



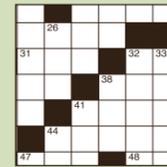
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High School HHH has a name — and a mascot

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

On Dec. 8, the St. Johns County School Board issued the name “Tocoi Creek High School” to High School HHH, currently under construction in the World Golf Village area and scheduled to open fall 2021. The name was one of several suggested in community meetings hosted by the school’s principal, Jay Willets, and he said it was one of his favorites.

“The more I looked at how symbolic ‘Tocoi’ was to the World Golf Village area, the more I thought it was a natural fit,” Willets said. “The merge of cultures in World Golf Village today, from the old to the beautiful mix of new, with people from everywhere forming a community ... Tocoi to me represents this.”

Willets explained that the correct pronunciation is “toe - koi (like the fish).”

The word “Tocoi” means “waterlily” or “shallow water,” according to research Willets did with the St. Augustine Historical Society. The headwaters of Tocoi Creek are within the new high school’s zone and the area contained one of three settlements of Timucuan Indians on the St. Johns River. It appears in early records around the year 1602.

Throughout the Spanish and English settlement periods, Tocoi provided a strategic place for access for steamboat and rail essential in the development of St. Augustine. There was a rail line directly from the area to St. Augustine

High School HHH cont. on pg. 13

Celebrate the New Year with St. Johns Reads

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

The annual county-wide reading event, St. Johns Reads, has been moved to January from the typical February this year. For its 16th year, the St. Johns County Public Library System has announced that “The Library Book,” by Susan Orlean, will be the featured book.

“‘The Library Book’ is like a love letter to libraries,” said Donna Braasch, reference assistant at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. “The Los Angeles Public Library was burned to the ground and to this day, they don’t know who did it. The event, in 1986, was overshadowed by the Chernobyl disaster, which was the same week.”

Braasch said while the arson investigation is a huge part of the book, there are “layers and layers” of story.

Bartram Trail Branch Library Branch Manager Maribeth Beck offered some insight as to how the books are chosen for St. Johns Reads each year.

“There is a committee of staff from all the library branches that meets monthly,” Beck said. “The committee members actually read the books under consideration and then recommend the top four or five books for all committee members to read. The top vote getter is chosen as the St. Johns Reads book for that year.”

Beck said the committee does take suggestions from the public. She said the book chosen is typically vital to current events

and has programming opportunities — St. Johns Reads month includes a variety of programs inspired by the chosen book throughout the month, many of them virtual this year.

“Library staff will present everything from crafts, to cooking, to history ... as well as art programs and interviews,” Beck said.

Following are some highlights of scheduled events, all virtual and all free of charge, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Friends of the Library:

Jan. 8, 2021: Oil pastels with Kasha Fahy to create a local landscape. Art supply kits are available at the library for pick up. This event is funded by a grant from the Barbara Kay Foundation.

Jan. 20: Library interview with Ryan Dowd, executive director of the Hesel House. Dowd is well known for his work training librarians on how to work with homeless patrons.

Jan. 29: Main event: interview with John Szabo, city librarian for the Los Angeles Public Library.

Visit <https://sjcpls.org/branches/bartram-trail-branch/> for more information about all the events as well as links to sign up.

The finale programming event will once again be the St. Johns Reads 5k Race. Beck had the idea to hold the race for the first time last year.

“It’s a good family event that lets us tie our love of literature and fitness together,” Beck said.



Photos courtesy Michael Hayward
Last year, Melissa Burke, Mikki Sampo, and Joanne Spencer, all St. Johns County employees, crossed the finish line.



The runners started the 5K in last year’s race.



Photo courtesy St. Johns County Public Library
This year’s medal for the Lace Up for Libraries Run features a burning library.

The second annual Lace Up for Libraries Run will be held in Nocatee on the morning of Saturday, Jan. 30 at 8 a.m. Both a 5k and a one mile fun run will be offered and social distancing measures will be observed. Those who register for the 5k will receive a shirt and the top 200 finishers will receive a specially-designed medal which commemorates this year’s St. Johns Reads book. All proceeds go to future St. Johns Reads programs. There is also a virtual participation option; visit <https://laceupforlibraries5k.itsyourrace.com> for more information.

“The race is possible due to our sponsors,” Beck said. “Major sponsors are VyStar, Nocatee, and Friends of the Library. We are still seeking additional sponsors and race day volunteers.”

“The Library Book” is available at all St. Johns County Public Libraries in print, e-reader and audiobook versions. Place a hold for the book online or call your local library to place a hold.



All runners, staff, and volunteers who participated in the 2019 race.

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FAVORITE TREAT:
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FAVORITE FRIEND:
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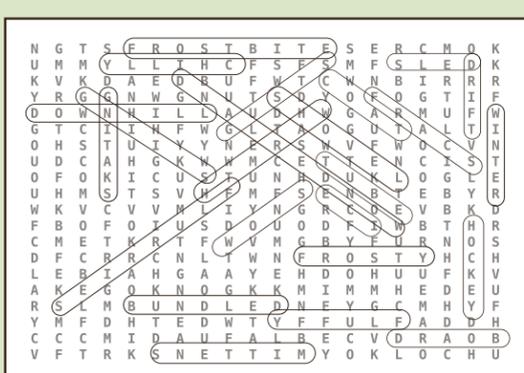
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Answers: A. snow B. blizzard C. frigid D. ice



Answers
to our
Puzzles
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MYSTERY PHOTO



Can you guess where this is?
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Last month's Mystery Photo was the main entrance to Julington Creek Plantation. We had no correct guessers.



with St. Johns County School Board Member, District 1, Beverly Slough

Q: What's your update this month on the new schools under construction?

A: We now have a name for High School HHH: Toco Creek High School. The School Board made the determination at our meeting on Dec. 8 and the reasoning was that it honored the native tribes that were in the area as well as Toco Creek, which actually runs through the school's zone. The School Board only picks the name of a school; the mascot will be picked by the principal and the community.

High School III should be breaking ground any day [as of interview date of Dec. 16]. The principal for this school will be determined in the spring.

We have the zoning finalized as of early December for K-8 School MM. This will allow Principal Amanda Riedl to begin her community meetings to discuss naming and mascot suggestions, like we just had for Toco Creek High School.

Q: What is the latest information about School Based Distance Learning?

A: We are very grateful that the governor and the commissioner of education extended the Emergency Order that provides for School Based Distance Learning through the end of the school year so that funding will be in place. Our goal is to get as many students back in brick and mortar schools as possible, though, because we are discovering that most learn better in person. For those who have been successful with distance learning, we are glad to be able to continue it. We recognize that some families have extenuating circumstances, but absent that, we will

be asking families to stick with whatever option they choose at the beginning of the semester for the rest of the school year. Moving back and forth has proven disruptive.

A recent survey we performed said that 20 percent of distance learners do plan to return to brick and mortar schools in the second semester. As a result of this, we will be consolidating some distance learning classrooms, so some students may have a change in teachers. Distance learning families have been notified of this.

Q: Have there been any reporting changes to the district's COVID dashboard?

A: The Health Department finally allowed us to report, on a daily basis, active cases and quarantines listed by school. This information is now available online at the top of the district's website. Student and teacher active cases remain very low.

Q: What else do you have to share with District 1?

A: Some upcoming important dates include:

Jan. 8: Online applications for Programs of Choice open on district website

Jan. 12: Virtual High School Showcase, 3:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Feb. 5: Deadline for all applications for Programs of Choice.

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.



with St. Johns County Commissioner Christian Whitehurst (District 1)

Q: How was your first Board of County Commissioners meeting as a new commissioner?

A: We had a meeting the day of my swearing in. I was sworn in and then we just got right to work. That day, there were some commercial development variances to vote on. We've had two more meetings since then with a mixed bag of items. I always have the community's interest in mind when I'm voting on the issues.

Q: Did you feel prepared coming into the job?

A: I felt well prepared coming in. I had a lot of people supportive of me both in the campaign and in the building. I had a lot of preparation before being sworn in, which is good because there is a lot to do. We commissioners also serve on various boards; for instance I serve on the North Florida TPO (Transportation Planning Organization) board, which oversees traffic and roadways in northeast Florida. My job is to get adequate funding for St. Johns County.

Q: What would you like to hear from your constituents?

A: I work for the people of St. Johns County and they are always welcome to reach out to me. This is already happening. In mid-December, I was invited to a meeting with neighbors and the developer of a residential project that wanted to add units to a neighborhood. This meeting was held about two weeks prior to the county commission meeting and I was able to listen to the neighbors and hear their concerns regarding the impact the proposal might have to the existing community and school implications. Meetings like this help me to understand how the community feels about a project.

Q: What are you working on now?

A: I'm meeting with every single department head in the county so I can learn

more about their departments and ultimately be more effective for the constituents. I will continue to do so until I have met with all of them. I've found that our staff cares very much about the county that they work and live in and they are really trying to serve the people.

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

A: It has been expressed to me by residents across the political spectrum that as the county grows, they want us to adhere to smart growth principles. As a board, we just took the first step of re-funding LAMP (Land Acquisition Management Program). The last year that this program was funded was 2008 and the funding amount was \$300,000. The motion we passed was in the amount of \$370,000, which is this most previous funding amount of \$300,000 adjusted for inflation. Staff will come back to us at the Jan. 19, 2021 meeting with suggestions for a funding source. I think this shows that this board is responsive and listening to the community.

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

A: Readers can email me at bcc1whitehurst@sjcfl.us or call me at (904) 584-5348.

Correction

Due to an editing error, the final quote in the article "Meet new St. Johns County Commissioner Christian Whitehurst" in the December 2020 issue of *The CreekLine* was incorrect.

The correct quote by Commissioner Christian Whitehurst should be: "As we grow, we need to make sure to not destroy what is beautiful about St. Johns County."

We sincerely regret the error.



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**with Florida State Representative
Cyndi Stevenson, District 17**

Q: Where are we with respect to the legislative calendar at this time [interview date of Dec. 15]?

A: We are looking forward to beginning the new legislative term. We have five new Republican members in the Florida House of Representatives this term. Presently, both Speaker of the House Chris Sprowls and Senate President Wilton Simpson are working to find a way to have our committee meetings and keep members safe. Statutorily, we need to meet in person.

On Dec. 18, we will hold our 2020 St. Johns County Legislative Delegation meeting. This is an opportunity for the elected representatives for St. Johns County (myself, Rep. Paul Renner, and Sen. Travis Hutson) to meet with the public as well as various advocacy groups to hear their ideas for the upcoming session. We will also recognize the retirement of some local officials, including Judge John Alexander, Sheriff David Shoar and Joseph Joyner, formerly superintendent of St. Johns County Schools and most recently president of Flagler College. This delegation meeting kicks off our new term.

Q: What are some important upcoming dates?

A: After the holidays, we will be transitioning to our Tallahassee office in preparation for the 2021 Legislative Session. Committee weeks begin on Jan. 11 and continue with the weeks

of Jan. 25, Feb. 1, Feb. 8, and Feb. 15. During this time we will be proposing bills to become laws as well as working on the Florida State Budget. House members have a limit of seven bills that they may file, while Senators have an unlimited number, although they must have a companion bill in the House. The Legislative Session begins March 2, 2021 and runs 60 days through April.

Q: Do you have any updates for residents in your district?

A: In January, I plan to start holding informative virtual workshops. Dates and times have not yet been established, but readers may contact my office in January to learn more. My plan is to provide transparency and make sure citizens know where to find accurate information. My idea for the first workshop is "Where to get good information about the legislative process" and I will go over how bills are filed and how to look up the status of bills while we are in session. An idea for a second workshop is to go over the state budget process and how it works. For valuable, up to date information, I also recommend the government access television network, the Florida Channel. It is available on television, online, and there is also an app.

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.



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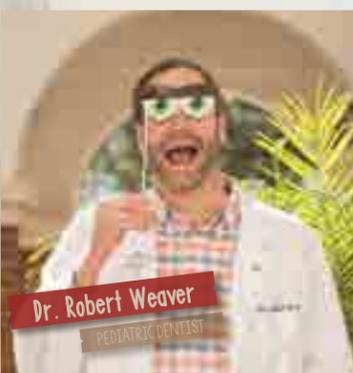
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January

What's Going On in St. Johns?
A modified calendar of events

Community Calendar

Herbal Medicine for Daily Wellness will be offered on Jan. 9 at 10 a.m. Attendees will learn about traditionally used herbs to promote wellness and health as well as how to create their own tinctures, teas, and salves. Included are guides, plant identification, lecture and herbal snacks. Pre registration is required via phone or text: (386) 972-1891.

The Healthy Eating Every Day Program will be held on Tuesdays, Jan. 12 – April 13, from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. This weekly series of live virtual classes helps attendees learn the right balance of foods for optimal health. To register, call Northeast Florida AHEC at (904) 482-0189 or (877) 784-8486.

The Newcomers of North St. Johns will host a meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 11:30 a.m. at La Cocina International Restaurant in the Castillo Real Hotel, 530 A1A Beach Blvd. in St. Augustine. Doors will open at 11 a.m. The event will feature a presentation by Cheryl Freeman, director of the Retire and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of St. Johns County, on local volunteer opportunities. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$30 for members. All reservations must be received by Jan. 12. Contact Sue Aird at sjaird@comcast.net to register.

Northeast Florida AHEC announces the following free Quit Tobacco Class, which includes free nicotine patches, gum or lozenges: Tuesday, Jan. 28, from 3 p.m. – 5 p.m. at Wildflower Healthcare Clinic, 268 Herbert Street in St. Augustine. Call (904) 482-0189 for more information or to sign up.

The St. Johns Reads 5K event “Lace Up for Libraries,” will be held at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 30 in Nocatee. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library of St. Johns County, through a partnership with Vystar Credit Union and the community of Nocatee, “Lace Up for Libraries” will help raise funds for programming and author visits for future St. Johns Reads events. Register for the 5K at www.laceupforlibraries5k.itsyourrace.com/event.aspx?id=12794. Contact your local library or visit www.sjcpls.org for more information.

First Coast Florida Lifestyles Newcomers Recreation Card Club will host a card playing at Dunkin’ Donuts at the Shoppes at Murabella on Jan. 31. Arrival is at 2 p.m. and card games will begin at 2:15 p.m. Masks must be worn while playing cards and there can be no food on the playing tables. Call the club organizer at (904) 829-0643 (no texts) to RSVP or for information about the club. The club is open to both men and women and is a smoke- and drug-free club.



with St. Johns County Property Appraiser
Eddie Creamer

Q: What advice do you have for property owners in the New Year?

A: It’s the time of year to think about exemptions. If you are a new homeowner in St. Johns County and qualify for an exemption, including homestead exemption, low income senior exemption, veteran’s exemption or a disability exemption, you need to apply.

The requirements for application include: you must own the property as of Jan. 1, 2021; it must be your primary residence and your Florida driver’s license must show this address; and you must not receive homestead benefits from anywhere else in the United States. You have until March 1, 2021 to apply, which you can do online on our website or by coming into our office.

If you have property in St. Johns County that is not a residence and you have an agricultural endeavor on that property and wish to take advantage of lower taxes as a result of an agricultural use designation, you need to apply for that, too.

Q: Can you give us an update on the homestead exemption audit your office

recently completed?

A: As part of the homestead exemption audit we undertook last year to identify improperly claimed exemptions, we also looked for property owners who qualified but didn’t take advantage of an exemption. As a result of this, just after the first of the year, we will be mailing out about 3,000 cards to property owners that we believe may qualify for an unclaimed exemption. If you get one of these cards in the mail, clearly marked from our office ... it is not a scam. The cards are specific to the exemption we believe you are entitled to, including homestead exemption, low income senior exemption, veteran’s exemption and disability exemption. You should follow the instructions on the card to follow up and see if you are in fact entitled to an exemption.

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 Eddie@sjcpa.us or call me at (904) 827-5500.

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Fruit Cove BAPTIST CHURCH

Once a state champion, always a state champion

By Coach Jill Benavides
mail@floridanewsline.com

Let us finish well the race set before us. Twenty-two athletes from No Excuses Running Club competed in the Florida Middle School Cross Country State Championship in Lakeland, Fla., on Oct. 31, 2020. The runners from northeast St. Johns County gave 110 percent at practice, trusting their training to race them through the finish line.

Brianna Motycka competed fearlessly in the Kindergarten – Second Grade Girls' Elementary Race, earning the second place medal. Chase Petrick also medaled tenaciously, placing 12th in the Boys' Elementary Race.

There were 203 runners in the Middle School Girls' Open race. Jordan Magloff

was the 10th place medalist, Kendra Magloff finished 31st and Addy Souza was 47th.

In the Girls' Team Competitive Race there were 220 runners and 29 teams that qualified. The No Excuses Running Club girls selflessly earned second



Photos courtesy Jill Benavides
No Excuses Running Club girls in the Girls' Team Competitive Race.

place in the Club Division: Riley Newkirk (23rd medalist), Charlotte Joseph (38th), Valeria Tafurt (42nd), Sarah Rose (49th), Sofia Ramirez (55th), Rylan Borgmeyer (91) and Sarah Rocheleau

(93rd). All seven girls ran personal records (PRs).

In the Boys' Open Race, 193 runners competed. Cameron Newkirk placed 29th, Joshua Hazlewood placed 42nd, Charlie West placed 47th, and Stephen Preddy placed 72nd.

Finally, in the Boys' Team Competitive Race, with 271 total runners representing 33 teams, the No Excuses Running Club boys team relentlessly earned the Florida Middle School Boys' Cross Country State Champions title. Braden Motycka was the fifth place medalist, Nicholas Rueda was the 16th place medalist, Noah Gil was the 28th place medalist, Gavin Stopa finished 43rd, Jackson Lafser finished 47th, Bryce Motycka finished 62nd, and Brody Petrick finished 113th.

This first place finish brought Coach Zeke Benavides to his knees in tears. These young athletes trained all summer and fall, overcoming many challenges, injuries, setbacks, COVID restrictions



The state champion No Excuses Running Club boys.

and self-doubt to achieve this highest XC Team honor. Truly they will remember this moment the rest of their lives. Once State Champions, always State Champions. Now let's see what they can accomplish in Track and Field!

Email noexcusesrc7@gmail.com or visit Facebook page: noexcusesr for more information about the No Excuses Running Club.

Zeke and Jill Benavides are owners and coaches of the No Excuses Running Club.

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The gift that keeps on giving

By Jennifer Lockwood, DVM
mail@floridanewslines.com

Did you add a furry member to your family this holiday season? Adding a pet to the family can be an amazing joyful experience, and the human-animal bond that is formed can provide multiple health benefits for both you and your pets. A pet is truly the gift that keeps on giving and we must remember that pet ownership is a lasting commitment. Lifelong, routine preventive care is key to ensure that your pet is at their best health throughout their lifetime.

Routine preventative care starts with annual visits to the veterinarian. Pets age faster than their human counterparts, which means changes can develop more rapidly. Preventative care encompasses many aspects of veterinary medicine, including annual exams, vaccinations, and early detection laboratory screening. During these annual wellness exams, your veterinary health care team will get to know you, your pet, and the lifestyle you share. Recommendations can then be made that fit best you and your pet's needs.

Vaccination is a vital aspect of preventative care and is necessary for preventing diseases and keeping you and your pets safe. Similar to children, vaccination begins when your pet is young. Puppies and kittens will complete a series of

vaccines before reaching adulthood to ensure that they are adequately protected. These vaccines will continue throughout their lifetime and can be adjusted based on your pet's risks and needs. Be sure to talk to your veterinarian about your pet's lifestyle so that they can suggest the appropriate vaccines to keep your pet safe.

Preventative care also includes performing routine diagnostics. Annual laboratory testing helps your veterinarian screen and diagnose conditions earlier so that appropriate treatments can be instituted sooner. Preventative care also includes administering monthly preventatives for heartworms, fleas, and ticks year-round.

While your veterinary team can help guide and provide you with various medical options for your pet, you can also play an active role in your pet's health. The commonly used resolution, "New Year, New Me" can also include your pet. Our furry friends need a balanced diet for every life stage and routine exercise to maintain a great quality of life. What better way to strengthen the human-animal bond with your pet then by including them in your new year healthy lifestyle?

Jennifer Lockwood, DVM is owner and veterinarian of Crosswinds Veterinary Hospital. Email crosswindsvet@gmail.com for more information.

Rotary Clubs donate to INK!

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Recently, four Rotary Clubs in St. Johns County have fulfilled member support and donations with more than \$20,600 to benefit programs and services provided by The St. Johns County Education Foundation, Inc. which operates as INK! (Investing in Kids).

Monetary contributions from Rotary Club of St. Johns, Rotary Club of St. Augustine Sunrise, Rotary Club of Hastings and Rotary Club of St. Augustine Beach will help INK! with basic learning and literacy intervention for students and provide support for teachers throughout the county. The funds will also assist educators with early identification and treatment for children who are at risk for reading and learning skills failure. Items purchased with the grant include the latest in technology with laptop computers, monitors, keypads and mouses, wireless and universal docking stations, software, and an enclosed and customized trailer with sponsor graphics, among others.

According to Donna Lueders, INK!'s executive director, the nonprofit provides innovative programs and class-



Photo courtesy INK!
Monetary contributions from Rotary Club of St. Johns, Rotary Club of St. Augustine Sunrise, Rotary Club of Hastings and Rotary Club of St. Augustine Beach helped purchase an enclosed trailer with sponsor graphics.

room resources to promote the academic success of St. Johns County public school students. The organization was established in 1994 after issues became apparent that local schools and teachers needed additional resources beyond what is provided by federal, state, local governments, and parent associations.

"Demands for more revenue increases as the student population continues to rise. For the last several years, the student population has grown by a minimum of four percent annually. Additional students require more educators to be hired and District funds are bare bones," said Lueders. "The problem is

Rotary Clubs cont. on pg. 11



Photo courtesy Congressman John Rutherford's Office

Students nominated for service academies

In early December, Representative John Rutherford announced this year's 34 local nominees to the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), United States Military Academy (USMA), and the United States Naval Academy (USNA). Each year, thousands of students from across the country apply to attend one of our nation's service academies. The ultra-competitive selection process includes receiving a nomination from the president, vice president, or a member of Congress. The 34 students from Northeast Florida who received nominations through the office of Rep. Rutherford must now compete for admission against nominees from across the country. Northern St. Johns County nominees are: from Allen D. Nease High School: Brandon Timothy Donovan, USMA; from Bartram Trail High School: Chloe Marie Hill, USAFA and Mackenzie Ann Williams, USMA; from Creekside High School: Jacob William Douberly, USNA, Pavel A. Shilenko, USAFA, USMA and Elyse Victoria Soracco, USMA; and from Ponte Vedra High School, Edward Anderson Lancaster, USNA and Mason Diego Romero, USNA.

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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

MarketInsight



Star Spangled murder

By Scott Grant
ScottGrant@StJohnsBusinessMonthly.com

In September 1814, Francis Scott Key huddled below decks on a British warship peering out through a porthole as a great battle raged in Baltimore harbor. The British were attempting to capture the city. Fort McHenry stood in their way. The next day, Key penned a poem on the back of an envelope. Key's poem, set to music, would become our National Anthem in 1931, although it was purportedly played at baseball games as early as 1867. Through the long night, "the bombs bursting in air," proved to Key that the fort still stood firm. The danger was real. A month earlier the Brits had captured Washington and burned both the Capitol and the White House. First Lady Dolley Madison is credited with loading a cart with various national treasures, including a portrait of George Washington and the White House silver, before fleeing just ahead of the Red Coats.

The battle in the harbor was part of what we now call the War of 1812. At the time, it was more commonly known as "Mr. Madison's War." The war was ended in our favor in Europe and no one knew that the Treaty of Ghent had been signed when American troops commanded by Andrew Jackson annihilated British veterans at the battle of New Orleans. Jackson's storied victory would ultimately propel him into the White House. The victory remained so important that a reenactment was once featured as part of a Super Bowl halftime show.

Later, Francis Scott Key was named the United States Attorney for the District of Washington. Forty-five years later, his son had the same job. Philip Barton Key was a widower and known as "the most handsome man in Washington." He became involved with a married woman, the wife of Congressman Daniel Sickles. Sickles was a noted philanderer with many mistresses. Sickles neglected his pretty young wife, leaving her open to the advances of the flirtatious Key. Sickles even travelled to England in the company of a notorious prostitute and shockingly introduced her to Queen Victoria. Sickles was so involved with the other woman

that he was unaware of what was going on at home. He became aware of his wife's infidelity only when he received a "poison pen letter" from an anonymous detractor. Sickles flew into a rage.

Shortly thereafter, Sickles saw Philip Barton Key outside his home in Washington. He ran to fetch a gun and then raced outside to kill the Virginian in cold blood. "Key, you scoundrel," he exclaimed as he fired multiple shots into the unarmed lothario, "you have dishonored my home, you must die!" The scandal caught the attention of the nation. It was the trial of the century. Sickles was defended in court by future secretary of state, Edwin Stanton and others. They argued Sickles was not guilty by reason of "temporary insanity." The jury agreed. It was the first time the temporary insanity defense was used successfully in the United States. Sickles became a celebrity. Many supported his actions.

Two years later, the country was at war with itself. Sickles left Congress to fight for the Union. In 1863, he was commanding a corps at the Battle of Gettysburg. It was there that he infamously bungled, advancing his troops from the heights down into the "wheat field" and the "peach orchard" against orders. This action left the Union flank exposed and vulnerable. On July 2, the Rebels attacked. Sickles' corps was destroyed. Had the Confederates pressed the attack more vigorously, the history of the nation may have been different. It was their last, best chance to win the war. The Rebel attack stalled and then regained momentum. Only the timely arrival of a regiment from Maine saved the day for the Union. Many on the Union side must have lamented that the jury had not reached a different verdict four years earlier and convicted Daniel Sickles. For the rest of his life, Sickles insisted he was the true hero of the Battle of Gettysburg.

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@standfast.com.

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce awards volunteer leaders

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce has presented its 2020 Leadership Awards virtually. Pre-COVID-19, the Chamber held a signature event in the fall to recognize and thank the Volunteer Leaders for their donation of time and expertise. The Chamber began its virtual presentation at the Dec. 4 Virtual Economic Development Breakfast. Mark Nighbor, the Chamber's 2019 – 2020 chairman of the board, presented the Chamber Member of the Year to Northrop Grumman and First Coast Technical College for their "Outstanding Collaboration and Efforts in Workforce Development." He also awarded Joy Andrews, Deputy County Administrator, St. Johns County, with the Chairman's Award for her "Outstanding Leadership and Support of St. Johns County Businesses through COVID-19." And, Mike Koppenhafer, chair of the Executive Committee, Economic Development Council, 2019 – 2020, presented the Fred Schroeder Economic Development Council Member of the Year award to Firehouse Subs for "Outstanding Corporate Stewardship" to St. Johns County, the First Coast, and the nation through COVID-19.

All 2020 award recipients will be recognized on the Chamber's social media platforms. The other winners are: Small Business of the Year Award: St. Augustine Distillery; President's Award: Skip Marsh, Flagler Health+; Public Policy Member of the Year: Michael Scine, Scine CPA Advisors; Chamber Ambassador of the Year/ Gene Morse Award: David Permenter, N2 Publishing; and Ponte Vedra Beach Division Ambassador of the Year/Grace Hayes Award: Kari Zerrahn, Anderson Agency of NE Florida. Also honored for their significant contributions: past chairman of the board, Mark Nighbor and past chairman, Executive Committee, Economic Development Council, Mike Koppenhafer.

The chairman of the board for 2020-2021, Dr. Erika Hamer, commented that the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce is poised to succeed due to the efforts of these awardees.

"We have endured a challenging year," she said. "Our members are resilient and will continue thriving due to the incredible support shown by these volunteer leaders."

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Pedro Menendez High School Academies update

Pedro Menendez High School will host its Academy Night on Jan. 27, 2101. Visit <https://cte.stjohns.k12.fl.us/school/pmhs/> for more information.



Photo courtesy Chris Cofield, Program Specialist/Academies, Pedro Menendez High School

Academy of Architecture and Building Sciences: The Building Construction Program at Pedro Menendez High School completed a chicken coop for a local community member. The Building Construction Program program is always excited to do projects for community members.

VyStar Academy of Business and Finance: Members of the VyStar Academy of Business and Finance are currently certifying in Microsoft Office products. To date more than 50 students have certified in either PowerPoint, Word or both.

Bartram Trail Air Force JROTC brings home hardware

By Antone L. LeFevre
mail@floridanewsline.com

Despite changes to their program due to Covid-19, the Bartram Trail High School Air Force JROTC has been busy. On Nov. 7, the Drill Team competed at the Tift County Drill Challenge in Tift County, Ga. This was the first meet of the year and the Drill Team came home with numerous trophies:



Photo courtesy Antone L. LeFevre, Lt Col, USAF (Ret) Blake Zweigle, Trey Willis, Kayla Campbell, Easton Hansen, McKenna Frazier, Chloe Hill, and Kylie Maldonado.

Female Color Guard: First place for Unarmed Color guard, third place for Armed Color Guard, and C/1st Lt. McKenna Frazier, Outstanding Commander.

Exhibition Team: Unarmed Exhibition, third place, Armed Exhibition, second place.

Solo Armed Exhibition: First place

Easton Hansen and second place Corey Bell

Regulation Team: Unarmed Regulation, second place, C/Col. Chloe Hill, Outstanding Commander.

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Being a high school freshman during coronavirus

By Meliza Turlington
mail@floridanewline.com

Becoming a freshman at a high school is a big step in one's life. Making the transition from middle school to high school is already daunting, but now with the coronavirus, it is more of a challenge to make this transition.

This year, Creekside High School has instituted many changes to make sure that everything is safe for the students. There are specific directions to go in the interior hallways, but students can go both ways for the exterior. This process has made it easier for some people to get to their classrooms because everyone is going in one direction inside the building; however, it is challenging for freshmen to learn where the hallways are and figuring out where the classes are within the school because in person orientation was not an option. Teachers have been helpful to the freshmen by helping them find the way to walk in the right direction.

Additionally, all students are required to wear masks in certain places and times. It is a challenge for everyone because it can be hard to keep a mask on in our humid Florida weather and it is hard to identify friends. Teachers also have to check the students' temperatures before they step into their first period class.

The process for lunch is very different

compared to previous years at Creekside, with many more options available for all students. Lunch has been a unique situation because there are many more places to sit, but there is a limited number of people who are allowed to sit at each table. Being in groups with friends is a challenging situation because students have to plan ahead of time where and with whom they would like to sit. These rules also apply to the mornings, when students arrive at school and sit in the courtyard.

For classrooms, each desk is separated and shielded by dividers, so group partner work is challenging. A factor that also plays into this is distance learners. In some classes, some teachers have to open online meetings for online students, which can cause technical difficulties because multiple students are using the same program at once. Sometimes teachers have to repeat their entire lesson to their online students and in-person students. Coronavirus has been a challenge for everyone, but especially for freshmen — so it will be fascinating to see how things will play out and if things will ever be back to normal for the class of 2024.

Meliza Turlington is a freshman at Creekside High School.



Photos courtesy Nubia Angel

BTHS Hispanic Honor Society collects items for Alpha Omega

The Hispanic Honor Society at Bartram Trail High School recently conducted a donation drive to benefit Alpha Omega, an organization that helps single mothers, their children and senior women. Bartram Trail students donated many items such as diapers, baby wipes, towels, and laundry detergent. The Hispanic Honor Society is an honor society for students who have decided to advance their Spanish education and enrich their cultural understanding of Hispanic people and their countries. The club performs many community services throughout the year.

Rotary Clubs cont. from pg. 8

that students and teachers are suffering while working extremely hard every day to obtain the tools necessary for academic success. Today's classrooms are less likely to be equipped so all types of learners can achieve. Educators must look to outside resources for support," she said.

In 2020, INK! generated more than \$840,000 back into classrooms to enhance public education in St. Johns

County, however the nonprofit cannot sustain its mission without having the proper tools, funding, and equipment. With the new donation, Rotarians can get involved in activities while volunteering to help fill and deliver supply orders along with mentoring students, volunteering in classrooms and at events, to name a few.

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The role different vitamins play

By NewsLine Staff
 mail@floridanewline.com

A nutritious diet is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. When it's part of a health regimen that includes routine exercise, a healthy diet that's rich in fruits and vegetables can help people reduce their risk for various illnesses, including chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

Many adults have known about the value of fruits and vegetables since they were youngsters and their parents repeatedly told them how important it was to eat healthy foods. Despite those early lessons, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that less than 10 percent of adults and adolescents eat enough fruits and vegetables. That's unfortunate, as fruits and vegetables are loaded with vitamins that benefit the body in myriad ways.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
 Green, leafy vegetables like spinach and broccoli are good sources of vitamin E.

The U.S. National Library of Medicine notes that vitamin deficiency occurs when people do not get enough of certain vitamins. Recognizing the many functions vitamins serve may compel adults and adolescents to include more fruits and vegetables in their diets.

• **Vitamin A:** The U.S. National Library of Medicine notes that vitamin A helps form and maintain healthy teeth, bones, soft tissue, mucous membranes, and skin. According to the World Health Organization, vitamin A deficiency is the leading cause of preventable blindness in children and increases the risk of disease and death from severe infections.

• **Vitamin B6:** Vitamin B6 helps form red blood cells and maintain brain function. Though the National Institutes of Health notes that isolated vitamin B6 deficiency is uncommon, a deficiency has been associated with various conditions, including a weakened immune system and dermatitis

cheilitis, a condition marked by scaling on the lips and cracks at the corners of the mouth.

• **Vitamin C:** Vitamin C is an antioxidant that promotes healthy teeth and gums, helps the body absorb iron and maintains healthy tissue. In addition, vitamin C plays an integral role in helping wounds heal. Vitamin C deficiency impairs bone

function, and Merck notes that in children that impairment can cause bone lesions and contribute to poor bone growth.

• **Vitamin D:** The U.S. National Library of Medicine notes that 10 to 15 minutes of sunshine three times per week is enough to produce the body's vitamin D requirement for people at most latitudes. It's hard to rely on food to supply ample

vitamin D, which helps the body absorb calcium that is necessary for the development and maintenance of healthy teeth and bones.

• **Vitamin E:** Vitamin E helps the body form red blood cells and utilize vitamin K. Green, leafy vegetables like spinach and broccoli are good sources of vitamin E. The Office of Dietary Supplements notes that a vitamin E deficiency can cause nerve and muscle damage, potentially leading to muscle weakness and vision problems.

• **Vitamin K:** Vitamin K helps to make certain proteins that are needed for blood clotting and the building of bones. The T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard notes that the main type of vitamin K is found in green leafy vegetables like collard greens, kale and spinach. Vitamin K deficiency is rare, but it can lead to bleeding, hemorrhaging or osteoporosis.

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Get to Know . . .

Makhaila Mills

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com



Photo courtesy Makhaila Mills
Makhaila Mills

Creekside High School senior Makhaila Mills has always been athletic. Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, she participated in ice skating, gymnastics, swimming, diving, and soccer — all before fourth grade, when the family moved to St. Johns. She eventually settled on track as her sport — and a good decision it was. Makhaila is a state champion and finished fifth nationally in her favorite event, the 100m. She recently committed to the University of Southern California, where she plans to major in human biology with a goal of becoming a dermatologist. Makhaila is the daughter of Tony and Tracy Mills and big sister to Madison (a sophomore at Creekside) and Mason (a fifth grader at Patriot Oaks Academy).

Q: How did you decide to run track?

A: We have always been encouraged by our parents to be active and that's why I tried so many different sports. When we first moved here, I played flag football and participated in boxing and rowing. When I was 12, my mother sat me down and said I needed to pick one activity and commit to it. My father had played football and my mother ran track, so I decided I wanted to be like my mom and do track. We signed up with the St. Johns Striders and Coach Fields has been my coach ever since.

Q: Did you take to track immediately?

A: No! When I first tried it, I cried. It was so hard. I was not good at it, and I

was used to being good at whatever I tried. But I had promised my mom I would stick with it and my coach said he saw something in me, so I kept showing up and trying. Finally, two years later in eighth grade I started seeing my potential and this motivated me to keep going. I knew I was fast.

Q: How has your high school track experience been?

A: When I started ninth grade, I was scared to join the Creekside team since the rest of the team was older, plus I had trained with my club team rather than the high school team during conditioning season. But Coach Fields is also the Creekside coach and he just told me to do my thing. He had me run with the boys because he knew I could keep up with them and I earned the team's respect. In ninth grade, I placed third at states in the 100m, finishing behind a runner who was first in the nation. She really pushed me to be better. In 10th grade I finished first in states in the 100m and second in the 200m. My junior year, last spring, nothing really happened because of COVID, but we had one meet at Bolles and my 11.73 was first in the nation. I also improved my personal record in the 60m indoor event. This spring will be my final season and I am looking forward to it. Our whole team is doing great; we are a

very tight team and we all support each other. I love my team and I would be nothing without them and my coach.

Q: What do you do in your spare time?

A: Training for track is a very high commitment. We start club conditioning in September and then have competitions leading up to high school season in the spring, followed by training for nationals in June and July. The only month we really have off is August. But when I can, I like to go shopping and I love to sleep! Mostly I like to hang out with my friends and teammates.

Q: How did you decide to commit to the University of Southern California?

A: I was not really considering USC at first, because it is so far away. During the recruiting process, I formed tight bonds with coaches from a couple of different schools (actually, both USCs: University of Southern California and University of South Carolina). But California has everything I need. The academics are superior and they offer the major I want. Also, the coaches have trained many Olympic athletes ... and my dream is to go to the Olympics.

High School HHH cont. from pg. 1

known as the St. Augustine Railway. Like the Timucuan, Spanish and Minorcan residents continued to carve out a community from the wilderness.

"I think Tocoí was a beautiful crossroads, similar to World Golf Village today," Willets said.

After the selection of the school's name, the goal was to match the mascot with the name Tocoí. Willets said all mascots under consideration were suggested by community members in meetings held earlier in the fall.

"We wanted to select the mascot name that not only sounded best with 'Tocoí Creek,' but also has the best symbolism," Willets said.

On Dec. 18, the last day of school prior to Winter Break, the mascot name was revealed: Tocoí Creek Toros.

Stay tuned to future issues of The CreekLine for additional information leading up to the opening of Tocoí Creek High School.

Get to Know . . .

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CLI

Fishing

Capt. David's Fishing Report

By Captain David Lifka
mail@floridanewslines.com

It's officially winter, and we have reached what can be the most difficult time of year to wet a line. Wind and cold definitely add to the difficulty factor, plus cooler water temperatures will slow the bite. Warm spells in between cold fronts can often turn on a bite and should be taken advantage of when you get the chance.

Last winter there was pretty decent black drum bite that happened through January and lasted well into the spring. Fishing docks and bridge pilings (U.S. Highway 17 bridge) in the Doctors Lake area of the St. Johns River seemed to be the hot spot then. Trying any docks and pilings at the Buckman Bridge or north and south of the bridge are definitely worth a try when those pretty days occur.

One species of fish that really likes to bite during the pretty days of winter months is the speckled perch or crap-pie. Most freshwater lakes and creeks in our entire region will provide some excellent speckled perch fishing over the next couple of months. A quick online search of bait stores and fish camps can help you find out where the best bite is currently happening. Also, while you are searching, you will find there are still some old-fashioned fish camps that

can still provide you with a rental jon boat and kicker for a day on the water.

If you happen to own a boat, but would rather just wait for spring to roll around before getting out on the water again, remember we live in Florida. In just another six to eight weeks our winter is already over. Since the virus, the number of boaters on the water has increased dramatically. Now might be the perfect time to beat the spring rush and get your boat serviced for the upcoming season of fun on the water.

Finally, a New Year's resolution that should be easy to keep: Do not let your down time from being on the water go to waste. Make this year's resolution to take a day to make sure that your boat meets and exceeds all safety requirements. Safety on the water should always come first for yourself and your crew and passengers.

Fishing Report: Speckled perch are your best freshwater bet this time of year. Saltwater species are going to be hit and miss, but on milder days anything can happen anywhere you happen to try.

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



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Nutrition Check

Nutrition Check: Eating Healthy on a Budget

By Kristen Hicks-Roof, Ph.D., RDN, LDN; Marissa Schwam, B.S. mail@floridanewslines.com

It's the time we've all been waiting for, the start of 2021! Of course, we have high hopes for what's to come as we leave 2020 in the past, but how can we ensure that we start off the New Year right?

A lot of us have New Year resolutions and pick either a goal that we may have struggled with in the past or a new goal that we hope to accomplish in the future. Most of the time, New Year resolutions are economic related or health related such as "I want to save more money" or "I want to eat more fruits and vegetables." What if I told you that you could accomplish both goals at the same time? Here are some tips to help you eat healthy on a budget this New Year:

Make a list before you go to the store. Planning out what you need for the week before you go to the store will help reduce the amount of "extra" or non-essential items that land in your cart. Most find it helpful to plan out specific meals for the days of the week and create a list of ingredients for those meals. This can then be used as the grocery list because it will have everything you need for the week.

Shop the sales and use the coupons. Clipping coupons and utilizing BOGO

sales can save an individual an average of \$30 – \$50 a week. (Leone et al., 1996) You can find coupons in local store ads or in "junk mail" we trash from the mail. Some stores will advertise discounts or BOGO items right on the shelves. Our local grocers also use their apps to directly add the coupons on to your account.

Compare labels. High priced name brand foods are often identical to the store brand or generic brand. The only difference is usually the brand name products often cost more. Compare the labels to determine which item is the best bang for your buck.

Don't shop hungry. Shopping hungry can cause a person to increase the amount they spend at the store. Studies have shown that "hungry shoppers" spend on average, 60 percent more than "non-hungry shoppers" (Phys.org).

These four simple tips will help you not only achieve your health-related goals this new year, but it will also help you achieve your financial goals. Happy New Year!

Kristen K. Hicks-Roof Ph.D., RDN, LDN is an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Brooks College of Health, University of North Florida.



The Pantry Raiders

Enjoy comfort food on chilly days

By NewsLine Staff mail@floridanewslines.com

When seeking recipes for cold days, consider those comfort foods that can be enjoyed warm to chase away the chill. "Croissant Bread Pudding" is an ideal choice. Topped with a rum-flavored sauce, it's sweet and decadent for all the right reasons. Enjoy this recipe from "The Pampered Chef: Stoneware Inspirations" (The Pampered Chef, Ltd.) by The Pampered Chef Test Kitchens.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Croissant Bread Pudding

Croissant Bread Pudding

(Yields 12 servings)

- 4 large croissants (about 3 oz. each)
- 1 red baking apple, such as Jonathan
- 6 eggs
- ½ cup plus 3 tbsp. sugar, divided
- 2 cups half and half
- 1 orange
- ½ cup pecan halves, chopped
- ¾ cup butterscotch caramel ice cream topping
- ¼ tsp. rum extract
- ½ cup golden raisins

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly spray a deep baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Slice croissants from top to bottom into ½-inch slices. Set aside 16 of the largest slices. Cube remaining slices and place in bottom of baker. Arrange reserved slices over cubes in an overlapping circular pattern. Core and slice apple, leaving peel on; cut slices in half. Tuck apple slices between croissant slices.
2. In a bowl, whisk eggs and ½ cup of the sugar. Pour half and half into a microwave-safe container and microwave on high 2 minutes or until hot. Slowly add half and half to egg mixture; whisk until blended. Carefully pour egg mixture over croissants. If necessary, lightly press croissants down to coat.
3. Zest orange to measure 2 teaspoons zest. Juice orange to measure ¼ cup juice; set juice aside. Chop pecans. Combine remaining sugar, orange zest and pecans; sprinkle over croissants. Bake 30 to 35 minutes or until golden brown and set in center. Remove from oven to a cooling rack; let stand 10 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, combine ice cream topping, rum extract, reserved orange juice, and raisins in a microwave-safe container. Microwave on high 30 to 60 seconds or until hot; pour into serving bowl. Serve sauce over pudding.

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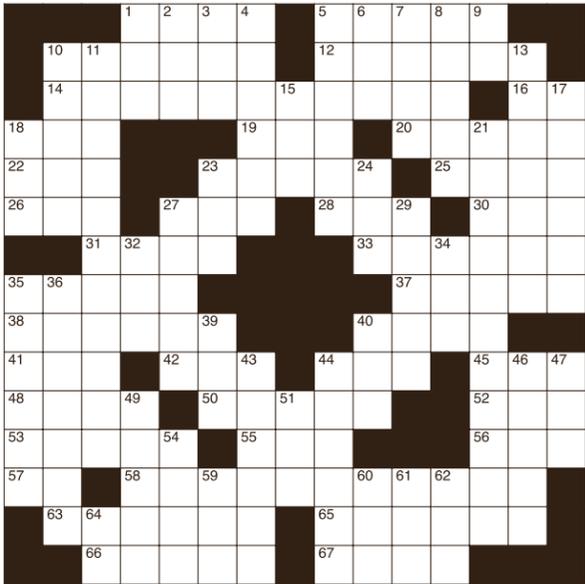
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
- 5. 2014 Winter Olympics host
- 10. Soft fabric
- 12. Covered in flowers
- 14. Works at a college or university
- 16. Keeps us cool
- 18. Corpuscule count (abbr.)
- 19. Similar
- 20. Birthplace of Muhammad
- 22. They ___
- 23. Preamble to a book
- 25. Southern China people
- 26. Hair product
- 27. The woman
- 28. Partner to cheese
- 30. One point north of due east
- 31. Round Dutch cheese
- 33. Be in awe of
- 35. Christmas song
- 37. Emits coherent radiation

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Nowhere to be found (abbr.)
- 2. Not new
- 3. Brew
- 4. Stain with mud
- 5. Chief or leader
- 6. Luke Skywalker's mentor ___-Wan
- 7. Type of sauce
- 8. Sharpens
- 9. Priestess loved by Zeus
- 10. Jean Henri __, French entomologist
- 11. Regulates supply of fuel
- 13. Disturbing and horrifying
- 15. Equal (prefix)
- 17. Hosts film festival
- 18. Tattered piece of clothing
- 21. Rich desserts
- 23. Unique motor (abbr.)
- 24. Disfigure
- 27. Chemical substance
- 29. Slang for famous person

CLUES DOWN

- 32. Department of Labor
- 34. The A-team rode around in one
- 35. Beach cabin
- 36. Living things
- 39. Gun (slang)
- 40. Disconsolate
- 43. Stroke gently
- 44. Actress Richards
- 46. "Cletus Hogg" actor
- 47. Returned material authorization (abbr.)
- 49. Brazilian mountain range
- 51. Upset
- 54. One with supernatural insight
- 59. Insecticide
- 60. Taxi
- 61. "Much ___ about nothing"
- 62. Cannister
- 64. Popular clothing retailer

- 32. Department of Labor
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Solve the code to discover words related to winter. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 26 = I)

A. 5 1 3 14
Clue: White precipitation

B. 16 21 26 8 8 6 24 18
Clue: Strong snow storm

C. 2 24 26 25 26 18
Clue: Very cold

D. 26 7 4
Clue: Frozen water

WINTERTIME WORD SEARCH

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

WORDS

- BOARD
- BUNDLED
- CHILLY
- COAT
- DOWNHILL
- DRIFT
- FLUFFY
- FLURRIES
- FROSTBITE
- FROSTY
- GUSTS
- HOCKEY
- ICE
- MITTENS
- SCARF
- SHOVEL
- SKATING
- SKIING
- SLED
- SNOW
- TUBE
- WARMTH
- WINTER
- WONDERLAND

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

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# Travel

## The Other Jacksonville — in North Carolina

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewline.com

Jacksonville, Florida, ranks as the largest city in the country with that name, but it's far from the only one. Did you know that a half-dozen cities and around a dozen other municipalities also bear the name Jacksonville? Like our hometown, most of them were named for President Andrew Jackson. Have you ever been to another Jacksonville, perhaps one in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Oregon, Texas, or North Carolina?

I recently flew to Jacksonville, NC, where the population is just more than 74,000. Located in the southeastern coastal region, it's the county seat of Onslow County. This area also includes Richlands, Sneads Ferry, Swansboro, and North Topsail Beach.

Jacksonville, NC, founded in 1842, is the home to Camp Lejeune, a large training facility for the US Marine Corps. With this strong military connection, the residents celebrate with many patriotic parades. They also honor those who sacrificed their lives at Lejeune Memorial Gardens, a poignant, off-base memorial park. I toured the open-air, public facility and discovered moving tributes at the Beirut Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial (second-largest in the country), 9/11 Memorial Beam,

an Eagle, Globe and Anchor statue, and the Montford Point Marine Memorial. This last statue honors the first Black Marines who were reluctantly admitted to the Marine Corps between 1942 – 49, a time of segregation. The group became distinguished during the battle at Iwo Jima.

For a lighter experience, I went to sea to learn all about shrimping. I hopped aboard a shrimp boat, a 35-foot wood trawler, at Sneads Ferry. Sneads Ferry carries the moniker, "Shrimping Capital of the East Coast."

My group of five met Captain TJ Jarman and his first mate, Danny, at the marina for a cruise along the New River. Depending on the season and the tides, charters like mine depart either during the day or in the evenings, but not on weekends. Participants learn about the workings of a shrimp boat, the process of trawling and capturing shrimp. Guests see the towering wings (or nets) lowered and enjoy a ride at about 1.7 knots per hour as the shrimp and other fish are trapped. The nets drag through the water, work-

ing like a funnel that forces the shrimp through the nets to the rear tail bags.

After about 15 – 20 minutes, anticipation builds as the nets are raised and the lively catch emptied on a large table. Everyone joins in the slimy scramble of picking out shrimp and crabs and



Sorting out the crabs.



Montford Point Marines Memorial.

throwing the other fish back into the sea. (Rubber gloves and tongs supplied.) It's a wild time with fish flipping, crabs crawling, and water squirting about. The seagulls provide a loud soundtrack, but our giggles and yips may have been even more piercing. 'The Reel Livin'



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Checking the nets.

Charter Company gives the first 50 pounds of shrimp and crabs caught to their guests. The rest remain as part of the crews' catch. What a fun but equally great educational experience we had!

While in the area, you can also explore nearby Swansboro, another delightful little North Carolina seaside town. I went kayaking where the White Oak River meets the Intracoastal Waterway, enjoyed a sunset cruise on the Lady Jane, Swan Boat, and checked out Hammock Beach State Park. Most folks ride the park ferry over to Bear Island for a day of beaching, shelling or fishing. Swansboro hosts an annual Mullet Festival in November along their cutesy downtown, except, of course, in 2020.

If you are looking for travel ideas, the cities in Onslow County offer plenty of outdoor adventure for all ages. Driving time runs around seven hours. For more information: [www.OnlyInOnslow.com](http://www.OnlyInOnslow.com).

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# Gardening

## A New Year: An optimistic approach

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewsline.com

As concerned as I am for the pollinators that underpin our food supply, I have found something else to concern us all, and that is the state of the world's soils. The very stuff on which we depend for our food is becoming depleted to a more or lesser degree across our planet.

I first heard about this phenomenon some years ago, when I read about an area of the UK, the Norfolk Broads, which is famous for its fens or wetlands. Within the Broads there were areas of farmland where the rich peaty soils, laid down over centuries, were becoming shallower as a result of conventional farming techniques. On a trip from Atlanta to Jacksonville more recently, I recall being shocked at the amount of dust whipped up and across the interstate from bare fields by a wind that was not particularly strong. For "dust," think "topsoil."

In 2011, another related problem was brought to light to a wider audience:

"A landmark study on the topic by Donald Davis and his team of researchers from the University of Texas at Austin's Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry was published in December 2004 in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition. They studied U.S. Department of Agriculture nutritional data from both 1950 and 1999 for 43 different vegetables and fruits, finding 'reliable declines' in the amount of protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, riboflavin (vitamin B2) and vitamin C over the past half century. Davis and his colleagues chalk up this declining nutritional content to the preponderance of agricultural practices designed to improve traits (size, growth rate, pest resistance) other than nutrition." (Scientific American, April 27, 2011)

Now, in the first week of December 2020, I read that depleted soils do not support the full range of microbes that underpin our agricultural efforts, and overall the state of our soils is not good (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/04/global-soils-underpin-life-but-future-looks-bleak-warns-un-report>). It's a complex subject so I turned to the University of Florida,

where soil and water researchers have come to this conclusion:

"Growers interested in improving soil health in their fields should keep in mind that soil management practices change soil quality slowly over time. The use of cover crops, crop rotation, organic amendments, and limited tillage are important practices to consider for increasing soil organic matter content notably by adding organic materials with qualities affecting soil characteristics differently from the crop debris and crop roots. It is important to maintain a 'green carpet' across the soil surface because this supports a living root system with a robust population of soil organisms. Over time these practices will help eliminate many soil constraints that often stem from the depletion of soil organic matter. Healthy soils will be more resilient to extreme weather events, support diverse populations of soil organisms, and save farmers money on inputs, such as fertilizer, while maintaining or increasing yields. This sustainable use of the soil will also allow farmers to leave behind fertile farmland to support and feed the next generation." (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ss657>).

So many of our soils are shallow and are lacking microbial diversity, and our modern farming techniques concentrate on characteristics other than nutrition, resulting in produce that is less than optimally nutritious. As the quote from the University of Florida describes, while some soils may be less than ideal, with a long term approach to rebuilding soil health we can begin to improve our children's futures. Certainly in the home garden, we can add compost, use organic fertilizers like seaweed products, and plant cover crops — and aim never to leave soil bare. We can limit our use of chemicals, supply a variety of flowers and other plants, including native trees and shrubs, to support beneficial insects, and feel confident that we are doing our bit to help our world. The time to act is now!

A Happy New Year to all, and a sincere wish for a brighter, greener, more healthy, and beautiful 2021.



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