

What is the Buy Nothing Project?

By Meg Balke
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Buy Nothing Project began when two friends, Rebecca Rockefeller and Liesl Clark, created an experimental hyper-local gift economy on Bainbridge Island, Washington, in July 2013. Since then, it has become an international network of local gift economy Buy Nothing communities with groups in 44 nations. The Buy Nothing Project was founded with the mission to build community by connecting people through gifting and reducing our impact on the environment. It is about freely sharing our abundance with neighbors and asking our neighbors for things when we need, or want, them. The Project is not focused on the stuff, rather focused on the people. People are put in touch with each other through a Facebook group to give, receive, share gratitude, share, lend, and borrow — all building a shared narrative and culture of generosity.

The local North St. Johns group was founded in February 2020 by Meg Balke and Keri Kowalchuk. The group was launched on Facebook and quickly gained traction. The Buy Nothing guidelines encourage “sprouting” when a group shows signs of losing the “neighbor” feel, which typically starts at 800 – 1,000

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St. Johns County goes back to school

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

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

“From everything I’ve heard, the first day of school around the county went smoothly,” School Board member Patrick Canan said. “Kudos especially to everyone at Beachside High School for working all weekend and getting the doors opened to students on Aug. 15.”

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

At Julington Creek Elementary, home to 1,045 students this year, school secretary Heidi Karl said that students and families were happy and eager to return.

“We have more fabulous students and families due to the rezoning of Hickory Creek Elementary and also our new ESE programming,” Karl said. “We are excited to celebrate the school’s 50th birthday this year.”

At Freedom Crossing Elementary, one of the district’s most populous schools with an expected 1,950 students, fourth grade teacher Lauren O’Shell said the first day was a success, with hallways filled with music and dancing during arrival to excite the students and welcome them back into the building.

Freedom Crossing Academy Vice Principal Melissa Lime noted some changes for the coming school year, including a partnership with Creekside Teaching Academy and the Bartram Trail IT Academy to provide opportunities for student internships and STEM projects.

“Also, Freedom Crossing Academy is a National Showcase Capturing Kids Hearts Model School, the only school in Florida, and we have been recognized as a Florida PBIS Model School since 2019 for our effective school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports,” Lime said. “The framework is aligned with Capturing Kids’ Hearts

best practices and the SJCS D Character Counts pillars.”

At Nease High School, Principal Lisa Kunze said the first day went well. She said that the school’s car line was empty at 9:16 a.m. and everyone was in class at 9:20 a.m.

“Students seemed excited about being back on campus and starting a new school year,” Kunze said. “Students met all their teachers, we fed them, and they all returned home safely. A great first day!”

Kunze said Nease has adopted a new cell phone procedure this year at the request of the leadership team, who had asked for a school wide policy to ensure consistency from classroom to classroom.

“We purchased pocket holders for each classroom and require students to place their phone in the pocket holder upon entering,” Kunze said. “This new procedure will help students maintain their academic focus without the distraction of their cell phone.”

The St. Johns County School District’s first day counts included a high school student count of 13,601 with 2,260 students at Bartram Trail High School, 2,383 at Creekside High School, 1,371 at Pedro Menendez High School, 2,119 at Allen D. Nease High School, 1,863 at

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members. Sprouting means dividing the group to create smaller hyper-local groups. These sprout groups grow over time, and the cycle continues. Currently the original St. Johns North group sprouted to three groups in March 2022, which are managed by their own admins.

Members join their group according to where they live through a Facebook group. Keeping groups small makes it easier to make exchanges without driving distances and encourages connecting with your neighbors living on your street, in your subdivision or in close proximity; it is a “village mentality.” (For instance, “I need a cup of sugar,” and you walk to your neighbor who is gifting you that cup of sugar.) The founders express this ideal as “Give where you Live.” You also have the opportunity to meet more of your neighbors that you might never meet otherwise. That’s the idea behind the Buy Nothing Project. It’s a community where people give and receive all kinds of goods without money — and form connections with each other in the process. Locally, we have heard many heartwarming stories of friendships being made and the kindness of others.

Separately, “purge” pages and other “free stuff” groups are also popping up as our society has more and more possessions and these pages definitely have a place in our community. If someone has to get rid of a couch or clothes quickly, or post a “curb alert,” the first-come-first-served groups are perfect; however, Buy Nothing groups encourage letting your

gift “simmer” a bit so as many members as possible have an opportunity to see it. Gifters can choose a recipient randomly or ask for a funny joke then pick their favorite. In the Buy Nothing group, when a gift is given or an ask is fulfilled, it is shared in the spirit of transparency with the group through a tag or post so all members can share in the generosity and joy.

All gifts have the same value — priceless. There is no difference between a “want” or a “need” in Buy Nothing. Members can post offers (gifts) of goods they would like to give away, share, or lend. This may be gifts of garden produce, chicken eggs, used furniture, or services such as repairs or teaching a new skill/craft. Asks can be as simple as “Can someone take me to the auto repair shop after noon” or “I need size six interview clothes.” Currently a northern St. Johns Buy Nothing sprout group has a round robin Happy Birthday yard sign that moves all over the community and is loved by many members. Each birthday is memorialized on the back of the sign before it moves on to the next member.

A gift economy’s real wealth is the people involved and the “web of connections” that form to support them. Buy Nothing groups exist for the sole purpose of building community. Currently, there are three groups in our northern St. Johns area and three along the County Road 210 corridor. To find where your group is, visit <https://tinyurl.com/BN-North-St-Johns-master-map> then search Facebook for: “Buy Nothing St. Johns, FL” to find the area for you.

Bulldogs return to school



It's back-to-school season, and Bolles Bulldogs came back to all four Bolles campuses on Thursday, Aug. 11. Photos courtesy The Bolles School

St. Johns County Tax Collector Dennis Hollingsworth and staff wish you a happy birthday!

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

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

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

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

Visit sjctax.us for more information.



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BFF

Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet DeeDee!



Breed:

Shetland Sheepdog

Favorite Activities:

Carrying around my squeaky hedgehog toy

Favorite Treat:

Blueberry Greenies

Favorite Friends:

My family, especially my mama

How did she get her name:

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

Do you have a cute pet? Send us your pet's picture and the answer to the five questions above before the 10th of the month. Also tell us you saw the BFF contest in The CreekLine. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in The CreekLine! Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet.

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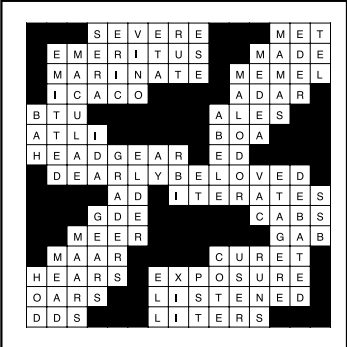
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MYSTERY PHOTO



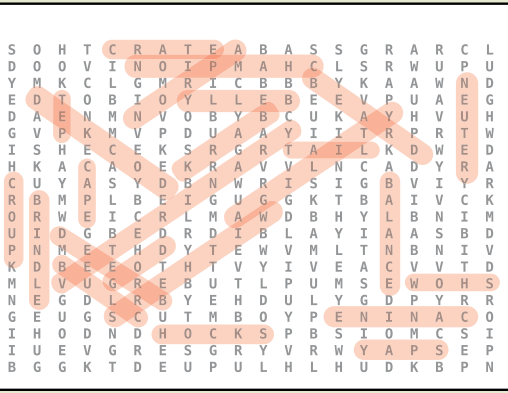
Last month's Mystery Photo was the grounds of River of Life Church on Race Track Road.



Answers
to our
Puzzles
PG 16



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



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September

Community Calendar

What's Happening in St. Johns

Trout Creek Senior Center offers activities for seniors on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 6795 Collier Road in Orangedale. Cards, crafts and games start each day at 9 a.m. with trivia, nutrition/exercise, Bunco and Bingo among the additional activities before lunch at 11:45 a.m. each day. Contact Program Coordinator Anne Marie Forsythe at (904) 552-1611 for more information.

Playing HOOKie, a group for those who enjoy knitting, crocheting and looming (with all items donated to charity) meets every Wednesday from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Panera Bread in the RiverPlace shopping center, 11111 San Jose Blvd. Visit the group's Facebook page (Playing HOOKie) or email playinghookie31@gmail.com for more information.

Jokers Wild, a local card group, plays the game of "Hand, Knee, and Foot" on Wednesdays. If you are interested in joining, please call (904) 230-6962 and leave a message.

1st: The Garden Club of Switzerland will meet at the Bartram Trail Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd. on Sept. 1 at 10 a.m. Connie Gladding, Master Gardener and board of directors member of the North Florida Daylily Society will discuss how to select and grow daylilies. Guests are welcome. Visit www.switzerlandgc.org for more information and to register.

1st: The Jacksonville Camera Club will meet on Sept. 1 and Sept. 15 from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. at Shepherd of the Woods Southside, 7860 Southside Blvd. There is a social "hour" of 30 to 45 minutes before the meeting. Visit jaxcameraclub.com for more information.

6th: Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, Sept. 6 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church at the Mandarin Road Campus in the Woodie Room at 11844 Mandarin Road. Guild member Jeanie Jacobson will discuss Half Square Triangles. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

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

10th: Bartram Trail Friends of the Library Book Sale will be held at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd., on Sept. 10 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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

12th: The Northwest St. Johns County United for Progress Club

will meet on Monday, Sept. 12 at 6:30 p.m. Guest speaker Rhona Di Camillo will speak on "Voting Protections for All Americans." Contact nwsjcp@gmail.com for more information if you'd like to attend.

13th: Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club will hold its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, Sept. 13 at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive off County Road 210. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. Entertainment will be magician Mr. G with interactive magic and audience participation. The cost of the luncheon is \$32. Make checks payable to BTNC and mail to Deborah Russell, 12376 Fireberry Ct., Jacksonville, FL 32258. Payment must be received no later than Sept. 6, 2022, no exceptions. Be sure to indicate entrée choice on the check memo line. Visit www.facebook.com/BTNC1 for food choices and updated information.

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

17th: Herbs for Cooking and Healing will be offered on Sept. 17 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 at (386) 972-1891.

19th: The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, Sept. 19 at the First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. The program will be "Quilt Chat: A Sampler of Samplers" with Sunnie Malesky. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

20th: Happy Hookers crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on Sept. 20 from 5:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. The group crochets or knits blankets for cancer patients at area hospitals. All skill levels are welcome. Visit www.sjcpls.org or call (904) 827-6960.

23rd: Adult Craft — Boho wall hanging will be held at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, at the entrance to Julington Creek Plantation, on Sept. 23 from 10 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Supplies provided by Bartram Trail Branch Friends of the Library. Registration is required; call (904) 827-6960 beginning on Sept. 1 to sign up.

24th: 15th annual Holiday Craft Fair will be held at San Juan del Rio Catholic Church, 1714 State Road 13, on Sept. 24 from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. In addition to numerous vendors with unique items, the event will feature multiple food trucks.



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with St. Johns County Commission Vice Chairman Christian Whitehurst, District 1

Q: Can you shed any light on why the construction is taking so long on Veterans Parkway between Race Track Road and Longleaf Pine Parkway?

A: This has been under construction for way too long. It's been frustrating for me and I know it's been frustrating for residents. Basically the project is to take the two lane road and make it four lanes with bike lanes and sidewalks. Last year there was an engineering design flaw that delayed construction for six months. Now we are ready to go, but have run into materials shortages, notably concrete and asphalt. Presently, they are looking for approved alternatives to use. I have not stopped pushing our staff to get this project finished. They know it is a priority for me and for you.

Q: At what point of the annual budget process is the County Commission?

A: We are in the final stages of setting the 2022-23 budget; the new fiscal year starts Oct. 1. We set the maximum rate of property taxes at the current rate, so there is no tax rate increase. People might see an increase in the amount they pay, though, due to the increase in our property values. It's important to note that the Board of County Commissioners can only control the rate; the free market controls the property value. In September, we will set the final rate and we could still consider the roll back rate.

Q: Are there any noteworthy items in the budget you'd like to highlight?

A: The Sheriff is asking for a decent increase in his budget, but it is to do things we all think are important regarding public safety. He proposes that all deputies should earn a minimum of \$50,000. If this budget is approved, the sheriff will finally be able to compete with surrounding counties for quality employees.

Also, there is \$10 million in the budget which is proposed to activate a 60- acre

parcel of land that the county already owns off Greenbriar Road into a north-west park. This money will go towards improving the park with ballfields in Phase 1 of a three phase project. We are still seeking input from the community as to the types of ballfields desired. Please contact me and let me know your thoughts on this and be sure to copy the director of our Parks and Rec Department, Ryan Kane (rkane@sjcfl.us). This park has been needed for a long time and I'm extremely excited about the progress.

There are also millions of dollars in the budget for things like roads, drainage projects, and other prescribed improvements on our five-year-plan.

The County Road 210 expansion project between Cimarrone and Greenbriar Road is already funded and moving forward. It should be complete in 650 days, according to our Public Works Department. We are doing this project the right way — the extra lanes added will also include bike lanes and sidewalks.

Q: Do you have any update on the possibility of the formation of a public housing authority for the county?

A: We recently had our first introduction to what a housing authority would look like in St. Johns County. I asked a lot of tough questions in the meeting that I didn't get satisfactory answers to and no decisions have been made at this time. We want to help those who are not able to work, but there might be other mechanisms to accomplish this. I think we need to investigate this more fully. Anytime you are expanding the size of government, I think it's important to measure twice and cut once.

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

A: Readers can email me at bcc1c-whitehurst@sjcfl.us or call me at (904) 584-5348.



with St. St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Have we been seeing an increase in crime in St. Johns County?

A: We do have an increase, but it is not violent crime. Our increase has been in property crime, and it can largely be prevented with proper action by citizens.

What we at SJSO want everyone to remember is the 9 p.m. Routine: Lock it Up. This means that every night at 9 p.m., before you go to bed, get in the habit of locking your car, securing any valuables inside your car, and locking the doors to your home.

Q: Can you share any recent statistics?

A: From Jan. 1, 2022 to Aug. 1, 2022, we had 75 firearms stolen in burglaries, including motor vehicles, residential, and commercial properties. Out of the 48 firearms stolen out of vehicles (11 firearms were stolen from just one vehicle), 46 of them had unlocked car doors. Only two were stolen in smash and grabs.

What this says is we in St. Johns County are making ourselves a soft target for the criminal element. We are known for leaving firearms, as well as credit cards, valet keys, laptops and golf clubs in our unlocked cars, and often in a visible area.

Keep in mind too, that if you leave your car unlocked, your home is also vulnerable since many people have garage door openers in their cars.

Q: What suggestions do you have?

A: Again, at 9 p.m., do the 9 p.m. Routine: Check to make sure your doors are locked and your cars are locked every night.

Also make sure to take a picture of the serial numbers on your firearms so you can provide that information in the event they are stolen. We can then make an accurate report to the National Crime Information Center. In two days recently, we had nine firearms stolen from unlocked cars — and none of the owners knew their serial numbers.

If you must leave your firearm in your car, leave it out of sight and locked in your trunk and remember to lock your car doors as well.

If you see something suspicious, report it to us immediately and let us triage or investigate. Even if nothing of real value is taken if your car is burglarized, report it to us as we may be able to get a fingerprint or DNA sample that could help with other burglaries.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you with any questions or suggestions about this article?

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



Trash To Treasure Sale

September 30 and October 1, 9 am - 2 pm

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Westminster Woods
on Julington Creek

www.WestminsterWoodsFL.org
25 State Road 13, Jacksonville, FL





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Guest Column

General Election: Important upcoming dates

By St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

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

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

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

Because the General Election is an open election, party affiliation does not matter. All voters receive the same ballots, all candidates and parties are listed on the ballot, and voters may vote for whomever they choose. Several retention questions regarding the Supreme Court Justices and the 5th District Court of Appeal Judges will appear on the ballot. There will also be three constitutional amendments on the ballot



and one local referendum. Sample ballots will be mailed to all voters approximately three weeks prior to the election, so you will have plenty of time to study your ballot and prepare to vote.

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

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



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

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

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

Q: Have you visited the new Beachside High School?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q: How can our readers contact you?

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

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Guest Column

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

By St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer, CFA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Grandparents: Four tips for spending on your grandkids

By Chris Thompson, CFP®, CRPC®

Many grandparents spend money on their grandkids, whether by chipping in on big expenses like tuition bills and travel expenses or covering smaller costs like meals and holiday gifts. The inclination to be generous is understandable, and many seniors say it brings them joy to support (or even occasionally spoil) their grandchildren. But lavishing them with gifts shouldn't come at the expense of your own financial security. If you're seeking to find the balance between supporting your grandchildren and ensuring your own finances stay in healthy shape, here are four tips to keep it all in check:

1. Know what you can afford. No matter how much you enjoy splurging on your grandkids, your financial security should remain your first priority. There are many unknowns in retirement, including your longevity, the fluctuation of markets and the impact of inflation on purchasing power (a factor that's particularly pronounced at the moment, with inflation rates at their highest in 40 years). Spend and gift within your means to maintain your own financial health in the future.
2. Determine if you're giving or loaning. If you're giving a gift, understand current federal tax rules, which are based on the calendar year. In 2022, you can give up to \$16,000 to each family member before the federal gift tax is applied. If

you are married, both you and your spouse may gift \$16,000 (for a total of \$32,000). And make certain the recipient knows it's a gift for their own tax purposes, and so there is no uncertainty about whether or not they need to pay you back. If you are loaning money to a grandchild, be very specific about the terms and repayment, and consider having a written document that both parties sign and date. This can help safeguard your financial situation and ensure both of you are on the same page — now and in the future.

3. Talk about it. Many people tend to shy away from discussions about money and finances with their family. If you would like to help support your grandchildren or save for their future goals like college or a down payment on a home, be sure to communicate this with their parents. This can help your adult children do a better job with their own financial planning. For example, if the parents of your grandchild know how much you are expecting to contribute to their child's education, they may be able to decrease the amount allocated to a 529 Plan and invest more toward other goals, such as their own retirement.
4. Establish boundaries. Even if you want to help your grandchildren financially, depending on their situation, it may not be appropriate to do so, or to repeatedly

provide support. Everyone appreciates help, but if your grandchild needs to learn financial independence, there can be value in letting them live within their own means. Keep in mind the smart — and sometimes tough — financial lessons you learned as you made your own way as a young adult, and the pride that came with successfully overcoming challenges.

If you want to provide financial support to a family member, but haven't incorporated it into your overall financial plan, consider consulting a financial professional.

Chris Thompson, CFP®, CRPC® is an Associate Manager and Financial Advisor with Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC. in Jacksonville. He specializes in fee-based financial planning and asset management strategies and has been in practice for 29 years. To contact him, visit www.ameripriseadvisors.com/chris.thompson or email chris.thompson@ampf.com.

Ameriprise Financial, Inc. and its affiliates do not offer tax or legal advice. Consumers should consult with their tax advisor or attorney regarding their specific situation.

Robotics school opens



Photo courtesy Linda Gay

Code Wiz St. Johns opened in July and held a ribbon cutting ceremony in August. The coding and robotics school offers after school programs, camps, birthday parties and courses for Girl Scouts for kids ages seven – 17. Rebeca Rodriguez and Eliud Rivera are the owners and Code Wiz is located at 530 State Road 13, Unit 5 in St. Johns.



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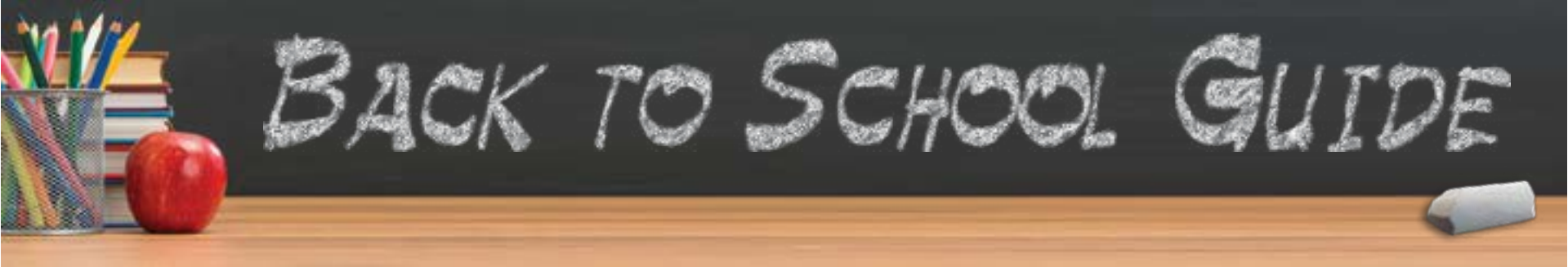
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HUGS restocks schools' emergency food pantries

By Brette Reiman
mail@floridanewslines.com

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

“It gives me great relief to no longer worry about whether families have food to eat when our doors are closed, and I look forward to our continued partner-

ship with HUGS,” said Rona Welch, Unit Director, The Players Championship Boys & Girls Club, a HUGS Pantry Partner for three years.

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

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

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

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

“The help our Title 1 school receives

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

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




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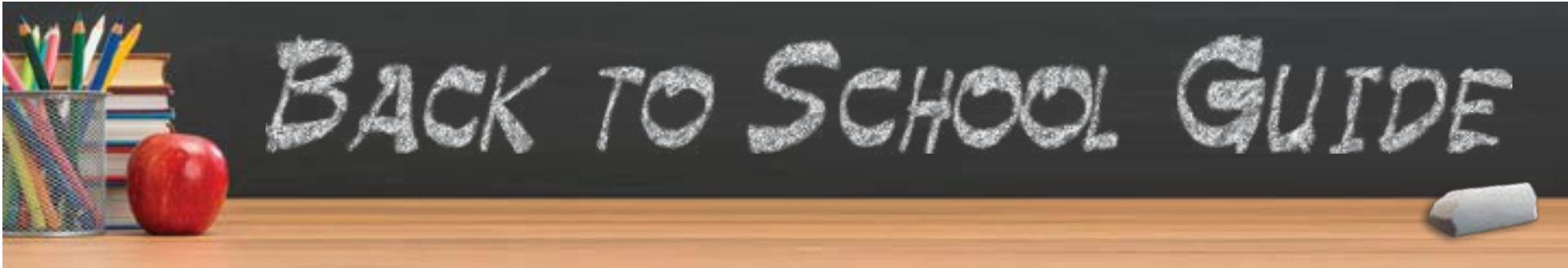


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Back to school cont. from pg. 1

Ponte Vedra High School, 1,615 at St. Augustine High School and 1809 at To-coi Creek High School. There were also 181 students in attendance at St. Johns Technical High School.

Middle school attendance totaled 7,136, with student headcounts ranging from 634 at Sebastian Middle School to 1,382 at Pacetti Bay Middle School. The other first day totals were Alice B. Landrum Middle School with 1,090, Fruit Cove Middle School with 1,182, R. J. Murray Middle School with 641, Gamble Rogers Middle School with 835, and Switzerland Point Middle School with 1,372.

The district’s K-8 schools totaled 10,262. Liberty Pines Academy had a first day headcount of 1,581, Patriot Oaks Academy with 1,298, Valley Ridge Academy with 1,188; Freedom Crossing Academy with 1,775, Palm Valley Academy with 1,363, Mill Creek Academy with 1,691 and Pine Island Academy with 1,366.

The elementary school population totaled 12,042 and another 368 students attended the district’s alternative, charter and Department of Juvenile Justice schools on the first day of school.

“The preparation from administration, teachers and support staff to welcome

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

with their teachers.”

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



Photo courtesy Lauren O'Shell
New fourth graders at Freedom Crossing Academy.

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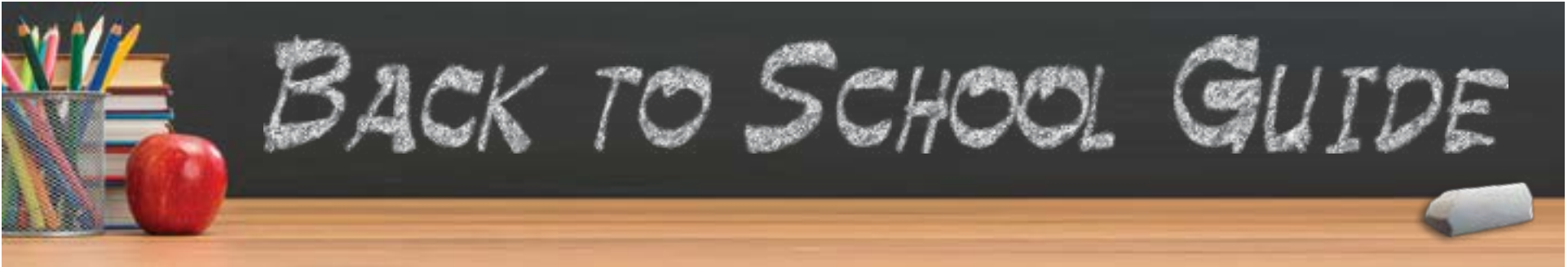
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Brothers host third annual school supply drive

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

This summer, brothers Brewer and Maddox Sicilian sponsored a service project and collected school supplies for INK! (Investing In Kids), a non-profit, which leads efforts to directly benefit the educators and students within the school district. The brothers specifically focused on INK!’s Tools 4

Schools program. According to INK! Executive Director Donna Lueders, on average, local teachers spend more than \$800 of their own money purchasing school supplies for students and the classroom. The purpose of Tools 4 Schools is to minimize expenses for educators with a goal of serving approximately 3,000 teachers and 48,000 students countywide.

Jim Wheeler, INK! operations and student programs director, added that at the end of the 2021 – 22 school year, INK!’s Tools 4 School program reported record numbers of supplies delivered to teachers in every public school in St. Johns County. INK! filled and delivered nearly 1,400 teacher-requested orders of school supplies and educational materials with a total value of more than \$101,000.

This service project was started by Brewer Sicilian, captain, the summer of the pandemic. He repeated his service project last summer. This summer his brother, Maddox Sicilian, co-captain, joined in the efforts. Together they collected more than 3,200 school supplies for INK! through donations from friends, family, and neighbors.

Brewer Sicilian said, “My mom was an educator. I saw her spend money on supplies for her classroom and students. When I found out that INK! assists teachers with classroom needs, I wanted to help stock their supplies.”

Maddox Sicilian said, “We know we aren’t there yet. But our desire is that no teacher will have to use their own money to pay for classroom supplies.”



Photo courtesy Jennifer Sicilian
Jim Wheeler of INK! with Brewer and Maddox Sicilian

During the school year, teachers can order supplies online through the INK! website and orders are filled and delivered by INK! to their schools at no cost. For more information on Tools 4 Schools or to coordinate a community drive effort, contact Jim Wheeler at (904) 547-7121 or email james.wheeler@stjohns.k12.fl.us.

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Type O blood urgently needed

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

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

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

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

Visit oneblood.org or call 1-888-9Donate to find a donation center near you.

New retailers added to Race Track Road development

Ferber Company, a privately held real estate development and investment company headquartered in Ponte Vedra Beach, offers an update on the mixed used Durbin Creek Crossing development, located at the southwest corner of Race Track Road and St. Johns Parkway in NW St. Johns County.

This development, already in progress, will see the addition of some familiar and new options for shoppers. Aldi

Supermarket and Burger King are already open. Scheduled to open in late summer are First Florida Credit Union, ABC Liquors, and Peppers.

Also in late summer, the first apartment units are scheduled to launch from DHI Communities (a DR Horton Company).

The fourth quarter of 2022 will see a new 7-Eleven and Scrubbles

Car Wash opening. Both TD Bank and Ellianos Coffee have begun construction as well. The company also just announced an agreement for a Starbucks and Taco Bell to round out the development.



Photo courtesy Ferber Company
Durbin Creek Crossing under construction.

Newcomers of North St. Johns announces September 2022 luncheon
Newcomers of North Saint Johns will hold its monthly luncheon, open to any resident of the St. Johns County area, on Tuesday, Sept. 20 at the exclusive members-only Serenata Beach Club, 3175 South Ponte Vedra Blvd in Ponte Vedra Beach. The event features lunch and renowned pianist Carl Grant. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. with the meeting beginning at 11 a.m.

The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members and \$40

for guests. All reservations must be received by Sept. 12, 2022.

“This is our first luncheon of the season and we’re thrilled to be back together and catch up on news and vacation travel after this long hot summer,” said Co-President Pat Lett.

“We’re looking forward to a lot of fun and fellowship and, of course, the talented Carl Grant who is opening for us,” said Co-President Judy Porter.

As always, raffles for gift baskets and a fun 50/50 drawing spice up the luncheons. If you are interested in a registration form for the luncheon, membership information or about upcoming activities, email membership@newcomersofnorthstjohns.org. The group offers a wide a variety of activities including wine socials, golf, Mahjogg, holiday parties, day trips and cultural events. Visit www.newcomersofnorthstjohns.org to learn more about the club and view the upcoming calendar of events.

Realty company donates backpacks and school supplies to local students

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty branch offices recently donated hundreds of backpacks filled with school supplies to Northeast Florida children during the company’s 23rd annual Backpack Challenge.

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

Crookshank Elementary School, R. B. Hunt Elementary School, Osceola Elementary School and South Woods Elementary School in St. Johns County, and Trinity Foundation of Florida.

During the campaign, monetary donations as well as new backpacks and school supplies for local students in kindergarten through grade 12 were collected at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty offices throughout Northeast Florida. The company used the donations to purchase additional backpacks and school supplies, and also encouraged donors to purchase backpacks and school supplies online via Amazon wish lists and ship directly to the charities.

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



Photo courtesy Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty
The Mandarin/Saint Johns office donated to Hugs Across the County of St. Johns.

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Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

Eva Delaney

Eva Delaney just accomplished a rare feat — the 11-year-old sixth grader at Patriot Oaks Academy competed in 10 swimming and two track events at the AAU Junior Olympics in Greensboro, NC in July. The events were held at the campus of North Carolina A&T State University in venues used for some adult Olympic trials, a big step up from the smaller venues that Delaney had competed in while qualifying for her events.

She earned eight medals in swimming (butterfly and freestyle events) and posted personal best times in all her races. The very next day after the swimming competition concluded, Delaney ran a personal best in the 3,000 meters, placing sixth overall. A couple of days later, she ran another personal best in the 1,500 meters and placed eighth overall. She earned All-America honors in both events.

Locally, Delaney swims for Loggerhead Aquatics; she has been swimming since she was eight years old. She



Photo courtesy Pat Delaney
Eva Delaney

qualified for the AAU Junior Olympics based on her times throughout the year. Delaney runs in “open” track meets as she just started running this year. She found it to be a relatively easy transition from swimming. Delaney has two sisters, one of whom is her twin, and is the daughter of Pat and Deena Delaney. The family has lived in NW St. Johns County for nearly all of Eva’s life.

Q: What surprised you the most

about competing at the AAU Junior Olympics?

A: I couldn’t believe how big the pool was and I was also surprised by how many people were in the stands at the track competition. Also, everyone I competed against was so fast!

Q: What was your favorite part about the competition?

A: I was excited to race against people from around the country. I made a lot of new friends, including a girl from Hawaii. It was fun to race at the Junior Olympics because I could really gauge where I was against these fast athletes. Especially in track, I wasn’t really expecting much since I had just started running, but I did better than I expected. I was nervous, but it was a great experience and I hope to go again next year.

Q: What was your proudest accomplishment at the Junior Olympics?

A: Earning All-America status in track. You have to finish in the top eight and it’s a big deal.

Q: What do you like to do in your free time?

A: I like to hang out with my friends and go to amusement parks. We just went to Universal, so that’s my favorite. I also have a cat named Cici and a guinea pig that I like to play with.

Nutrition Check: World Alzheimer’s Day and the food/brain connection

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

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

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

Dietary Patterns:

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

Specific Nutrients/Individual Foods:

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

Nutrition Check cont. on pg. 19

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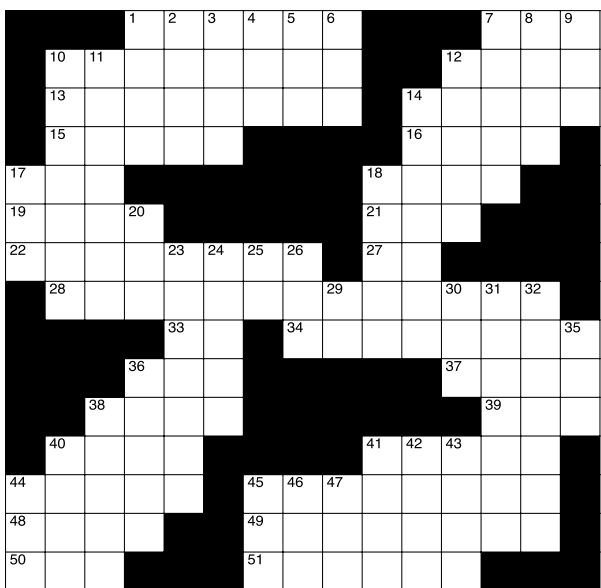


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|---|--|---|



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

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

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| Y | M | K | C | L | G | M | R | I | C | B | B | B | Y | K | A | A | W | N | D |
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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

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



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Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 15 = E)

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

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Creeks Crushers are Babe Ruth World Series champs

By John Dross
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Creeks Crushers 8U softball team won the Babe Ruth World Series Championship, held July 28 – Aug. 6 in Jensen Beach. This tournament was comprised of state and regional championship winners from around the United States, showcasing the best players and teams in the country.

The week began with pool play games which were used to determine seeding for the bracket-style, double elimination tournament format. The Crushers went 4 – 0 in pool play with impressive victories over North Carolina (11-2), Kentucky (14-4), Alabama (30-5) and Puerto Rico (8-2). With a remarkable run differential of 63 –13, the Crushers were positioned well going into the bracket play.

With a 3-0 record in bracket play, Creeks found themselves in the familiar position of playing in the championship game. The District, State, and Regional champions were one win away from capping a dream season. All that stood between them, and the World Series title was a rematch

against a talented Virginia team. Virginia had battled their way out of the loser's bracket after a close loss to Creeks earlier in the week, while Creeks remained undefeated, forcing Virginia to win two games to claim the title.

After a slow start, Creeks managed to push two runs across in the bottom of the second to open the scoring and followed that with a four-run effort in the third. With a 6 – 0 lead heading into the top of the fourth inning, the Virginia bats came alive, scoring four runs of their own. Creeks was able to respond with two of their own in the bottom of the fourth to make the score 8 – 4. The top of the fifth inning started with a dazzling defensive play by Emma Ash. The Virginia leadoff hitter drove a ball in the gap to the wall. Ash tracked the ball down and executed a perfect relay throw to short-stop Isla Kruayai, who in turn fired a strike to third baseman Braylee Rosette to record the first out of the inning at third base. This remarkable play had momentum on the Creeks side. The following half inning saw the Crushers extend the lead with clutch hits by

Jordan William and Camryn Kruayai to put the game out of reach as the 8U Creeks Crushers clinched the World Series Championship.

The Creeks Crushers were dominant throughout the tournament, posting a perfect 8 – 0 record and outscoring their opponents by a combined total of 113 – 26. Their team batting average of .567 and defensive fielding percentage of .918 were also tops among all World Series participants.

In addition to the team accolades, multiple players brought home indi-

vidual awards for the efforts. Jordan Williams and Ella Hofrichter won gold glove awards presented to the World Series all-tournament defensive team. Isla Kruayai, Chloe Harkins and Georgia Griffin received All-World Series Team honors. Chloe Harkins earned the title of World Series batting champion with a batting average of .800 and was also named World Series MVP.

The Crushers finished this storybook season with a record of 29 – 5, winning 21 games in a row to end the season.

Creekside student to represent Florida at 2022 Global Youth Institute



Photo courtesy Ali Pressel

This summer, Creekside High School senior and Academy of Engineering and Environmental Sciences student Taylor Worbington participated in the Florida Youth Institute through the University of Florida. The Florida Youth Institute is a program focusing on global food security and providing opportunities for students to understand how they can make local impacts to improve lives in their communities. Worbington shared her solutions on global food securities in a paper presented to a panel of experts representing agriculture, natural

resources, and related science industries. She was selected to represent Florida in October as part of a delegation at the 2022 Global Youth Institute with the World Food Prize Foundation. In addition to receiving this recognition with the Florida Youth Institute, Worbington also was recently selected as one of only 11 students in Florida to participate in the FEMA Region 4 Youth Preparedness Council, which cultivates leadership and life skills by helping students share ideas and build stronger and more resilient communities.



Photo courtesy John Dross

Creeks Crushers are Babe Ruth World Series champs

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Travel

River cruising on the Seine: Paris and Normandy

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewsline.com



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
The "Jane Austen."

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

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

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

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

My cruise traveled to dock in Caudebec,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Chateau Gallard ruins.

Fishing

Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis
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Usually by the time September rolls around, I have already made at least one comment to my wife about how I'm ready for some cooler weather. It's not that I don't enjoy summer, it's just that eventually the heat and humidity gets old and some change would be nice. September typically doesn't bring relief for that, especially lately. While we are waiting for a temperature shift to cue us into seasonal changes, the fish have already been noticing. Days have been growing shorter since the summer solstice and one day of wind with a northerly component can set off large movements of baitfish and their predators to areas south of here.

The mullet run is one of the larger and more obvious of these movements. Even if you're not into fishing, you can spend an evening on the beach watching this migration through September and into October. Tarpon, sharks and dolphins all seem to have more energy when mullet are on the menu and they can really put on a show right off the beach. Closer to home the mullet will be moving into the river. These mullet have to go north before they go south, so this run can ex-

tend into November. Tarpon, jacks, and redfish will take up the antagonist role for the local mullet schools.

If you're looking to net shrimp for dinner then September and October are going to be your best months for that on average. These shrimp have traveled south of Palatka and fattened up all the way down and back. With the numbers we saw earlier this year we have the foundations of a decent shrimp run. The only wrench or two that may lessen the chances are: one, a large rain event such as a tropical storm or hurricane and two, an algae bloom. The excess rain from the storm can really upset the shrimps' movements and cause them to leave in mass rather than the waves they usually move in. The algae blooms can produce toxins harmful to humans, so contact with the water during shrimping isn't ideal.

Any way you look at it, September is the start of our fall fishing season, which holds some of the best fishing we have in our area. Keep an eye on the winds and get out there and wet a line when you can.

Nutrition Check cont. from pg. 15

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

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

Learn more and find references at:

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

www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-do-we-know-about-diet-and-prevention-alzheimers-disease

• Alzheimer's Association (www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/food-eating)

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

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

Gardening

Useful habitats, invasive vines, and cool season veg

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale
mail@floridanewslines.com

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

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

So many natural areas around town are being swallowed up by new developments and the wildlife is left homeless — but individuals can make a real contribution to help support wildlife. Planning our plantings in "layers," from the ground up to the tree canopy, we can make our yards into sanctuaries. Beginning at the ground level, leaves and natural mulch like pine straw should form the basis of our ecosystem or habitat. Ground dwelling invertebrates like worms and other little "creepy crawlies" — a term from my childhood — are among the creatures that transform dead plant matter into rich soil: the foundation. From there on up, add ground cover plants, perennials and sub shrubs, large shrubs, and small trees. If, and only if, you have the space, a larger tree would complete the picture. There's no need to dwarf a small property when smaller trees could supply shelter and food. These

are the classic elements of garden design. For information on Florida-Friendly design, including how to cater to wildlife by incorporating native plants, please see <https://bit.ly/3QKBBMA>. For more articles on gardening with wildlife check out <https://bit.ly/3SRNz8W>.

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

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

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

Master Gardener Volunteers are available to take your questions Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. at (904) 255 7450, or email duval@ifas.ufl.edu. If you would like to receive our newsletter in your inbox, just let us know.

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