

Ponte Vedra NewsLine

SEPTEMBER 2020 Volume 7 Issue 9

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

A Florida NewsLine Publication



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BFF Best Furry Friend



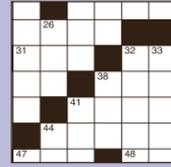
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Nease cadets graduate from Navy JROTC Leadership Academy

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Nease NJROTC, the No. 1 program in northern Florida and the state of Georgia and one of the top 10 programs nationally, restocked its high-performing cadet leadership ranks by successfully graduating seven cadets at the Area-12 NJROTC Leadership Academy in Clay County in July.



Photo courtesy Scott La Rochelle

Nease NJROTC instructors and cadets completed the Area-12 Leadership Academy in Clay County: GYSGT Duane Hanson, MCPO Duane Spears, Amber Vidler, Dylan Dosio, Brandon Donovan, Daniel Mahoney, Brodie Mongon, Juan Castillo, Haylie Spell, Isabella Rivera, Kaitlyn Boggs and Captain Scott LaRochelle.

The NJROTC Leadership Academy historically brings together the top 200 cadets from Area-12's 60 high school programs across northern Florida and the state of Georgia; however, this year to ensure the proper health and safety of the trainees, smaller Leadership Academy clusters were organized across the area. The Clay County Leadership Academy included 30 cadets from Clay, Fleming Island, Middleburg, Oakleaf, Orange Park, Ridgeview and Nease high schools.

Navy JROTC cont. on pg. 14

"Free Flow" to help the homeless

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

It was during a hot August mission trip to Haiti in 2010 that Lisa Harris fully understood the incredible power of clean water and the ability to take a shower.

"We had to keep our eyes and lips closed tight because we were using dirty water," said Harris, a Ponte Vedra Beach resident. "We could not fully shower up, and we were just disgusting by the end of the trip."

Harris showered a lot once she returned home, something she realized everyone takes for granted.



Free Flow booth at Serve Day 2020 putting together drop bags for the homeless.

"After the shower, I felt like a new woman. That external act had an internal impact that was so profound. In that moment, I knew that I would provide the homeless with access to showers," said Harris, who resigned from her job with a large veterans organization in June to pursue this goal full-time.

Known as Free Flow, Harris calls the mission a "huge passion project" that came to fruition when she moved to Ponte Vedra Beach in 2017. She noticed the large homeless population in the Jacksonville Beach area and reached out to then co-workers Kristina Rice and Beth Whitman who fully embraced the idea.

"I am a believer. I sat on this idea for eight years and never felt a call to do it. I think that there is an anointing time and an appointing time. When I relocated to Florida from Atlanta, I knew that it was time. I am in love with this area, and I want to improve and support it," said Harris, who has worked most of her life in the nonprofit sector.

A lot of time and energy was spent on

paperwork for Free Flow to become a 501 C3 non-profit, develop a mission and vision statement and attract donors and volunteers, she said.

And then the pandemic hit.

"We are of the mindset that just because of the virus, the homeless do not cease to have needs. They still need showers and resources," she said. "And, sadly with so many people losing their jobs right now, we anticipate the need to increase. We really want to be proactive."

Step one is to restore dignity, she said, which is why the mobile showers and laundry unit has to be the first purchase. Free Flow is currently seeking donations



Free Flow volunteers at Serve Day in St. Johns County

to make this a reality as soon as possible. This unit (four private stalls, two for women, two for men and one out of the four ADA equipped) will cost \$76,000, and it will include five sets of washers and dryers. All services provided to the homeless will be free, and Free Flow will concentrate on Jacksonville Beach first and then branch out. Volunteers will be busy washing clothes while the homeless shower in a safe and secure environment where they will also receive a "drop bag" full of personal hygiene items and clothing.

Ultimately, the goal is to create a "Mobile Care Village" across the area that would also include two more mobile units – a



Free Flow board members Kristina Rice, Lisa Harris and Beth Whitman. Photos courtesy Lisa Harris

Bicycle Repair and Trade unit and Job and Education unit. The order of purchase for the mobile units is intentional and with a purpose, said Harris.

Board member Kristina Rice agreed.

"Being clean changes your whole outlook, and it creates a feeling of dignity and respect," said Rice, who has been working with veterans and active duty military members for five years. "We want to work together as a community and stand in those gaps and bridge them."

Board member Beth Whitman said she first felt a desire to help the homeless during her first job out of college when she worked for a community action organization.

"We are all one bad decision away from being in this same situation," said Whitman, who has an accounting background. "There are a majority of homeless people



Free Flow volunteers at Serve Day 2020 held in July at Ponte Vedra High School.

that have been employed, who want to be employed and are capable but simply fall on hard times for whatever reason. Many can't find employment due to their inability to bathe or wash their clothes."

Free Flow cont. on pg. 11

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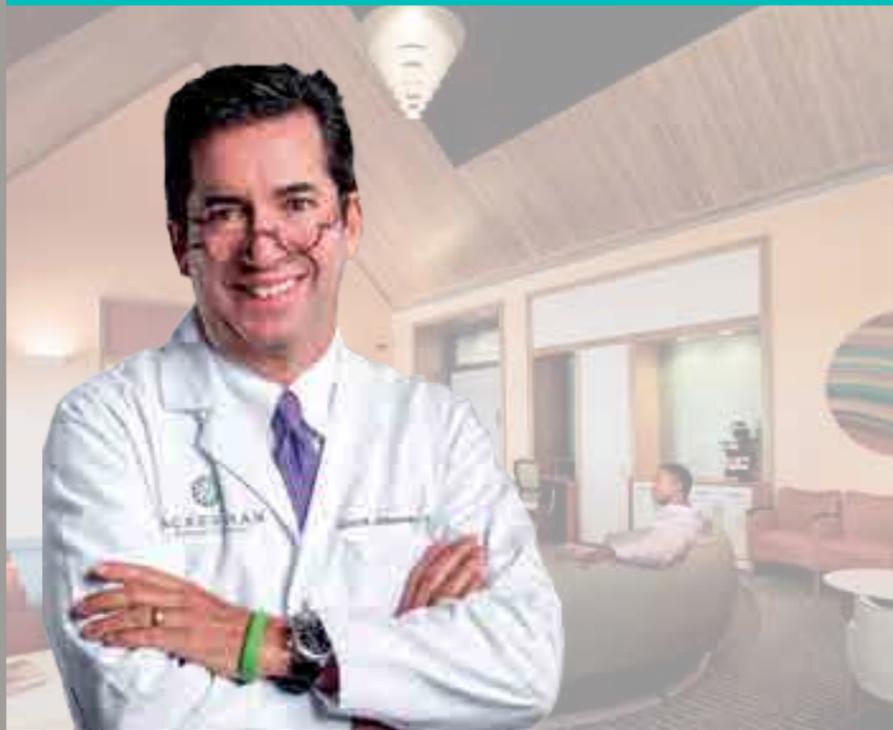
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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Jaar!



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Boxer mix

FAVORITE ACTIVITY:
Chasing the bouncy ball at the beach or swimming after the ball in the lake

FAVORITE TREAT:
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FAVORITE FRIEND:
Lucy

HOW YOUR BFF GOT THEIR NAME:
Marley seems like a popular dog name, so I went with another musician's last name

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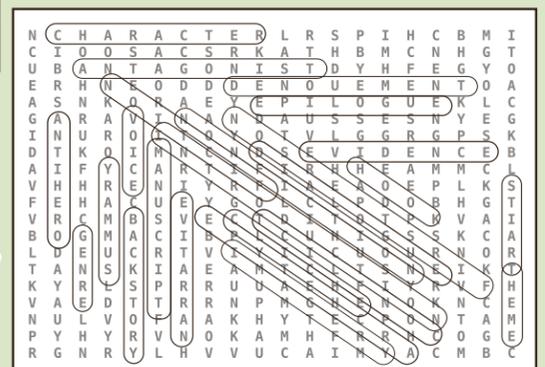
Last month's Mystery Photo was the side of the Palm Valley Bridge.
Our winner was Laurie Stone. Congratulations!



Answers
to our
Puzzles
PG 12



Answers: A. compose B. draft C. edit D. ideas



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with St. Johns County Commissioner Jeremiah Blocker, District 4

Q: Can you give us an update on what you have been doing lately that has resulted in an absence of this column for a few months?

A: I have been mobilized as a member of the Florida National Guard. I'm proud to continue serving in the military and there are actually a number of elected officials in the Guard. When I'm mobilized, I can still participate in Board of County Commissioners meetings and vote on items before the board. I can also still answer emails and phone calls from constituents, but it's usually in the evenings.

We had planned a series of Town Hall meetings plus my local office hours in Ponte Vedra Beach, but due to my mobilization and COVID-19 concerns, we had to postpone these. I think these meetings are important and plan to resume them when we can and when it is safe to do so.

Q: Can you shed some light on your stance on wearing face masks in St. Johns County?

A: First, I think we need to lead by example in St. Johns County. When social distancing is not available, we require masks in county facilities. We can control and enforce this in our facilities. As far as a county-wide mask mandate, the challenge is enforceability. How do you go from a strong recommendation to enforcement? I am not in favor of creat-

ing mandates and laws that we cannot enforce. Rather, people need to be good neighbors and respectful. I think that the majority of our citizens are.

I would encourage businesses to take the Pledge St. Johns (www.pledgesjc.com). This is a way for the county to provide necessary PPE and hand sanitizer to businesses so they can keep customers and employees safe. Consumers can also visit this site to learn which St. Johns County businesses have taken the pledge.

When dealing with a global pandemic, everyone has an opinion on how to address it. We need to accommodate these opinions as much as possible, but still keep the public safe.

Q: Do you have any beach renourishment updates?

A: There are a number of projects in different phases at this time, including the design phase. The last I heard, the one time sand renourishment for the dunes will be upcoming this fall, pending weather. Hopefully we won't have any hurricanes and we will see something happening on the beach this fall.

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

A: Readers can email me at bcc4jblocker@sjcfl.us or call me at (904) 679-2620.



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

Q: Do you have any updates on the two new schools presently under construction, High School HHH and K-8 School MM?

A: Construction is moving along on schedule for both of these schools. Additionally, even though we will have to wait until next year, financially, to begin construction on High School III in the Twin Creeks area, planning is already in progress with the facilities department and the superintendent. This school, to be located in the central northern part of the county, will help additionally with overcrowding in our northern high schools.

Q: What can you tell us (as of the date of this interview, Aug. 19) about the start of school on Aug. 31?

A: We are super excited about school starting. Teachers have been attending training and I have spoken to all the principals in District 4. It is a happy time to be in the building and everyone can't wait to see the students. While we know that things may change and we may have to pivot, it's been great having people come together and focus their energy on the students.

Q: What will school look like?

A: Many of the schools in District 4 will utilize the blended model, where some students attend a teacher's class virtually and some attend in person. This of course presents unique challenges and my request of the community would be for understanding as teachers



Photos courtesy St. Johns County School District
High School HHH under construction, July 20, 2020.

get the routine down. I know they are up to the challenge because we have the best teachers. I'm happy that we came up with a model that gives people — staff and parents — choices. Refinement may still be necessary as we strive for continued improvement.

Q: Do you have any district news to share?

A: I'd like to congratulate Mike Degutis, our Chief Financial Officer, who has been promoted to Chief of Staff. This is a new position for our district, but common across other districts in the state. For now we will leave the two deputy superintendent positions left vacant by Cathy Mittelstadt and Brennan Asplen (who both accepted superintendent of schools positions in other school districts in the state) unfilled. We are at a time that we need the expertise of someone who is fully familiar with our strategic plan and growth. Mike has been a part of our team since 2011 and has this experience.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

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

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

Q: What events are happening now at the Clerk's office?

A: The St. Johns County Property Appraiser mailed out TRIM notices in August. For any disagreements with valuation or exemptions, homeowners should first schedule an informal conference with the Property Appraiser's Office. If a disagreement persists, visit our website to file a petition, which is found under the "VAB" tab. The deadline to file is Sept. 8. People can call our office at (904) 819-3644 with any questions.

Q: Can you give us an update on the operations at your office?

A: We have changed how we are handling marriage services. We are no longer requiring appointments for marriage licenses or ceremonies. Due to concerns about COVID-19, ceremonies are limited to just the couple getting married.

Q: Are appointments still required to get a passport?

A: Yes. We still require an appointment to get a passport. In mid-August, we hosted Congressman John Rutherford at our office. His office is very involved with constituents who have passport issues or questions as they relate to the Department of State. He told us that the Department of State is just now processing passport applications received in February and March, before the COVID shutdown of the offices. As more locations and staff return to work, the timeline for getting a passport should speed up. It should be noted that there are presently no expedited

passports by the Department of State, except in true instances of life or death.

Q: Can you comment on the virtual jury trials taking place in other counties?

A: These virtual trials are just for civil trials and they are on a trial basis for some counties around the state; St. Johns County is not included.

As for criminal and civil jury trials, they have been suspended through the end of August. At this time, our office is monitoring the situation to see when the suspension will be lifted by the chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court. Our office has been very strict in following CDC guidelines as they pertain to COVID and we have not had to shut down due to outbreaks.

Q: Do you have anything else to share?

A: As you may know, there has been a moratorium on evictions since early April. At the end of July, Gov. DeSantis extended the suspension of evictions further, but only for those tenants who have directly been affected financially by COVID. This restores a level of accountability.

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

A: A lot of questions can be answered by visiting our website, www.stjohnsclerk.com, which is most commonly used to pay traffic citations or search court records. People can also call our main office at (904) 819-3600.



with St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

Q: Can you give an update on TRIM notices?

A: Truth in Millage (TRIM) notices, including the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, were mailed out in mid-August. They can also be viewed on our website. If homeowners have any questions about their TRIM notice, to include valuation or exemptions, I encourage them to call our office to discuss.

Q: What happens if a homeowner disagrees with your office's valuation or application of exemptions?

A: We understand that from time to time, we won't agree, but we always try to move towards the taxpayer if legal and possible. If necessary, Florida provides an excellent avenue to settle any differences we are unable to resolve with homeowners: the Value Adjustment Board is an independent entity that does not work for our office or for the county.

Q: How does a homeowner go about the process of disputing?

A: If we can't come to an agreement, we actually encourage taxpayers to go to the Value Adjustment Board. The deadline for appeals to this board is Sept. 8. Homeowners can visit the St. Johns County Clerk of Courts website (www.stjohnsclerk.com) and click on the "VAB" tab. It costs \$15 to file a petition and a hearing will be scheduled sometime September through December, at the taxpayer's convenience. Hearings can be in person or remotely, over the telephone.

If the disagreement with our office is over exemptions, it is a statutory matter and the hearing will be before an independent magistrate who is an attorney. If the disagreement is over valuation, the independent magistrate will be an MAI appraiser. Prior to the hearing, our office will submit to the taxpayer all of our documentation and evidence. At the hearing, the taxpayer will submit his/her evidence and then the magistrate will make a decision.

Q: What happens if the taxpayer disagrees with the magistrate's decision?

A: At that point, the taxpayer may appeal to the Full Value Adjustment Board, which is made up of two County Commissioners, one member of the School Board and two independent citizens who are appointed. If this Full Value Adjustment Board believes that the magistrate has erred, they will send the case back for the magistrate to change the decision.

I would like to emphasize that this is a fully independent process and the Property Appraiser's office is not favored in any way. It is not adversarial at all; it is just a third party making a decision.

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

A: Our office is located at 4030 Lewis Speedway Ste. 203, (904) 827-5500. It is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Also, readers can email me at Ed-die@sjcpa.us or call me at (904) 827-5500.

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**with St. Johns County Supervisor of
Elections Vicky Oakes**

Q: As of the date of this interview, Aug. 19, Primary Election Day was yesterday. Can you give us some updates on how the day went?

A: First I'd like to say kudos and thank you to our poll workers, and I think our voters should know that elections would not take place without these volunteers. I hope they will extend their thanks to the poll workers as well.

We saw an overall voter turnout of about 29 percent, which is about the same as the 2018 primary — but we saw a lot more Vote by Mail, likely specifically a result of COVID concerns. We mailed out about 50,000 Vote by Mail ballots and had 25,745 returned. This return rate of approximately 50 percent is typical for a primary.

Our website has a voter turnout report that shows in real time, on a daily basis, the status of all forms of voting: Vote by Mail, Early Voting, and Election Day. Visit www.votesjc.com/voter-turnout to check out more statistical information about the most recent election.

Q: What is the result of the primary election races?

A: We had several races that were decided in the Primary Election: School Board District 2, 7th Judicial Circuit Public Defender, and two of the judicial races. Still to be decided in the November election are: Congressional District 4, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners District 1, Sheriff and one judicial race. These will of course be in addition to many other races that will appear on the General Election ballot.

Q: What is the next step?

A: We will certify our Primary Election results on Aug. 25 and then we will move full speed ahead to the November General Election. We have to start the ballot layouts so Vote by Mail ballots can be mailed and there is another round of poll worker classes scheduled.

Q: Looking ahead, what are some of the important dates for the upcoming General Election?

A: First and foremost, the deadline to register to vote in the Nov. 3 General Election is Oct. 5. Other important dates include: overseas and military Vote by Mail ballots will be mailed to voters who requested one on Sept. 19; domestic Vote by Mail ballots will be mailed to voters who requested one on Sept. 24; Early Voting Dates will be Oct. 19 – 31; and the last day to request a Vote by Mail ballot is Oct. 24 by 5 p.m.

Q: Where are the Early Voting sites and what can you tell us about the Nov. 3 ballot?

A: The Early Voting sites will be announced in mid to late September. Voters will receive a sample ballot for the Nov. 3 General Election prior to the election as always. I recommend that each voter takes the time to review it as it is quite lengthy, with a lot of races as well as six Constitutional Amendments to be voted on.

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

A: Readers can email me at voakes@votesjc.com or call me at (904) 823-2238. Our website, www.votesjc.com also has a wealth of information.



Photo courtesy Newcomers of the Beaches

Newcomers of Beaches announces open registration

Newcomers of the Beaches is a social club for women who have recently moved to the area or have undergone a life changing event. All activities adhere to current healthcare guidelines and members participate in a variety of activities where lifelong friendships are formed. There are walks on the First Coast beaches, casual biking through Nocatee trails, walks around local neighborhoods to rejuvenate the mind and body. The Book Club meets virtually once a month to discuss books selected by the group. Are you a gamer? There are Mah Jongg and Canasta groups active online now. Coming soon we will have trivia and bingo. Visit www.newcomersofthebeaches.com to become a new member.

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MarketInsight



The Five Dollar Day

By Scott Grant
ScottGrant@StJohnsBusinessMonthly.com

In January 1914, six months before the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz-Ferdinand sparked the start of World War I in Europe, Henry Ford and the Ford Motor Company shocked the nation with the announcement of the Five-Dollar Day. Ford Motor's announcement that they were more than doubling wages for workers on the company assembly line in Dearborn Michigan was stunning. The move was hailed as an act of altruism and Ford is often credited with the creation of the middle class. His workers could now afford to buy homes and the very Model-T automobiles they labored to produce.

Ford's motives were not entirely altruistic. Productivity at his plant suffered from worker turnover. Ford, who had started out working for Thomas Edison, revolutionized manufacturing when he invented the moving assembly line. That assembly line was not fully automated unless he had a trained labor force to perform the repetitive tasks required of its human component. The increased pay worked. Turnover dropped from 370 percent to nearly zero. So many applicants flooded the plant that riots broke out. With his new workforce in place, the time it took to make each Model T dropped from more than 12 hours to a mere 93 minutes.

The pay increase came with a catch. Only half of the money was paid in wages; the second half was profit sharing — and to qualify, workers had to meet certain requirements. Ford Motor Company inspectors visited workers in their homes making sure that the dwellings were clean, that everyone was speaking English, and that no one was drinking alcohol. They also kept their eyes open for any acts of sedition or abuse. Finally, employees were required to contribute regularly to a savings account.

Henry Ford is a complex figure in American history. He was an early fan of Adolf Hitler. The Fuhrer was a fan of Ford's.

The German dictator greatly admired Ford Motor Company as a model of efficiency. And, although the auto magnate would later change his mind about the Fuhrer when World War II broke out, it is said he kept a picture of Hitler on his desk and that Adolf kept a picture of Henry on his.

Henry Ford was a fierce anti-Semite. In 1920, he began publishing a series called "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," in a newspaper he owned called the Dearborn Independent, which purported to tell the "neglected truth." The fiercely anti-Semitic polemic had first been published in Russia in 1903 and purported to expose the plans of an international cabal of Jews to control the world by controlling information and entertainment. The "Protocols," replete with tales of child abduction and shadowy rituals, had been widely debunked and dismissed as fake long before Henry Ford published them, but Ford, who once remarked that "history is bunk," believed them, because he wanted to.

Some of this may sound familiar. Vile conspiracy theories about baby eating satanic cults and deep state cabals haunt the internet today as well. More and more, otherwise normal neighbors have increasingly grasped the noxious spewings of an anonymous internet prophet known as QAnon. It occurs that there are similarities between Henry Ford's time and our own. A pandemic, a recession, and the closing of bars represent both eras. Now, in 1920 the bars closed for a different reason; Prohibition became the law. But one must wonder if conspiracies thrive in a world where people feel cooped up and powerless.

Scott A. Grant is a local author, historian, columnist, and speaker. He is president of Standfast Asset Management in Ponte Vedra Beach. He welcomes your comments or questions at scottg@standfastic.com.

Why Labor Day is worth celebrating

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Labor Day weekend is much-anticipated. Many people look forward to Labor Day weekend because it offers one last extended break to enjoy summer weather. Though summer does not officially end until September is nearly over, for many people Labor Day, which is celebrated annually on the first Monday in September, marks the unofficial end of summer.

But Labor Day is more than just one final chance to embrace the relaxed vibe of summer and soak up some rays. In fact, Labor Day boasts a unique history that's worth celebrating for a variety of reasons.

What is Labor Day?

The United States Department of Labor notes that Labor Day is a celebration of American workers that dates back to

the 19th century. The day is meant to commemorate the contributions workers in the United States have made to the nation, helping to make it one of the strongest and most prosperous countries in the world.

Who came up with the idea of Labor Day?

Despite the fact that municipal legislation surrounding Labor Day was initially introduced in the 1880s, debate remains as to just who should be credited with proposing a day to honor American workers.

Some records suggest that Peter J. McGuire, who served as general secretary of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and co-founded the American Federation of Labor, deserves the credit for Labor Day; however,

Labor Day cont. on pg. 10



PONTE VEDRA NEEDS ITS COUNTY TO FIGHT FOR COASTAL RESTORATION AND TRAFFIC SOLUTIONS.

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Minimize your flooding risk by doing these five things

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

As Florida is in the middle of hurricane season, here are five tips from the St. Johns River Water Management District to prepare for heavy rains from severe storms, including torrential rain from recent summer thunderstorms. By being proactive, homeowners can help protect themselves and their property from flooding.

- Report clogged culverts or slow-moving water in ditches to your local government to allow adequate time for maintenance or repairs before a storm.
- Keep grass clippings and other debris out of stormwater drainage systems to prevent clogging and loss of stormwater storage and treatment capacity. Stormwater systems help control flooding by slowing down surges and absorbing rainwater before it reaches water bodies.

- Clean out roof gutters and extend downspouts at least four feet from structures to keep water from ponding at the foundation.

- Build up the ground around the home to promote drainage away from the foundation.

- Bookmark useful webpages, including www.sjrwmd.com/storm, for links to flood statements and warnings, river stage and flooding data, and local government emergency contacts. Links to the National Weather Service, Florida Division of Emergency Management and the U.S. Geological Survey's interactive map of current conditions in the state are also available via the website at www.sjrwmd.com/data.

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Briefs

St. Johns County extends building, permit fee reductions for local businesses, residents

In order to provide relief for local businesses and residents who are recovering from the impact of COVID-19, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners extended a 30 percent reduction in all general building permit fees.

Specific reduced fees include those related to development review, fire safety inspections, residential and commercial demolition, swimming pool fees, as well as electrical, gas, plumbing, mechanical, and irrigation permit fees.

The fee reductions are in effect through Nov. 3, 2020. Call St. Johns County Building Services at (904) 827-6800 for more information or visit www.sjcf.us to view the updated fee schedule.

Newcomers alumnae group holds board meeting

Nancy Scott and Camilla Leininger, the outgoing co-presidents of Newcomers Alumnae, recently held a board meeting to install the new board members for the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year. Although the pandemic has prevented this social group, started in 1998, from meeting sooner, the meeting was held utilizing social distancing and safety measures.

The new board members are: Maria Woodford and Barbara Stidfole, co-presidents; Sally Lutz, vice president; Louise Johnson, treasurer; Debbie Condit, recording secretary; and Maureen Tinnesz, corresponding secretary.

The board committees are: Membership, Brooke Freeman; Monthly Luncheons, Sharon Romans and Dede LeClair; Interest Groups, Debbie Corsano; Adventures and Outings, Paula Kennedy; Newsletter Editor/Directory, Katie McGuigan; and Parliamentarians, Nancy Scott and Camilla Leininger.

The group expressed delight that the monthly luncheon at Marsh Land-

ing Country Club on Sept. 2 will take place on a limited scale, and other social events and virtual activities in the future will be decided based on social distancing and safety guidelines. Some of the group's activities highlighted on its website are: book club, bunco, canasta, Happy Hour, lunch-in, wine socials, mah jongg and adventures and outings.

Newcomers Alumnae is a social group comprised of women who live in Ponte Vedra Beach, Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach, Atlantic Beach, Noctatee, Jacksonville and St. Augustine. The group provides an opportunity for graduates of newcomer groups to continue growing in the community and to foster friendships through social activities. Contact brookemeister@msn.com to apply for membership or visit <https://newcomersalumnae.wildapricot.org> for more information.

St. Johns County CARES Program launched

In August, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners launched St. Johns County CARES, a program to help local businesses, residents, and nonprofit organizations respond to and recover from the economic impact of COVID-19. Applications for small businesses and residents are now available. Applications for nonprofit organizations will be available in the coming weeks.

A financial assistance program utilizing more than \$18 million in federal CARES Act funding, St. Johns County CARES provides grants to eligible applicants who suffered loss of revenue or income, or incurred unexpected expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Small businesses may qualify for up to \$20,000 in grant funding and residential households may qualify for up to \$5,000 in grant funding.

For more information, visit www.sjcf.us/sjccares, call (904) 209-6050, or email sjccares@sjcf.us.

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Dream Big Florida program to send student postcards to space and back

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Club for the Future and STEM2 Hub are partnering on the “Dream Big Florida” postcard program, which will provide more than one million Florida students direct access to space through Blue Origin’s reusable rockets.

The program gives K-12 students access to space by asking them to create postcards with their dreams of the future and vision for life in space answering the question, “Why do you think Earth needs space?” The postcards will be collected at the district level and sent back to Club for the Future in the first month of school. Blue Origin will then

fly the postcards to space and back on upcoming New Shepard rocket launches, and mail them back to students with a “Flown to Space” postmark. The program provides teachers and students with an engaging activity to kick off the school year and inspire them to think about a future of life in space.

“This partnership and this project provide young people across the state of Florida with something that once seemed implausible: access to space,” said Kathleen Schofield, executive director of STEM2 Hub. “But more than that, each postcard represents the

inner voice of a young person, a chance to be bold and dare to dream about the future, to ignite a spark of entrepreneurship, and set out on a path they may never have dreamed possible!”

To help students think about why Earth needs space, teachers and students can access the Club for the Future’s standards-aligned curriculum or engage via a series of thought-provoking prompts outlined on Dream Big Florida’s microsite.

“Club for the Future was launched last year by our founder to inspire students to pursue careers in STEM and help

visualize the future of life in space to benefit Earth,” said Josef Reinke, director, Club for the Future. “We are beyond excited to partner with Florida’s amazing STEM2 nonprofit, STEM2 Hub, and bring access to space to more than one million students across Florida through our ‘Send a Postcard to Space’ program.”

Visit <https://clubforfuture.org/missions/dream-big-florida/> for more information and program materials. Visit www.clubforfuture.org and <https://stem2hub.org> for more information about Club for the Future, founded by Blue Origin, and STEM2 Hub respectively.

Popular Cupcake Run to be virtual this year

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Due to concerns about COVID-19, the annual Girls on the Run Cupcake Run and Cake Walk was moved from April to September; however, with CDC guidelines still restricting large gatherings, Girls on the Run has decided to make the Cupcake Run a virtual run this year. Scheduled for Sept. 19, it is not too late to sign up and receive the race swag (medal, mini cupcake, technical shirt, cupcake coupons and a race bib). Registration for the 5K only will take place until Sept. 13 at midnight (or until the medals are gone).

For local participants (within 50 mile radius), race packet pickup will be Tuesday, Sept. 15, Wednesday, Sept. 16 and Thursday, Sept. 17 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 8 p.m. each day at Sweet by Holly at the St. Johns Town Center, 4624 Town Crossing Drive #137. For out of town participants (outside 50 mile radius), all swag (except cupcake and coupons) will be mailed no

later than Sept. 16.

Once you receive your packet, run your race your way on Saturday Sept. 19 and post it to the GOTRNEFL Facebook page to win a dozen Sweet by Holly cupcakes.

For the past 16 years, Girls on the Run Northeast Florida has been a champion for girls, helping them to see that their potential isn’t just enormous — it’s beyond measure! Girls on the Run staff know that their programs are needed now more than ever, so they are hard at work to ensure that girls will continue to build connectedness, strengthen their social-emotional health and increase their physical activity during this upcoming school year. Their commitment to inspiring girls to be joyful, healthy and confident is stronger than ever.



Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach announces 2020 Home Tour

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Ten years ago, The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach debuted the inaugural Home Tour, which has grown to be one of the area’s most popular events with more than 500 attendees. This year’s Home Tour will take place on Saturday, Sept. 12 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. There will be two sessions: 10 a.m – 1 p.m. and 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

The 2020 Home Tour will feature three exquisite Mark Macco Architects homes in prestigious neighborhoods in the Beaches area. Admission includes transportation to the homes by luxury coaches and VIP car service by Audi Jacksonville and Orange Park for an additional charge. The Cultural Center’s exhibitions and The Market will be opened for viewing. Food trucks will be outside The Center serving delicious treats both sweet and savory.

The Home Tour acts as a major fundraising and community outreach component to the Cultural Center’s annual activities. The tour serves the Center’s mission to bring the arts into the life of the community through arts education, exhibition, and outreach, and by honoring a donor-driven philosophy. Due to COVID-19, The Center will practice safe standards and is limiting the amount of exposure to guests during this event.

For admission, visit www.ccpvb.org or call Gina Fiore at (904) 280-0614 Ext.1202.

The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The Cultural Center is located at 50 Executive Way in Ponte Vedra Beach.

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Bolles launches 2020-21 school year on campus, online

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

The first day of school on all four Bolles campuses and in home-based classrooms around the world went off without a hitch on Aug. 13.

The Bolles Lower School Whitehurst and Ponte Vedra Beach campuses, as well as the Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus, opened the year in a “Operating Scenario 2.” That means classes are being held on campus with synchronous online instruction available for students wishing to take classes from a distance. The Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus is in “Operating Scenario 3,” meaning half the student body is on campus each day while the other half participates in at-home learning. Facilities and classrooms on all four campuses have been redesigned for appropriate physical distancing, including the addition of partitions and relocation of some classrooms to larger spaces.

“Thanks to the hard work and diligence of our faculty and staff this summer, we are well prepared for a safe and healthy return to campus,” said Bolles President and Head of School Tyler Hodges. “I am grateful for the opportunity to learn together during this unusual season — we are ready for a safe and productive school year.”

The focus on health and safety is paying off. The Bolles School has a higher enrollment number this year than last year, with numbers expected to grow

as prospective student paperwork is processed in the weeks ahead.



Photos courtesy The Bolles School
A student at the Ponte Vedra Beach campus practices safe handwashing.

On the first day of school, students practiced new arrival protocols on each campus, including arrival health screenings. Prior to campus entry, all students must have their temperature taken from their vehicle. They also must answer a standard set of questions regarding their physical condition, symptoms and any known exposure to COVID-19. All faculty and staff also must answer the same questions and log their temperature before beginning the work day.



New Ponte Vedra Campus Head Stacey Hendershot escorts a student on the first day of class.

Masks are mandatory on all Bolles campuses this year. Students also are getting used to new classroom seating charts, physical distancing standards and new class dismissal and arrival bells that allow for adequate spacing between classes. Many classes enjoyed connecting with classmates learning from home via large screens and video technology.



A Whitehurst Campus class with distance learning classmates.

On Aug. 13, half of the Class of 2021 enjoyed the Senior Breakfast, an annual tradition hosted by the Bolles Parent Association. Clad in black dresses and shirts, tiaras and sunglasses, students convened at a distance on the Bolles

River Campus for grab-and-go breakfast snacks and camaraderie. The second half of the Class of 2021 enjoyed the festivities on Aug. 14.

BEAM supply drive serves highest number of students in recent years

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

The Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry (BEAM) staff and volunteers completed their 26th annual Back to School with BEAM event, which was hosted drive-thru style at Neptune Baptist Church on Aug. 1.

Students and their families remained in their vehicles stopping at stations manned by volunteers in PPE to receive school supplies, backpacks, books, undergarments, clothing/shoe vouchers and healthy snacks.

This year proved to be one of BEAM’s most impactful years to date, assisting more than 900 local students with school essentials. Last year, 650 students were served through Back to School with BEAM, which traditionally takes place inside the main sanctuary at Beach Church.

Supplies were made available for school-aged families who live in ZIP codes 32233, 32227, 32266, 32250

and 32082 or if they have a parent who works or worked prior to COVID-19 in any of these zip codes.

BEAM continues to adhere to recommendations from the CDC, Florida Department of Health and local authorities. What has typically been a 1,000 or more person indoor back to school event

changed this year to model a drive-thru mobile food pantry distribution site. This year, a total of 77 volunteers over several days stepped up to ensure beaches area students had access to essential school supplies in preparation for in-person and/or virtual academic year plans.

Organizations that supported the 26th annual Back to School with BEAM event were Neptune Baptist Church, Beach Church, Rotary of Ponte Vedra Beach, Deerwood Rotary, READUSA, St. Vincent de Paul, First Coast Rotaract, JAX Chamber Beaches Division, and the Beaches Resource Center.



Photo courtesy BEAM
Volunteers manned a drive thru station for Back to School with BEAM on Aug. 1.



Families drove through the Back to School with BEAM school supply event.

Labor Day cont. from pg. 7

the Department of Labor notes that many people believe a machinist named Matthew Maguire (no relation to Peter) was the first to propose a holiday honoring workers in 1882. At that time Maguire was serving as secretary of New York’s Central Labor Union, which later adopted a Labor Day proposal and appointed a committee to plan a demonstration and picnic. The first Labor Day was ultimately celebrated in New York City on Tuesday, Sept. 5, 1882, in accordance with the plans made by the Central Labor Union, which strongly suggests that Maguire does, in fact, deserve the credit for coming up with the holiday.

Why celebrate Labor Day?

Labor Day is worth celebrating because, without the contributions of millions of workers every year, the United States would not be the success story it is and has been for more than 200 years. In addition to the United States, many countries across the globe, including Canada and Australia, have their own versions of Labor Day.

Labor Day weekend might now be seen as the unofficial end of summer. But this Labor Day weekend, celebrants and workers should remember that Labor Day also should be a time to reflect on the value of hard work.



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Get to Know . . .

Judy Tenbroeck

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com



Photo courtesy Judy Tenbroeck
Judy Tenbroeck

Judy Tenbroeck's childhood did not include a television, a phone or any modern conveniences that most folks take for granted such as hot running water. From the age of four until college, Tenbroeck lived with her family in Papua New Guinea. Her parents worked as Wycliffe linguists who translated the Bible into a written language, essentially creating an alphabet, teaching the villagers to read, write and to ultimately learn the Bible. Tenbroeck and her four siblings lived in the missionary children's home and attended the mission school. Despite the remote area, Tenbroeck, who is an operating room nurse at Baptist Medical Center Beaches, has only good memories of her upbringing. She described her life there as blissful, filled with strong friendships, sports, music and devoid of social frictions.

Tenbroeck's interest in nursing began as she watched her mother read medical books while trying to help villagers seeking aid for many ailments. When she was 13 years old, Tenbroeck found out that one of the missionary staff members, an elderly woman, had a stroke and was alone for three days before anyone found her. It was at this moment that Tenbroeck decided that she wanted to become a nurse and to take care of her parents one day. She made a promise to God that if He let her become a nurse, she would do just that. Her course was set.

Q: Where did you attend college?

A: I attended Biola University in California. I wanted a five-year program because my parents went on five-year missions, and I wanted to finish at the same time. The university was near downtown Los Angeles, so I went from the native village to a very big city environment. It was a huge culture shock for me. I didn't know how to drive, and I wasn't even used to having a long hot shower. Once I finished the nursing program, I moved to Jacksonville Beach because my brother lived there, and I wanted to be near family.

Q: What brought you to Ponte Vedra Beach?

A: I moved onto 15 acres in the area with my late husband, Stuart Tenbroeck. It is called Deer Run Ranch. I was a mountain girl and wanted to go to Tennessee or anywhere with season changes. So, Stu planted hundreds of deciduous trees all over the ranch and said "I'm bringing you the mountains" — a romantic gesture.

Q: How did you learn to work a ranch?

A: I owe my love of ranching to Stu. He taught me everything that I know to live on a ranch. There was no man like Stu. He could do everything. He would say "Judy, listen to me, you will need to know this." And I did. He prepared me for everything.

Q: You mentioned that your late husband, a former St. Johns County deputy, and your late father both suffered from dementia. Talk about this experience.

A: Stu had a severe form of dementia known as "Lewy Body," comparable to a combination of Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinson's Disease. The life expectancy

for someone with Lewy Body is five to seven years. Stu lived for 11 years. He was bedridden for six years. I felt that God wanted me to take care of him at home. When Stu was at his worst, I cried out to God and said "Please don't make me go through this." I clearly heard God say to me that I would lose Stu physically, but that I would see his true spirit. And for those last six years, he was the sweetest Christian. He was amazing. He passed away in 2016. A year later, my dad showed signs of dementia, and my parents moved in with me. My dad passed at the age of 95 in 2020. My mom continues to live with me. And my promise to God at the age of 13 to take care of my parents was fully realized. Without God, I could not have taken care of Stu or my dad.

Q: You have plans to board horses on your ranch with a special goal in mind. Please share.

A: It is a gift from heaven to have the quietness of a ranch. I personally saw the benefit of this peaceful environment for my husband and father. If a person with dementia has too much stimulation, it can be a disaster. I am currently boarding two horses, and I would often take my husband and father on golf cart rides to look at the horses, Poppy and Chief. We also have 25 chickens and two goats. This was so calming to them. I would like to board two more horses at the ranch so that people with dementia could come with a caregiver and enjoy a day out. If anyone is interested in being interviewed to board a horse here, please email me at judy.tenbroeck@gmail.com.

Free Flow cont. from pg. 1

Harris said the public's image of the homeless is unintentionally flawed.

"It is not always who you think it is or just what you see," she said, referring to someone standing streetside asking for money. "It is also the woman fleeing a domestic violence situation who literally has nothing. It is a person who is living paycheck to paycheck and just lost their job. It is someone just released from foster care with no family. It is someone's sister, mother, father or brother — folks just like me and you."

Harris has been canvassing the area to better determine the needs of the homeless while giving out drop bags (made possible through current donations). She said she hears repeatedly from the homeless that they can't always get to a shelter in time for a shower, that it is too far away or that they have an interview the next day, but nowhere to go to clean up.

Volunteer and Ponte Vedra Beach resident Bill Brunscheen said he sees the need and thinks Free Flow will be very helpful to the homeless community.

"My role is whatever they need," said Brunscheen, who hopes to get others from his church, Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church, to also volunteer. He volunteered in July with Free Flow at Serve Day 2020 to help assemble drop bags during the event hosted by Roots Church and held at Ponte Vedra High School. Serve Day is a global effort that provides churches with a chance to serve their local communities, and Free Flow was one of five nonprofits invited to attend.

Harris, Rice and Whitman underscored their plan to complement other homeless services that currently exist and to work together to meet the needs of the community.

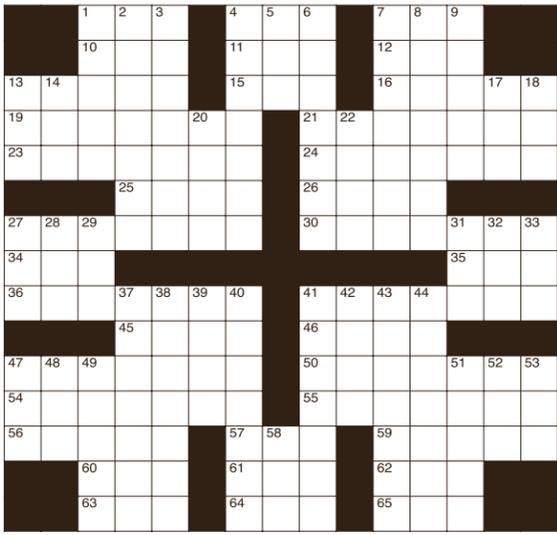
Visit www.free-flow.org to volunteer, learn more or to donate.

Get to Know . . .

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

Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Chop with an ax
- 4. Where a bachelor lives
- 7. Indicates near
- 10. Doctors' group
- 11. It's just a number
- 12. Type of bread
- 13. Lively ballroom dance
- 15. Charles S. Dutton TV series
- 16. A way to use up
- 19. Singular event
- 21. Home of Disney World
- 23. Minerals
- 24. Most insightful
- 25. Consult
- 26. In addition
- 27. Agents of downfall
- 30. Organizations
- 34. Supervises flying

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Czech monetary unit
- 2. Arousing intense feeling
- 3. Elks
- 4. Muscular weaknesses
- 5. Before the present
- 6. Figures out
- 7. Infinite
- 8. A low wall
- 9. Silly
- 13. Political organization
- 14. Used of a number or amount not specified
- 17. Divisions of the psyche
- 18. Denial
- 20. Ancient Iranian person
- 22. Count on
- 27. Popular sports league
- 28. Water (French)

CLUES DOWN

- 29. Partner to cheese
- 31. When you hope to get there
- 32. Angry
- 33. One point east of due south
- 37. Respects
- 38. Organize anew
- 39. French wine grape
- 40. Intrinsic nature of something
- 41. Neural structures
- 42. Brews
- 43. Where ships take on cargo
- 44. Holiday season singer
- 47. Shock treatment
- 48. Popular average
- 49. Products
- 51. A type of bear
- 52. Utilize
- 53. Old world, new
- 58. Swiss river



Solve the code to discover words related to writers.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 8 = D)

A. 2 11 20 23 11 9 26
Clue: To write or create

B. 8 12 22 16 5
Clue: Rough copy

C. 26 8 15 5
Clue: Correct or modify

D. 15 8 26 22 9
Clue: Thoughts about a course of action

WRITER'S CORNER WORD SEARCH

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

WORDS

- ANTAGONIST
- ANTIHERO
- ARCHETYPE
- BACKSTORY
- CHARACTER
- CLICHE
- CONFLICT
- DENOUEMENT
- DIALOGUE
- EPILOGUE
- EVIDENCE
- FICTION
- FIRST PERSON
- GENRE
- HOOK
- IMAGERY
- INTRODUCTION
- MANUSCRIPT
- NARRATIVE
- NONFICTION
- SUMMARY
- THEME
- TRAITS
- VOICE

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

The benefits of a new approach to learning for students

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The validity of the adage “necessity is the mother of invention” was on full display during the COVID-19 outbreak. People quickly had to learn to adapt to a new way of life, including an educational system that was transformed dramatically by social distancing guidelines.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Virtual home instruction may become a large part of the educational landscape even after it's no longer a social distancing necessity.

More than 76 million students are enrolled in United States schools, per the latest Census Bureau information. In a matter of days, millions of students who once attended classes in-person were forced to transition to virtual learning instruction. The process showed just how flexible learning systems can be, and how virtual instruction may become more than an emergency protocol in the future.

Schools utilized systems like Google Classroom, Canvas and virtual meeting apps to connect and learn. While in-class lessons provide the socialization and one-on-one interaction that can be vital for students' academic success, there are many different reasons why virtual instruction can be a key component of learning models as well. When virtual learning is used in conjunction with traditional teaching, students may have a more well-rounded experience. Here are some potential benefits that may unfold as more data is collected.

- **Pace:** Virtual learning affords students the chance to work on lessons at a pace that fits their individual needs. Students can go back and reread or re-work problems until they're satisfied they have learned their lesson. Lessons can be

slowed down or sped up depending on proficiency, creating a customized educational experience.

- **No more weather days.** Many school districts include snow or extreme weather days into their calendars, adding on extra days at the end of the school year to meet the specified number of educational days. Remote learning can take over in these times and keep school districts from having to pad calendars.

- **Convenience:** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later to provide students the best chance to get the amount of sleep they need. Still, most adolescents currently start school before 8:30 a.m. Remote learning enables students to complete their assignments when it works best for them. This may help them get more sleep, too.

- **Apps:** Learning apps are a new wave of educational tools that have helped buoy virtual instruction. Primary school students or those with individual education plans may benefit the most from reinforced app skills that match their learning pace in fun ways.

2020 - 2021 St. Johns County School Calendar

September 2020					Total 179 Days
M	T	W	T	F	
	1	2	3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Optional Planning 9 Teacher Planning (non-student day) 2 Teacher Inservice (non-student day) Classes Resume Student/Teacher Holiday End of Quarter
7	8	9	10	11	
14	15	16	17	18	
21	22	23	24	25	
28	29	30			



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The Pantry Raiders

Quick and filling meal served up in a snap

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

After the lazy days of summer, fall often arrives with packed schedules and everyone getting back on track, whether for work or school. Busy families may not have much time to spend in the kitchen these days, but they don't need to devote hours to cooking. Even quick meals can serve up significant flavor.

In the time it takes to boil rice, this recipe for "Creamy Rice With Roasted Shrimp and Tomatoes," courtesy of "Real Simple Dinner Tonight: Done" (Time Home Entertainment) from the editors of Real Simple, can be put on the table. Arborio rice makes this dish creamy, but if it's unavailable, long-grain rice also can be used; just follow the package directions for cooking.

Creamy Rice with Roasted Shrimp and Tomatoes

(Serves 4)

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup Arborio rice
- 1 cup dry white wine
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 1 lb. peeled and deveined medium shrimp
- 2 pints grape tomatoes
- 8 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 cloves garlic



Photo courtesy MetroCreative

Creamy Rice with Roasted Shrimp and Tomatoes

Heat oven to 400 F. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until soft, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the rice and wine and cook, stirring, until the wine is absorbed, 1 to 2 minutes.

Add 2 cups water and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper to the saucepan. Simmer, covered, until the water is absorbed and the rice is tender, 18 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, on a rimmed baking sheet, toss the shrimp, tomatoes, thyme, and garlic with the remaining tablespoon of oil and ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Roast until the shrimp are opaque throughout, 15 to 20 minutes. Serve over the rice.

Nutrition Check

September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

By Kristen Hicks-Roof, Ph.D., RDN, LDN; Marissa Schwam, B.S.
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In an unrepresented time, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important now more than ever to ensure that our youth are healthy. In the United States, approximately one in six youths aged two – 19 are obese. (Source: CDC) Some risk factors for a child gaining extra weight include increased screen time, increased stress/anxiety, decreased physical activity and poor dietary intake. Children and teenagers who are overweight are more likely to become overweight adults, but what does this mean? This means that it is never too late; now is the time to help children and adolescents learn healthier habits that they can carry into adulthood.

What can you do to promote health in our youth?

Physical activity: It is recommended that children and adolescents aged six through 17 participate in 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily. Some ways to add in activity are taking a walk as a family, playing an outdoor sport, making an indoor obstacle course, or encouraging any physical activities that they enjoy. Set guidelines to encourage your child to be active to "earn" screen time.

Follow MyPlate: It is important to provide them with a healthy, balanced diet. Start small and aim to add at least



Graphic courtesy USDA

two fruits and vegetables into their daily meals and snacks.

Structured Mealtimes: Mealtime is a great way to help them form good eating habits at a young age. Having a time frame for major meals and keeping snack time simple and away from TV or other electronics helps them focus on eating and learning to understand their hunger cues.

Smart Snacking: Keep snacks simple and healthy and try to pair a carbohydrate with a protein. Snacks such as apples/bananas with peanut butter, grapes and nuts, or crackers with cheese are good to try. Homemade smoothies are also a fun snack; try making one with a fruit (berries, bananas, mango, pineapple), a vegetable (spinach, kale, cucumber, avocado), and dairy (yogurt, milk).

Navy JROTC cont. from pg.1

Top Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard JROTC naval science instructors from the seven schools directed the training, which covered leadership, drill, academics and fitness.

This year's attendees from Nease included rising seniors Brandon Donovan and Juan Castillo and rising juniors Kaitlyn Boggs, Daniel Mahoney, Brodie Mongon, Isabella Rivera and Haylie Spell. Cadets Dylan Dosio and Amber Vidler served as cadre during the week, assisting in the mentoring and training of the cadets. All three of Nease's naval science instructors — Captain Scott LaRochelle, Master Chief Duane Spears and Gunnery Sergeant Duane Hanson — worked as instructors for the program.

"An awesome experience," said cadet Brodie Mongon. "The hands on practical training in command presence will definitely pay off in leading the unit this year."

Cadets received individual medals for exceptional performance, including Cadets Boggs and Castillo for Personnel Inspection; Cadets Boggs, Donovan, Mongon and Rivera for Academics; and Cadets Mahoney, Mongon and Rivera for Honor Cadet.

"With all the uncertainties and unknowns forecast in the coming year, leaders will be needed to lead," said cadet Brandon Donovan. "I feel as a result from this training we're more prepared to meet that challenge."



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Travel

Explore Sanibel, Captiva and Cabbage Key

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewsline.com

Just south of Fort Myers, you'll find a chain of small remote islands except Sanibel and Captiva. They're known for their quiet residential communities, their sparkling white sand beaches, and the Gulf's pristine turquoise water. Seashells, however, bring them distinction.

Sanibel lies in an east-west position making it one of the few islands that run perpendicular to Florida's coast. This lineup causes the ocean currents to flush water downward and allows Sanibel to capture shells — thus earning the nickname "Shelling Capital of the World." The laid-back isle attracts seashell collectors from all over the globe with more than 250 varieties. Add the many outdoor activities to the natural attractions, and you've got a wonderful getaway for couples, families, or solo travelers.

I was impressed with the 25 miles of bike paths, most of them shaded and off-road, making them far safer. Half of Sanibel's acreage has been preserved against development, and buildings must stand no taller than the tallest palm tree.

Nature lovers, especially birders, are drawn to J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. This area becomes home to many seasonal mating birds

who build their nests in the protected landscape. Best time to visit is late winter through spring.

In addition to beaching, boating, kayaking, golf, and tennis, the east end allows a peek at the historic 98-foot tall Sani-

bel Island Lighthouse. Don't expect a circular building. Sanibel Lighthouse was built with an iron skeleton tower back in 1884 and lit with kerosene oil. To get to the top of the lighthouse, the lighthouse keeper had to walk up an external spiral staircase with 127 steps.

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is the only museum in the U.S. devoted entirely to shells and mollusks. The octagonally-shaped building looks impressive, but so was the

entrance fee of \$25. I skipped it and browsed shells in a seashell shop nearby.

Cross a small bridge at the northern end of Sanibel, and you're on Captiva, where magnificent villas hide behind lush tropical foliage. At the tip, you'll discover the Seven Seas Resort with a full marina and sailing school and the place where day-trippers board cruises to Cabbage Key or Useppa Islands. Sunset viewing on Captiva becomes a daily ritual, except when those late afternoon thunderstorms creep up. I missed the sunsets!

I'd heard about the famous Dollar Bill Bar on Cabbage Key and decided to take the cruise. Once I arrived on the rustic, Old Florida style island, I ate lunch outdoors overlooking the marina.

Afterward, I popped inside the inn to find walls thickly papered with old dollar bills. The ceiling, beams, and rafters all drip with hanging currency.



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Dollar bills on the wall and ceiling, Cabbage Key Inn.



Nature walk on Cabbage Key.



Sunrise, shelling and the Sanibel Lighthouse.

When the old bills fall off, the staff collects them for an annual gift to a charity. Guests enjoy signing a dollar and adding it to the wall, wondering if it will still be there, should they return. Cabbage Key offers a few rental properties, but most of the 100 acres remain undeveloped, with no paved roads and no cars. A short nature trail near the inn proved interesting.

Back on Sanibel, I indulged in the relaxing vibe. The islands offer a variety of fine restaurants, so dining out becomes the treat. Unlike the Keys, Sanibel and Captiva's nightlife remains low-key. I look forward to returning.

If you go: sanibel-captiva.org

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

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