recall that a requirement of homestead exemption in Florida is that a person can have no other homesteaded properties anywhere.

Q: How will the audit be conducted?
A: We will contract with a third party firm, Exemption Project, which will check against national databases to make sure our homestead here is still valid. The firm will work under my supervision and it’s key to understand that any final decisions are mine. My office will investigate and determine if the St. Johns County property has improperly claimed homestead exemption.

Q: How will the third party firm be compensated?
A: There is no upfront cost. Exemption Project is only paid if they find an improperly homesteaded property. If I agree, then we lien the property. When back taxes, penalties and interest are paid, the Exemption Project is paid 18 percent of that. I’ve presented this to all the taxing authorities in the county and received their approval, since a portion of any taxes collected will be paid to the firm.

Q: What are the penalties for improper homestead exemption?
A: The penalties are severe and include repayment of all back taxes, a 50 percent penalty and 15 percent interest annually. I urge readers to contact me if they are unsure of their individual situation and would like to discuss it.

Q: When will the audit begin and how long will it take?
A: We will begin in late summer and it will be an ongoing process. The initial audit should take approximately 90 – 120 days. Checks will continue to be run as national databases are updated.

Q: What are the benefits to hiring this firm and performing the audit?
A: 1 selected Exemption Project because they are very qualified and can identify rentals and short term rentals. They can also help us identify unclaimed exemptions, which is exciting for us. They can reverse their search to identify people who are not getting homestead exemption but should be. For the county, the audit is beneficial because not only will we collect back taxes, but it will put value back on the tax rolls in the form of any incorrect exemptions as well as any porability.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?
A: Our office is located at 4030 Lewis Speedway Stee, 203, (904) 827-5500. It is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Also, readers can email me at Eddie@sjcpa.us or call me at (904) 827-5500.

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QA
with St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

Q: Can you give us some background into the homestead exemption audit?
A: Right now, we have 71,000 homesteaded properties in St. Johns County and some are very old. They have never been audited. If something happens that could affect homestead exemption (such as death, divorce, or remarriage) within the state of Florida, we have a good system to discover it. But it’s not so for out of state properties. Recall that a requirement of homestead exemption in Florida is that a person can have no other homesteaded properties anywhere.

Q: How will the audit be conducted?
A: We will contract with a third party firm, Exemption Project, which will check against national databases to make sure our homestead here is still valid. The firm will work under my supervision and it’s key to understand that any final decisions are mine. My office will investigate and determine if the St. Johns County property has improperly claimed homestead exemption.

Q: How will the third party firm be compensated?
A: There is no upfront cost. Exemption Project is only paid if they find an improperly homesteaded property. If I agree, then we lien the property. When back taxes, penalties and interest are paid, the Exemption Project is paid 18 percent of that. I’ve presented this to all the taxing authorities in the county and received their approval, since a portion of any taxes collected will be paid to the firm.

Q: What are the penalties for improper homestead exemption?
A: The penalties are severe and include repayment of all back taxes, a 50 percent penalty and 15 percent interest annually. I urge readers to contact me if they are unsure of their individual situation and would like to discuss it.

Q: When will the audit begin and how long will it take?
A: We will begin in late summer and it will be an ongoing process. The initial audit should take approximately 90 – 120 days. Checks will continue to be run as national databases are updated.

Q: What are the benefits to hiring this firm and performing the audit?
A: 1 selected Exemption Project because they are very qualified and can identify rentals and short term rentals. They can also help us identify unclaimed exemptions, which is exciting for us. They can reverse their search to identify people who are not getting homestead exemption but should be. For the county, the audit is beneficial because not only will we collect back taxes, but it will put value back on the tax rolls in the form of any incorrect exemptions as well as any porability.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?
A: Our office is located at 4030 Lewis Speedway Stee, 203, (904) 827-5500. It is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Also, readers can email me at Eddie@sjcpa.us or call me at (904) 827-5500.
MarketInsight

Where there’s a will, there’s a fight!

By Scott Grant
ScottGrant@StJohnsBusinessMonthly.com

One of the most lurid and obscene documents you will ever read is the transcript of the trial in the New York lawsuit over the estate of J. Seward Johnson. Johnson was one of the sons of one of the founders of Johnson & Johnson, the company that makes Band-Aid and baby powder. At the age of 76, he divorced his second wife and married the upstairs maid. Basia Piasecka Johnson was 34 when she became the new Mrs. Johnson. Twelve years later, in 1983, her husband died and left his entire fortune of between $400 million – $500 million to the Polish immigrant who had arrived in New York with $200, setting off what one writer called “the largest, costliest, ugliest, most spectacular and most conspicuous” probate battle in American history. At the time, Seward Johnson’s estate was the largest ever to be probated in the State of New York.

The case finally went to trial four years later, in 1987. The four-month court battle cost more than $24 million in legal fees. Seventy-five witnesses produced 15,000 pages of testimony, much of which reflected poorly on the Johnson family, exposing tawdry details of incest, infidelity, cuckoldry, drug abuse, and attempted murder.

The trial pitted the Johnson children, each of whom had received a trust that of money accumulated by J. Seward Johnson. The fights are about hurt feelings, about money, even the obscene amount of $151 million. They eventually sold it to Google for $1.2 billion.

Most of the damage to Mrs. Johnson’s living. The Johnson children accused her of helping Basia to bully her husband into signing the will. The court cut her executor fees to $1.8 million and removed her as a trustee. Most of the jurors sided with the children and one indicated that Zagat’s testimony “did most of the damage to Mrs. Johnson’s case.” Zagat and her husband went on to start the Zagat Restaurant guide. They eventually sold it to Google for $151 million.

It is amazing how frequently estate fights destroy families. They are rarely about money, even the obscene amount of money accumulated by J. Seward Johnson. The fights are about hurt feelings and the type of family squabbles that often ruin Thanksgiving dinners. Outwardly happy families descend into chaos and fight over the most and least consequential of things, shouting about principle while lawyers get rich. There is no solution. It is a tale as old as Cain and Abel.

In the end, the case was settled. Basia agreed to pay the children’s legal fees and give them almost $50 million. The oceanographic institute, Harbor Branch, got $20 million and Basia Johnson, the former maid, kept the rest, about $340 million, making her the 194th wealthiest person in the world. She turned the mansion into a golf course and moved back to Europe to collect art.

The biggest loser in the case was Basia Johnson’s attorney, Nina Zagat. Zagat was a friend of Basia’s and wrote the will that made her executor and trustee of the trust. Nina was to be paid $9 million as executor and then $900,000 a year as a trustee for as long as Basia lived. The Johnson children accused her of helping Basia to bully her husband into signing the will. The court cut her executor fees to $1.8 million and removed her as a trustee. Most of the jurors sided with the children and one indicated that Zagat’s testimony “did most of the damage to Mrs. Johnson’s case.” Zagat and her husband went on to start the Zagat Restaurant guide. They eventually sold it to Google for $151 million.

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Q & A

with Florida State Representative
Cyndi Stevenson, District 17

Q: Now that session is completed, can you give us some updates?
A: We had a good session. There were lots of bipartisan bills passed, but there is still plenty of work to do.

Q: How did your bills that we talked about last month fare (as of interview date of May 15)?
A: For the voter privacy bill, we were able to protect the minors (16 and 17 year olds who have pre-registered to vote) by having their contact information taken out of public records, but the language that would have shielded the phone numbers and email numbers for all voters was not passed due to opposition in the Senate. Public records exceptions have to pass with a two-thirds vote. This bill is currently awaiting the governor’s signature.

House Bill 25, the ambulatory surgical center bill, went to the Senate, but it didn’t get passed as an individual bill. We were able to get an increase in the length of stay at these outpatient facilities to be a full 24 hours, so there is still work to be done but I’m happy with this expansion.

The language from my Peer Specialist bill passed in a different bill, as part of HB 369, along with some Sober Homes reform.

Finally the language from HR1043, the Cyber Harassment bill, passed with identical language in the Senate version of the bill, SB 1136. This bill also awaits the governor’s signature.

Q: What can you tell us about the budget that was passed?
A: Education is very important and this year we had a $242 increase in per student allocation, which includes $75 per student that can be used completely at local school boards’ discretion for teacher raises and additional programs. This is the biggest increase we have had in a long time.

The budget also includes some flexibility in Best and Brightest, the teacher bonus program and removed the SAT and ACT requirement. There is now some flexibility in the use of local millage for construction and some additional funding for Community Partnership Schools, of which we have two in St. Johns County.

Q: What are some other benefits in the budget this year for St. Johns County?
A: We received more money for the West Augustine septic to sewer program; funding for more outpatient mental health services; money for dune restoration needed in North Ponte Vedra Beach after Hurricane Irma; and funding for a resiliency project to prevent damage in the event of a flood to Flagler College. Again in Ponte Vedra Beach, $500,000 was allocated to work on A1A intersection to improve traffic flow without widening A1A (basically adding turn lanes.) Also, six additional detox beds for the EPIC Recovery Center were funded, which was a priority of the St. Johns County delegation.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?
A: Readers can email me at Cyndi.Stevenson@myfloridahouse.gov or call my local office at (904) 823-2300.
It’s time to prepare for hurricane season
By Billy Mullaney
mail@floridanswest.com

Welcome to Hurricane Season! Floridians readily embrace hot summers, beach days, and rabid alligators, but hurricanes come with the territory as well. While insurance is available to protect our home and belongings, a good understanding of those details can go a long way to make sure you are well protected for the season. Gathering hurricane supplies, watching weather coverage closely, and removing yourself from harm’s way when authorities recommend it are vital. Here are some other pointers from an insurance perspective.

As a hurricane approaches, you should consider what you can do to reduce or eliminate problems. Take a survey of your home and look for areas where a hurricane could create a problem. Clean gutters, trimmed trees, and storm shutters are all examples of ways we can help ourselves before the storm comes. After the storm, it is important to find ways to stop further damage from occurring. Depending on the storm, it may be awhile before repairs can start.

Most insurance policies come with hurricane deductibles which are larger than normal claims. It is not unusual to see deductibles 2 percent to 5 percent of the dwelling coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage. Review your policy to understand the trigger that changes the coverage.

Flood insurance is not included in homeowners coverage. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently updated the flood maps and St. Johns County was affected. You can find your property status by reviewing the updated map (https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search). It is important to know flood insurance may not be available while there are active storms and there is a waiting period when new policies take effect.

With today’s technology, we have every opportunity to record the personal property in and around our home. Pulling out a smart phone and taking a video will go a long way towards those records. Receipts and spreadsheets are great ways to manage your personal inventory. Big ticket items may require separate coverage, so consider endorsements to your policy. Items kept in a storage facility most often will be covered in your homeowners policy. Did you know your policy covers expenses and time spent outside your home due to repairs? This feature could play an important role if your home is damaged and needs fixing. Look at your policy to examine your limits and make sure you have good coverage in this area. This portion of your policy also covers lost income if you also rent out part of your home.

Take a little time for preparation and hurricane season will be behind you. Visit www.ready.gov for more valuable advice on this and other topics.

Billy Hohmann, CFP® is the agency owner of Florida Shield. Email him at billy@flshieldins.com for more information.

Low speed vehicles — What you need to know
By NewsLINE Staff
mail@floridanswest.com

Last month, The CreekLine featured information about the use of golf carts in NW St. Johns County neighborhoods. This month, low speed vehicles are featured in this information compiled by the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office:

What is a low speed vehicle?
A low speed vehicle or LSV is any four wheel vehicle that can travel no faster than 25 miles per hour. Low speed vehicles can be golf carts that are modified to travel greater than 20 miles per hour, but not more than 25 miles per hour. Most low speed vehicles are golf carts in appearance; however, they are a little faster and have additional requirements.

Where can low speed vehicles be driven?
A low speed vehicle may be operated on any county road with a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less. A low speed vehicle may not be operated on a sidewalk adjacent to a state or county highway, except a multi-use path.

What equipment is required for a low speed vehicle?
A low speed vehicle must have headlights, turn signals, tail lights, reflectors, parking brakes, rearview mirror, windshield, seat belts and a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). Low speed vehicles are required to have a license plate and be insured, much like a car or a truck.

Who may drive a low speed vehicle?
Persons driving a low speed vehicle must be licensed drivers and have in their possession a valid driver’s license.

Violations of the county low speed vehicle ordinance may be prosecuted via county citation. Fines range from $75 for a first violation to $168 for the second and subsequent violations. Violations of this county ordinance may also be prosecuted as a second degree misdemeanor with a fine of up to $500 and/or 60 days in jail.

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Northeast Florida average home sales price largest since June 2018

April was a busy month for real estate activity in Northeast Florida, with 2,889 homes being sold. This figure is a 6.5 percent uptick from a year ago, and the largest number of monthly sales since August 2018. There were also 3,171 pending sales (those on which a contract has been written but did not close). The pending sales activity was a 5.8 percent increase from a year ago.

The median sales price of $225,000 was up 2.3 percent from a year ago, but was down from $229,900 in March. The average sales price was significantly higher at $276,712, the largest average sales price since $280,880 in June 2018. Homes sold quickly in April, with 67 days on market being the average. A reduced inventory continues to be a major factor in the market, with only 3.6 months’ supply on hand.

“Sellers are finding that their properties are selling very quickly and pricing is robust,” said 2019 NEFAR President Jeanne Denton-Scheck. “In April, 14.3 percent of homes sold by NEFAR member Realtors were for more than the original list price.”

Visit www.nefar.com to view the April 2016 housing market reports for Northeast Florida, made available from the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors. As all St. Johns County and Nassau Realtors are not participants of the NEFMLS, reports provided do not represent the full extent of Realtor sales in those counties.

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For more information please visit or call (904) 679-4676

Directions: From US-1 justnorth of International Golf Pkwy, turn onto Las Calinas Blvd and travel approximately 1.5 miles, continue through the roundabout, then turn left onto Pantano Vista Way. Continue ahead then turn left onto Rio del Norte Rd. Model home will be just ahead on the right.

Model Home Hours:
Mon – Tues, Fri – Saturday 10 am – 6:00 pm
Sun 12 pm – 6:00 pm
Wed & Thurs By Appointment Only

*Homeowner pays only operations and maintenance fees charged by the CDD. **Home and community information, including pricing, included features, terms, availability and amenities are subject to change and prior sale at any time without notice or obligation. See your new home consultant for details. All square foot dimensions are approximate. Real estate agent must be present on first visit. Total commission/bonus earned and paid at closing. See a sales representative for a complete listing of qualifying homes. Pictures, elevations, features, sizes and colors are approximate for illustration purposes only and will vary from the homes as built. CBC058997 ©2019 D.R. Horton, Inc. All rights reserved.
Bartram Trail Library offers events and services through building closure

By Chett Wood
mail@floridanewsline.com

Though the building is closed for fire suppression system renovation, the Bartram Trail Branch Library is offering programming at satellite locations within the community throughout the closure.

Friday, June 7, 10 a.m.: Book Club, “The Wife Between Us”
Located at the Julington Creek Service Center
In June, we are discussing “The Wife Between Us” by Greer Hendricks. Newcomers are always welcome.

Tuesday, June 11, 6 p.m.: Book Club, “The Great Alone”
Located at The Twisted Compass
In July, we are discussing “The Great Alone” by Kristin Hannah.

Friday, June 28, 10-30 a.m.: Crafty Women (Pinecone Flowers)
Located at the Julington Creek Service Center
Make your own flowers that never wilt in red, white and blue to prepare for the July 4th holiday. A $5 donation to the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library for craft supplies is encouraged.

Tuesday, July 9, 6 p.m.: Book Club: “Little Fires Everywhere”
Located at The Twisted Compass
In July, we are discussing “Little Fires Everywhere” by Celeste Ng.

Friday, July 26, 10-30 a.m.: Crafty Women (Sunflower Wreath)
Located at the Julington Creek Service Center
Have you ever thought to yourself, “I really want to glue plastic spoons together?” If so, that seems a little odd, but be amazed at the things you can create with spoons, pizazz and a bit of time. Space is limited, and registration, which opens on June 28, is required. Call (904) 827-6950 to sign up. A $5 donation to the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library for craft supplies is encouraged.

More on the Bartram Trail Branch Library building closure:
Patrons will be able to request items and check them out from a temporary library located at St. Johns County Recreation and Parks Northwest Office at Mills Field 1721 Race Track Road. Located only about two miles north of the library branch, this temporary location will provide convenient access for patrons to borrow new items they have requested and return items during open hours.

The temporary library is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Tuesdays, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Patrons are advised that an after-hours book drop will not be provided.

Chett Wood is the Reference and Adult Services Librarian at the Bartram Trail Branch Library.

Due to population increase, St. Johns County needs more bus drivers

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Did you know that St. Johns County is the eighth-fastest-growing county in the country? According to a recent population estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau, the county’s population increased by 4.2 percent in just one year. And it’s not just retirees flocking to the Sunshine State — families with young children are also moving south, which means we need more bus operators to transport children safely to and from school.

“There are so many positives to driving a bus,” said Rebecca D’Alessio, bus operator, recruiter, and instructor for the Transportation Department. “It’s a meaningful, purposeful, and fun-filled job working with the kids and connecting with them. We like to say that we are the driving force of education.”

D’Alessio, a Massachusetts native who graduated from Worcester State University with a degree in geography and spent much of her adult life as a crew member on a passenger ferry in Key West, said she never even considered working as a bus driver until she read an ad in the local newspaper.

“I knew that St. Johns County offered great benefits and I really wanted a job with stability, flexibility, and room to grow. Becoming a bus operator gave me all of those things plus they paid me to train for my CDL Class B license. I also love the diversity of working here. We have everyone from C-level professionals and retired public servants to great-grandmas and single parents,” said D’Alessio.

St. Johns County School District’s Transportation Department is accepting applications for full-time and part-time school bus operators. Training programs are held regularly throughout the year. Candidates must adhere to a strict list of requirements and will be given a $1,000 sign-on bonus after working as a bus operator for 60 school days. Visit www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/transportation/jobs or contact George Marsh at (904) 547-8818 for more information.

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We’re looking for qualified ICT’s to join our team!
Boy Scouts make improvements to St. Augustine Wildlife Reserve

On April 20, the Boy Scouts of Troop 225 in Fruit Cove performed a conservation project to rehab animal cages for two big cats at the St. Augustine Wild Reserve. According to the troop’s scoutmaster Martin Hodgson, this project, like all done by the troop, was led by the scouts.

“We are a completely boy-led troop,” Hodgson said. “Adults provide the direction, coaching, and training that empower the boys with the skills they will need to lead the troop.”

Hodgson said the boys took a lot of pride in providing this service to the volunteer-run reserve and to the community. Spending time with the top predators was a fun benefit.

Troop 225 has a long history, dating back to the early 1980s, which makes it one of the oldest troops in the Northern St. Johns County. The troop has turned out more than 60 Eagle Scouts as well as many scouts involved in Order of the Arrow.

Troop 225 meets every Monday at 7 p.m. at Geneva Presbyterian Church, 1755 State Road 13 North in Fruit Cove. Visitors, family, friends and fellow scouts that might want to experience what the troop has to offer are welcome.

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Visit www.troop225.net for more information.

跑跑的骑士团结社区为好事业

更多于800人出席了第九届“跑跑的骑士”在克里基德高中举行的活动。这项活动于5月10日举行。活动包括了一个1英里跑、5K、以及赛百味队比赛。5K被爱尼尔斯的天使队和团队 имени trata winning at 18:22. Top 5K finishers, Kate Landau and Kristopher Shold, were awarded $500. The 2020 Race Logo contest winner, Riley McNaron, received a $500 scholarship sponsored by Leonard’s Studios. Riley McNaron, received a $500 scholarship sponsored by Leonard’s Studios. Riley McNaron, received a $500 scholarship sponsored by Leonard’s Studios.

克里基德高中的英语系长期支持“跑跑的骑士”活动。今年，该活动的赞助商是克里基德高中的骑士运动俱乐部。这项筹款活动使克里基德高中的运动员和乐队能够购买急需的大件物品。这项筹款活动是由克里基德高中的骑士运动俱乐部组织的，这项筹款活动使得有才能的队伍能够挑战其他队伍。

The Power of Creekside band Centipede team

更多于800人出席了第九届“跑跑的骑士”在克里基德高中举行的活动。这项活动于5月10日举行。活动包括了一个1英里跑、5K、以及赛百味队比赛。5K被爱尼尔斯的天使队和团队 имени trata winning at 18:22. Top 5K finishers, Kate Landau and Kristopher Shold, were awarded $500. The 2020 Race Logo contest winner, Riley McNaron, received a $500 scholarship sponsored by Leonard’s Studios. Riley McNaron, received a $500 scholarship sponsored by Leonard’s Studios. Riley McNaron, received a $500 scholarship sponsored by Leonard’s Studios.
Briefs

Lightner Museum to participate in Blue Star Museums

The Lightner Museum has joined museums nationwide in participating in the 10th summer of Blue Star Museums, a program which provides free admission to the nation’s active-duty military personnel and their families this summer. The 2019 program began earlier than in past years, on May 18 (Armed Forces Day) and will end on Monday, September 2 (Labor Day). Military can find the list of participating museums at arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

Blue Star Museums is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in collaboration with Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums nationwide. First Lady of the United States Melania Trump and Second Lady of the United States Karen Pence are honorary co-chairs of Blue Star Museums 2019.

“The Lightner Museum considers it a small but necessary opportunity to participate in the Blue Star Program. Honoring our military and its families has been a decades-long tradition at the Lightner,” said Robert Harper, Lightner Museum director. “We were the first in Saint Johns County to take part in Blue Star and I am happy to see that other institutions have followed suit. The Lightner and its staff consider it an honor to salute our Military personnel and their families this summer. The Lightner Museum considers it a decades-long tradition at the Lightner,” said Robert Harper, Lightner Museum director. “We were the first in Saint Johns County to take part in Blue Star and I am happy to see that other institutions have followed suit. The Lightner and its staff consider it an honor to salute our Military personnel and their families this summer.

“We have an opportunity to bring forth a first comprehensive medical office building to northern St. Johns County to complement an addition of a planned freestanding emergency center at the same location,” said Bradley S. Talbert, FACHE, president and CEO of Memorial Hospital.

“The four-acre property will be home to a planned Medical Office Building that will provide specialty services and physician offices with an adjacent freestanding emergency center. Memorial is anticipating its expansion to be operational by the end of 2020.

Rainfall trends remain steady with some regional variation

While central and northern regions of the St. Johns River Water Management District received typical rainfall for April, below-average rainfall persisted in the southern third of the district.

The northern zone was slightly below average, except for St. Johns County, which received 3.47 inches of rainfall. The central zone of the district was above average, led by Marion County with 4.1 inches of rainfall. The southern third of the district was below average.

As of May 1, surface water flow conditions in the Upper St. Johns River Basin were mostly in the low-flow range for this time of year. Moving downstream into the Middle St. Johns River Basin, the St. Johns River measured near DeLand also had low flow for this time of year. Further downstream, the Satsuma station had average flow, with low-flow measured at the St. Johns River near Jacksonville.

Visit www.sjrwmd.com/data for additional hydrologic data or to learn more about the St. Johns River Water Management District’s data collection program.

Retiring pastor heads for St. Augustine, new pastor coming home

Jim Walker, who has served faithfully for the last year at River of Life United Methodist Church on Race Track Road, has decided to hang up his stole. After a ministry that spans more than 30 years and two continents, Walker is looking forward to taking up residence with his wife Kathy in their old stomping grounds, St. Augustine Beach. His last Sunday at River of Life will be June 16.

Replacing Pastor Jim is Pastor Perri Martin, who is coming from Englewood on the West Coast of Florida. Having attended, and worked at, Crossroads Church near the St. Johns Town Center, Martin is excited to be returning to the Jacksonville area. Along with her husband and four young children, Martin will be starting at River of Life UMC on July 1. Her first sermon on will be on Sunday July 7.

Preschool marks milestone anniversary

The Goddard School of Saint Johns celebrates its 50th anniversary year of serving northeast Florida communities.

“The Goddard School of Saint Johns introduces STEAM concepts early on to help promote children’s natural curiosity in these subjects, increasing the chance that children will pursue STEAM-related careers later on in life.

Goddard School teachers play an active role in each child’s education and development, setting the stage for a fun, engaging learning environment. These enthusiastic, creative educators design unique, personalized lesson plans to captivate your child. The faculty also looks for learning opportunities that correspond with the students’ natural interests. For example, if an insect flies into the room and the children are captivated by it, teachers adapt the lesson to talk about insect life.

The Goddard School of Saint Johns has earned Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) accreditation, which is a national early-learning program accreditation. APPLE is accepted into the Gold Seal of Quality program.

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Local entrepreneurs Michael and Sashell Dragich grew up on opposite ends of the state. Michael Dragich was born in Ohio and later moved to South Florida while Sashell Dragich is a St. Johns native and has called Julington Creek home her entire life. She was a part of Bartram Trail High School’s legacy class (the first class to complete four full years after the school opened). Sashell Dragich attended the University of Central Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University in Ft. Myers, where she majored in business. After high school in South Florida, Michael Dragich joined the Marine Corps.

The two met in South Florida and moved to California, where Michael Dragich was stationed at the time. Ten years later, eager to introduce her husband to her beloved Julington Creek neighborhood, Sashell Dragich convinced him to call north Florida home. As felt by many, life after Michael Dragich’s military career was a transition with many questions — questions with answers that lead to the creation of Doody Daddy, a growing business for the couple and one that now supports their family. Michael and Sashell have been married for 10 years and have three children, two boys and a nine-month-old little girl.

1. What do you enjoy most about the area and Sashell, how had Julington Creek changed after being away for 10 years?
Sashell Dragich: I love Julington Creek because it still has that small town feel. Everyone knows everyone and I’ve always loved that. When we came back to the area after being away it was almost like a new world to me. So much had changed, but it’s still the friendly area I’ve always known.

2. What is Doody Daddy and how did the idea come about?
Michael Dragich: Doody Daddy is a business that offers the service of scooping dog poop for residential and commercial clients. We are primarily in the St. Johns area, but are growing to serve all of Jacksonville and St. Augustine. We are building customers and adding more drivers. Sashell runs the business from home now. The idea came from a place after serving in the military when I just didn’t feel that I could be happy in an office setting. I wanted to offer something to people that wasn’t very common.

3. What are your goals for your business?
Michael Dragich: Our goal is to keep growing and expanding. I’d love to franchise the business out to veterans one day. It’s often hard to find a place and sense of purpose after the military and I think it could help veterans get on their feet.

4. What do you enjoy doing as a family and personally?
Sashell Dragich: We always laugh because our profession?

5. Any jokes received when you explain your profession?
Michael Dragich: My friends joke sometimes, but I tell them that they see brown and I see green.

Sashell Dragich: We always laugh because we say that he’s a Doody Daddy because as a daddy of three kids, he’s literally surrounded by poop.

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If the truth be told, the thought of driving an hour to watch an American Civil War reenactment is not that appealing to a non-history buff, however, after meeting General Ulysses S. Grant of the Union Army in the parking lot, history started to take on a new meaning. He proudly posed for pictures and carefully explained the significance of his uniform’s badges and buttons. His wife, meanwhile, apologized for not being dressed in her finest silks for the occasion.

After a short shuttle ride, General Grant joined the crowd on the dusty, wooded path to the actual field where the Battle of Olustee, the only major battle fought in Florida during the Civil War, took place on Feb. 20, 1864. While strolling past musicians playing lively tunes and sporting rows of white canvas army tents, the first shots of the war rang in the distance.

As the battlefield came into view, canons blasted palmettos into the air — with the help of remote-control detonators. The excitement continued as soldiers on both sides advanced. Truly, this was not an experience found online, and the tidbits picked up along the way made it even more interesting.

For starters, the battlefield participants own both blue (for Union) and grey (for Confederate) uniforms, and they are assigned to a side before the reenactment begins.

Ear plugs are a must for everyone, unless a person just likes to cup hands over ears for long periods of time. And yes, there are ear plugs made for horses, too.

There’s a mini replica of the H.L. Hunley, the world’s first successful combat submarine. Unfortunately, three crews were lost on the submarine during trials and after the actual sinking of the USS Housatonic.

Visiting with historian Shorty Robbins is a trip. That is, she travels around in a mini, Victorian-era house to Civil War reenactments, and her piano opens into a bed.

This reenactment is about honoring veterans, encouraging the study of history, and teaching about the horrors of war. The three-day event includes memorials, parades, beauty pageants, concerts, theatrical performances, a fun run, medical tents, arts, crafts, foods, and merchants galore.

And for those who don’t like diving into history, the area also advertises natural springs (springrus.com) where tourists can suba dive, snorkel, and create their own history.
Nease NJROTC named No. 1 program in Area-12

By NewsLine Staff

mail@floridanewsline.com

For the seventh time in the past eight years, Nease was named the Most Outstanding Navy NJROTC program in Area-12, a region that encompasses 60 schools covering northeastern Florida and the entire state of Georgia.

The award is based on the total achievement of the program, which includes academic performance, community outreach, campus leadership, graduation plans, overall physical fitness and competition results.

“We (seniors) came into JROTC as the incoming Battalion Commander Linidy Gustafson receive the Most Outstanding Unit in Area-12 trophy during Nease NJROTC Awards Night,” outgoing Cadet Battalion Commander Lindsey Gustafson said.

Master Chief Petty Officer Duane Spears, one of the three naval science instructors, said Commanding Officer Captain Scott Larochelle led a cadet run unit — and these cadets like to stay active. “We’re a cadet team that is engaged parents and a supportive school administration,” said Captain Scott Larochelle.

Nease was the number one program in Area-12 from 2012-2016 and again in 2018. Nease is currently the No. 5 ranked program in the nation out of more than 600 schools.

“This achievement is the result of a total Nease family effort put forth by disciplined and hard-working cadets, engaged parents and a supportive school administration,” said Captain Scott Larochelle, senior naval science instructor.

Creekside sophomore is state champ

Makhall Mills, a sophomore at Creekside High School, competed in the Florida Track and Field State Championships on May 3 at the University of North Florida. She won the 100m sprint race in 11.66 seconds and was also runner up in the 200m sprint race. She currently holds the school record for both events and is coached by Rickey Fields.
Gracie Groves, a senior at Creekside High School, was awarded the P.E.O. STAR scholarship for the 2019 – 2020 academic year. The scholarship was presented at the Creekside awards ceremony on May 9 by Nancy Wertz. Groves will attend Samford University in the fall, where she plans to study music and political science. Groves is the daughter of Mark and Sarah Groves and was recommended for this scholarship by Chapter HT of Fruit Cove. The P.E.O. STAR Scholarship is a $2,500 scholarship based on excellence in leadership, extracurricular activities, community service, academics and potential for future success. The program is open to young women who are citizens or legal permanent residents of the United States or Canada and who are graduating high school seniors at the time of application. A student must be recommended by a P.E.O. chapter. Visit www.peointernational.org for more information.

The Jammin’ Jaguar Band from Julington Creek Elementary performed for the residents of River Garden Hebrew Home on Tuesday, April 16. The band is comprised of fourth and fifth graders who rehearse before school two mornings a week.

Julington Creek Elementary music students entertain

The Singing Jags from Julington Creek Elementary were invited to sing the national anthem for the Jacksonville Icemen’s first playoff game on Thursday, April 18. The chorus is comprised of third, fourth, and fifth graders who rehearse an hour after school, one day a week. They are pictured here with Fang, the team’s mascot.

The Creekside High girls’ tennis team captured the Region 2 title and competed in the state quarterfinals. The boys team made it to the regional finals, losing in a tight 4 – 3 match up, according to head tennis coach, Justin Vogel. Pictured are Imani Graham (class 3A overall singles champion), Tailynn Keen, Emily Kastleman, Molly Wannamaker, and Chetana Ramesh.

Creekside tennis teams end season on high note

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Creekside tennis teams end season on high note
Bartram Trail DECA students compete in international competition

By Delaney Cantrell
mail@floridanewsline.com

While the end of the school year brings excitement to most students, Bartram Trail DECA members had another reason to be excited. Some members advanced on from the state competition to be able to compete at the International Career Development Conference (ICDC). The students worked all year towards making it to this conference and found it to be a great and memorable experience for them.

Bartram took 15 students and two advisors to the competition in Orlando this year. The location of the competition rotates each year between Anaheim, Calif.; Atlanta, Ga.; Nashville, Tenn.; and Orlando. High school students from all over the United States and eight other countries attended the conference; this year’s attendance maxed out at more than 22,000 students.

To attend the international competition, the students must place in their event at the state competition. The Florida state competition, also held in Orlando, took place at the beginning of March. Bartram had an impressive turnout, with 11 students placing and many others receiving awards and scholarships.

Not all students that attend the international conference go because of placement in their competition. DECA also offers students the opportunity to attend a two-day workshop at the convention center where all the competitions take place. DECA’s Emerging Leader Series is designed to teach students effective leadership skills through goal-setting, consensus building, and project implementation. Skills learned in these workshops are beneficial to students as they plan for their futures in college or the workforce. Three Bartram students attended one of these academies.

The students who attended ICDC also had an entertaining time outside of the conference activities, meeting people from all over the world, enjoying a fun performance from the Blue Man Group, and spending an evening in Disney’s Magic Kingdom. While no students from Bartram placed at the international level, they all felt that they gained valuable skills and made lasting memories.
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With water temps pushing eighty degrees, Salinity levels are on the increase And little shrimp are beginning to show So fishing the St. Johns is beginning to grow.
Yes, summertime fishing has arrived. So gather your gear and don’t be deprived

Summertime fishing is finally here, and as always, is greeted with great expectations. As the summer progresses, we can only expect to see a steady increase in the variety, quality, and quantity of our fishing efforts.

Current indicators are promising that we are off to a good start for this summer’s fishing. A mild winter accompanied by less than normal rainfall has certainly contributed to this current outlook.

With juvenile shrimp starting to show throughout the river, we can now expect the larger species of the underwater food chain to be not that far behind. As summer progresses, the shrimp get larger as does the quantity and quality of the fish that feed on them. With the right weather conditions, late summer and early fall have the potential to provide as good fishing as nearly anywhere else in the state.

Almost certainly we can expect croaker, yellowmouth, redfish, flounder, black drum, sea trout, and sheepshead. If it’s a really good year we could even see additional species such as mangrove snapper and even tarpon. Not bad for our local area of the St. Johns, which is considered from downtown Jacksonville to the Shands Bridge. Officially this area of the river is considered to be freshwater, but in reality it is brackish for most or all of the year.

The latter part of the summer season is looked upon with great expectation as the St. Johns River food chain is made complete by the above water feeders (that’s us). Late July or early August is usually when we can expect our annual shrimp run to begin; sometimes lasting well into October, shrimping is a favorite activity for many. A good year shrimping could add up to a freezer full, while a slow year should still provide shrimp enough for bait.

Fishing Report: St. Johns croaker bite continues to warm up with reds showing around docks and pilings. Bonnethead sharks should be plentiful in the surf this time of year. They’re smaller, harmless, easy and fun to catch. Should be a great time for the kids.

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

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

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I think we are probably over the worst of the pollen season involving common trees like oaks and pines, but my daughter recently found an article in Scientific American, “Botanical Sexism Cultivates Home-Grown Allergies” (https://tinyurl.com/y6htszolv), and is well worth reading, particularly if you have an interest in becoming a Master Gardener volunteer. Classes are open to all and you don’t need a vast background in horticulture to be considered, just a general interest in gardening and a willingness to learn. The main requirement is that you want to volunteer your time. For vegetable, herb, and fruit growers, Beth Marlowe, our new Urban Garden coordinator, describes the Urban Garden Program and how it benefits our citizens. Terry Del Valle reminds us of best lawn mowing techniques, or using them as mulch, or even bagging them for collection, the excess nutrients that fueled the algae in the St. Johns River in recent years will be reduced, and the river will stay healthy. We shall see!

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4. Seaport (abbr.)
7. “Unforgettable” singer
10. The GOAT
11. Used to harvest agave cactus
12. Luke’s mentor __-Wan
13. Muses
15. IBM operating system
16. Hungarian village
19. Popular conversation topic
21. N. Atlantic island
23. Fail to discern correctly
24. The President has one
25. Irish Gaelic language
26. Gasteyer and Ivanovic are two
27. Garnished
30. National capital
34. Basics
35. Initial public offering
36. Winged horse
41. English synthpop duo
45. Mars crater
46. A lot
47. Small organelles
50. By reason of
54. “Growing Pains” actor Kirk
55. Free from contamination
56. Genus in the mahogany family
57. Body part
59. A belief in a supreme being
60. Talk a lot
61. Actors’ group
62. Unit of measurement
63. Slick
64. No seats available
65. A way to change color

CLUES DOWN
1. Belongs to the daughter of Chaos
2. Wardrobe
3. Derek and Jeff are two
4. Disfigured
5. Hawaiian dish
6. What a hack drives
7. Horse gear
8. Do away with
9. Narrow straits between Sinai and Arabian peninsulas
13. Corrie
14. Hawaiian flower necklace
17. Midway between northeast and east
18. Insecticide
20. Comfort
22. Town in Galilee
27. Informal greeting
28. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
29. Used to check the heart
31. Western India island
32. Credit card term
33. Female deer
37. British football team
38. Persian jurisdiction
39. Freshwater mussel genus
40. Opposite of happiness
41. Ban on trade
42. Bitterly regrets
43. Assented
44. Well-proportioned
47. Part of (abbr.)
48. Indigenous people of Thailand
49. A man of your stature (abbr.)
51. Advantageous
52. Female sibling
53. Electronic countermeasures
58. Swiss river

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When envisioning South Florida, Miami’s South Beach, Art Deco style architecture and an enticing food scene come to mind. Always exciting, but I chose to visit Fort Lauderdale. It’s less crowded, carries a similar vibe, and sits just 45 minutes away. Many think of Fort Lauderdale as a party-haven for college students on spring break, but it is also known as the Yachting Capital of the World. The 165-mile network of boat canals crosses the area earns it the nickname, the Venice of America. More than 100 marinas berth some of the largest mega yachts.

Even if you aren’t invited on one of those, you may yet embark — on a cruise from Fort Lauderdale’s Port Everglades, which ranks as one of the top three cruise ports in the world. It’s always a good idea to arrive a day early, so I offer a few suggestions of places to visit and things to do.

To get an authentic feel for the city, hop aboard the water taxi. Pleasing water views of the homes and canals accompany an informative narration about the history of the stunning area. Get off at one of the canal-side restaurants (I loved Shooters), then hop back on with your day pass.

Don’t miss driving along Las Olas Boulevard, home to many jaw-dropping mansions and 17 blocks of upscale shopping, sidewalk cafes and nightlife. Make reservations to dine in the rear courtyard at Louis Bossie, an Italian eatery whose magical outdoor setting mesmerizes, especially at sunset.

Shoppers might pop into the New River Fine Art Gallery to gaze upon some original modern art or famous artists’ works from the past. I was told that browsers are welcome, even those that can’t afford anything. The shop owners encourage everyone to gain an appreciation for visual art. Besides, it’s fun to imagine where you might hang or place a piece in your home.

North on A1A, but hidden off the highway, you’ll find the Bonnet House, a historic home now managed by the Florida Trust. Anyone interested in history or gardening should not miss this unexpected gem built in the 1920s. Eclectic artists Frederic and Evelyn Bartlett embellished the 1930s beachfront property. Their family left the property, brimming with a bounty of colorful art, to the state in 1983. Today’s docent-led tour provides fascinating insights into the era.

While visiting, I stayed at the centrally located W Fort Lauderdale Hotel and Spa on Beach Boulevard. The posh resort shines bright and airy after a recent $55 million renovation. The living room style lobby feels welcoming and comfortable. It’s also a great place to dine, enjoy cocktails or just people watch. My favorite hangout, however, was the hotel’s street-level Mexican themed restaurant, named El Vez.

The Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, just off the ocean, provides one of the calmest and picturesque kayaking spots ever. You might be able to take a stroll in the sand, spend a day sunning, or merely enjoy the view from the drive, this beach is one of Florida’s finest.

Travelers find the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport easy to navigate and convenient to Port Everglades, as well as the beach. A drive to Fort Lauderdale from Jacksonville takes you about five hours.

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