

Ponte Vedra

NewsLine

DECEMBER 2022 Volume 9 Issue 12

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

A Florida NewsLine Publication



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Photo courtesy Tiffany Merlo Phelps

Balloon toss at now Brown Family YMCA announcement ceremony in October.

Ponte Vedra's Y gets new name, renovation

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

David Brown helped establish Ponte Vedra Beach's YMCA 23 years ago, realizing that it was time for the community to have such a facility in its backyard.

Fast forward to 2022. Now Brown and his family have come full circle and are once again supporting Ponte Vedra's YMCA by making a private donation to what is now the Brown Family YMCA at Ponte Vedra Beach. The new name and

Renovation cont. on pg. 10

Palm Valley Boat Parade coming through

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

For Melvin and Yvette Luciano, the Palm Valley Boat Parade is about community, unity, and having good old-fashioned fun. That's why the couple will enter their 37-foot sport fishing boat for the third year in a row this Dec. 3 for the 2022 Palm Valley Boat Parade.

"The parade gives us an opportunity to gather friends and family to do something for the community and for us," said Yvette Luciano. "It is a very unique, interactive and fun event."

The Lucianos won Best in Show the past two years and said they worked for months on preparing their boat with the help of family and friends. In 2020, the theme was "Feliz Navidad" and last year the couple chose the movie "Coco."

"We chose 'Feliz Navidad' because everyone knows the song and can relate to it. We chose 'Coco' to remember in our hearts those who are not with us," said Yvette Luciano.

With an estimated 2,000 light bulbs on the entire boat, the Lucianos, along with family and friends, play music on the boat and get into costume for the big night. They will reveal this year's theme on parade night.

"The biggest reward for us is going to every dock and hearing the joy of the kids as they get excited to see each boat," said Melvin Luciano. "That makes all the planning and preparation well worth it."



Photos courtesy Beacham Still

The parade will begin at 6 p.m. starting at Marker No. 3 just south of the Palm Valley Bridge. From there, the procession will continue north and is anticipated to reach Marsh Landing around 8:05 p.m. – 8:30 pm. Live updates on pacing and expected arrival times at various landmarks will be given out as well. Water safety assistance is also provided during the event by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, St. Johns County Fire Rescue and Florida Fish and Wildlife.

Parade coordinator Beacham Still said the best places to view the parade are the restaurants along the seven-mile boat route of Palm Valley's Intracoastal Waterway: Palm Valley Outdoors, Barbara Jean's On the Water, Palm Valley Fish Camp and Valley Smoke. Also, Mickler's Wharf and under the Palm Valley Bridge are other possible public viewing locations, he said.

Cash prizes will be given to boat win-

ners in different size categories and to the best decorated docks. Still said typically 20 to 30 boats participate in the parade, and this year is looking strong.

"We are always looking to expand the event in such a way that it allows for continuity and growth," said Still. "The parade's real mission is to support the community by creating scholarships for local high school students at Ponte Vedra and Nease."

He added that the parade is funded by generous participants, businesses, and neighbors, and it also benefits the Palm Valley Charities via the Palm Valley Community Association board.

"We like to give back to our local communities," said Still.

Capt. Bob Brindle, who has been driving boat No. 77 in the lighted boat parade for the past 22 years as the lead boat, said he is once again looking forward to the parade.

"It is great since in this parade the boat and docks can interact with each other. It is lots of fun and a great family and friends event," he said.

For more information, visit palmvalleyboatparade.com or look for parade updates on their Facebook group page www.facebook.com/groups/Palmvalleyboatparade. Still can be reached at bstill@syncworks.com.



Photos courtesy Beacham Still

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Look for us in The Shoppes at Beachwalk next to Publix

MS volunteers wrap presents as fundraiser



Photo courtesy Bruce Reid

For an eighth consecutive holiday season, multiple sclerosis volunteers will be offering gift wrapping services to Beaches-area residents, with donations used to provide programs and services to thousands living in North Florida and impacted by the disease.

The service, located between Five Below and Hallmark in the South Beach Regional shopping mall in Jacksonville

Beach, begins Saturday, Dec. 10 and Sunday, Dec. 11, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. The wrapping continues Friday, Dec. 16, and runs daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., through Christmas Eve. MS elves wrap presents from any store, including online purchases. A concierge service — pick up, wrapping, and delivery — is also available by texting (904) 982-6510 or e-mailing LBR0730@gmail.com.

Character Counts! Run/Walk registration open

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

The Character Counts! Steering Committee is calling all walkers, runners and fitness enthusiasts to participate in the Character Counts! 6K/3K Run/Walk on Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023, at 9 a.m. The run/walk will begin and end at Palencia Elementary School located at 355 Palencia Village Drive, St. Augustine.

Walkers and runners will enjoy a course running through the neighborhoods of Kensington and Las Calinas and can choose to participate in the 6K (3.73 miles) or 3K (1.86 miles) distance.

Registration fees for the 6K are \$30 before Jan. 1, 2023, \$35 between Jan. 1 and Feb. 2, or \$40 on race day. Registration fees for the 3K are \$25 before Jan. 1, 2023, \$30 between Jan. 1 and Feb. 2, or \$35 on race day.

Race proceeds support Character Counts! initiatives throughout the St. Johns County School District. The run/walk is open to all ages. Register before Jan. 6, 2023 to receive a race t-shirt.

Registration forms and more information are available online at www.racesmith.com.

HUGS St. Johns and United Way team up to help food-insecure students

By Brette Reiman, HUGS St. Johns
mail@floridanewline.com

HUGS St. Johns was recently honored to receive a financial grant for its 17 school-based emergency food pantries from the United Way of St. Johns County. HUGS school pantries provide child-friendly items for food-insecure students (identified by their school counselors) who arrive at school hungry or who need to bring food home to prepare for dinner. The pantries are restocked each month by HUGS volunteers, and the United Way donation allows them to purchase needed food items that are combined with non-perishable food donations from the community.

“Our school-based pantry program has grown since the program began in 2017, and significantly since 2019. The funds from United Way make it possible to continue to provide for the growing need here in St. Johns County,” said volunteer food program coordinator Holly Ross.

United Way of St Johns County President and CEO Mark LeMaire said, “The team at HUGS does an amazing

job of working to address a growing need with a mighty group of caring volunteers in our community. United Way is proud to support this important hunger program serving children in St. Johns County.”

“We are incredibly thankful for our new food pantry for our students that are experiencing food instability,” said Pedro Menendez High School counselor, Stephanie Toffaletti. “This service gives them peace of mind knowing that their school community cares about them and their well-being, while giving them one less thing to worry about at school.”

United Way of St. Johns County supports health, education and financial assistance through their support of nonprofits throughout St. Johns and Putnam Counties. HUGS St. Johns is an all-volunteer 501c3 that provides food, clothing, shoes and more to thousands of St. Johns County children-in-need identified by school counselors, social workers and agency partners. Email info@stjohnshugs.org to donate food, host a food drive, or volunteer to help restock school pantries.



Photo courtesy HUGS St. Johns

HUGS St. Johns received a financial grant for its 17 school-based emergency food pantries from the United Way of St. Johns County.

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BFF

Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Bruno!

Breed:
Tibetan Terrier Mix

Favorite Activity:
Walking around the neighborhood seeing all my "friends" (humans and other dogs)

Favorite Treat:
Cucumbers

Favorite Friend:
My mama

How Your BFF Got Their Name:
Was rescued as "Bro" and my family changed my name to Bruno

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



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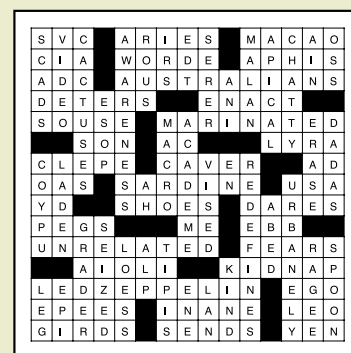
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MYSTERY PHOTO

Can you guess where this is?
Submit your answer to: mail@FloridaNewsLine.com.

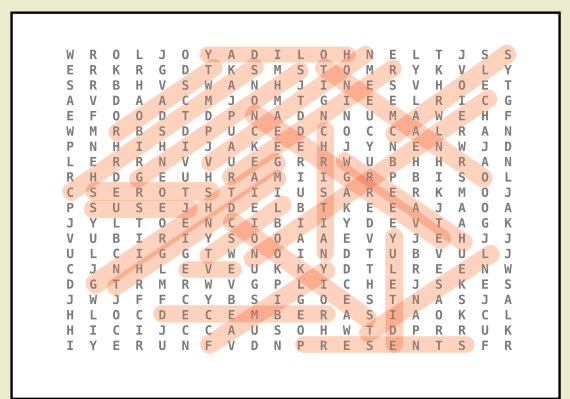
Last month's Mystery Photo was Nona Blue in Sawgrass Village.



Answers
Puzzles
PG 10



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December

Community Calendar

What's Happening in Ponte Vedra

Council on Aging offers interest groups at the COA Center at Flagler Health+ Village at Nocatee. Meetings are free and self-guided except for the Caregiver's Support Group. Advance registration for clubs and meetings is required; email pbrunell@stjohnscoa.com or call (904) 819-3234. Tuesday clubs include: Caregiver Support Group, 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.; and Widows and Widowers social group, second and fourth Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Wednesday groups include: Mah Jongg Meet-up, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.; and Genealogy Group, 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Palm Valley Market is held inside the Palm Valley Community Center at 148 Canal Road, every Tuesday from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, local honey, tea, seasonal treats, soap, jewelry, plants and more. Visit the Palm Valley Market Facebook page for more information.

2nd: The GTM Research Reserve will hold a new volunteer orientation on Dec. 2 from 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Learn about volunteer rules and responsibility as well next steps to volunteering. Complete the volunteer application online (www.gtmnerr.org) before attending. Contact Shannon Rininger at Shannon.Rininger@FloridaDEP.gov to assure that your application was received.

6th: Bingo will be held at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on Tuesdays from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. for four weeks beginning Tuesday, Dec. 6. Contact Suzanne Duvail at (904) 209-3659 for more information and to register.

6th: Essential Tremor – Meet, Greet & Educate will be held on Dec. 6 from 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Council of Aging Center at Flagler Health+ Village at Nocatee, 351 Town Plaza Ave., Suite 205. Featured speaker Lew Whiting of Coastal Clinical Research will discuss clinical trials. Register by email: pbrunell@stjohnscoa.com or by calling (904) 819-3234.

7th: Coastal Friends (formerly Newcomers Alumnae) will host its holiday luncheon on Dec. 7 at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. in Ponte Vedra Beach from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. To help ring in the New Year, many prizes and gift certificates will be handed out, as well as participating in a Secret Santa Gift Exchange. Additionally, an unwrapped toy can be brought for BEAM/St. Vincent DePaul Society Giving Tree to hand out to local children in the community. The cost of the luncheon is \$25 and reservations must be made in advance by contacting bartshar@comcast.net as soon as possible. Visit <https://coastalfriends.wildapricot.org> for more information.

8th: Sip-n-Shop hosted by Ponte Vedra Woman's Club will be held on Thursday, Dec. 8, from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at KD and the Sunshine Company at 426 3rd St. N. in Jacksonville Beach. Shoppers will receive 10 percent off their purchases and 10 percent of its sales will be donated to the Ponte Vedra Woman's Club for its 2022 – 23 charities. Visit www.pontevedrawomansclub.com for more information.

9th: Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will host its annual holiday party on Friday, Dec. 9 at 6:30 p.m. at Christ Episcopal Church's Westbury Hall, 400 San Juan Road. Catering will be by Bono's Pit Barbecue. Tickets are \$20.22 per person and available at <https://bit.ly/3MsthQP>. Email jkary@verizon.net for more information.

9th and 10th: Christmas Market will be held at Spray Waterpark in Nocatee on Dec. 9 and Dec. 10 from 6 p.m. – 10 p.m. This event is open to the public.

10th: Family seining hosted by GTM Research Reserve will be held from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. on Dec. 10 at Guana Dam, 505 Guana River Road. Attendees will pull a seine net through Guana Lake, collecting species of fish, crabs and other habitats, and learn about the animals and their roles. All necessary gear including waders and boots will be provided. The only charge is a \$3 parking fee, but registration is required; visit <https://tinyurl.com/26acj8r7> to sign up.

13th: The Newcomers of North St. Johns will host a holiday luncheon on Tuesday, Dec. 13 beginning at 10:30 a.m. at Maggiano's Little Italy in the St. Johns Town Center. The event features a delicious lunch and entertainment by Roger Dodd and Johnny Piantadosi, who will be singing traditional holiday favorites. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members. All reservations must be received by Dec. 5. Visit <https://newcomersof-northstjohns.org> for more information.

14th: Christmas Party and Cookie Decorating at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, will be held on Dec. 22 at 11 a.m. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.

14th: Ponte Vedra Woman's Club December General Meeting will be held on Dec. 14, from 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. There will be an opportunity to shop for the holidays at Rethreaded's Pop-up Store at the meeting. Registration is on the Ponte Vedra Woman's Club website under Events at www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php.

17th: Beach Exploration with GTM Research Reserve docents will be held on Dec. 17 from 9 a.m. – 11a.m. The hike begins at the GTM Research Reserve Visitor Center, 505 Guana River Road. This is a "Beaches 101" experience the entire family will enjoy. Visit gtmnerr.org for more information.

17th: The Nocatee Farmers Market will feature a Holiday Market and will be held on Saturday, Dec. 17 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. The Farmers Market is open to the public.

20th: Holiday Bingo with special prizes will be held on Dec. 20 from 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. at the Council of Aging Center at Flagler Health+ Village at Nocatee, 351 Town Plaza Ave., Suite 205. Register by email: pbrunell@stjohnscoa.com or by calling (904) 819-3234.

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Guest Column

General Election wrap up

By St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

The Nov. 8 General Election in St. Johns County was a success with 64.8 percent of registered voters turning out to vote.

Here's how the votes were cast:
31,673 Vote-by-mail Ballots

54,180 Early Voting Ballots

59,118 Election Day Ballots

A heartfelt thank you to the incredible elections team of approximately 500 staff and volunteers it took to conduct the election. This included front desk staff, warehouse staff, voting technicians, poll workers, vote-by-mail staff, IT and GIS staff, temporary staff, and our community partners who allowed their locations to be used as polling places. We are so grateful for your dedication and service to St. Johns County and our community.

Our polling places were busy places on election day. All locations were fully staffed with workers and plenty of ballots. Upon opening, many of our

locations had lines, but that is normal with so many voters stopping by to vote on their way to work. Our poll workers really appreciated voter patience throughout the day as they worked diligently to process votes and get them in and out as quickly as possible. A few of our locations even had lines at 7 p.m., but every voter in line was able to cast their ballot before heading home for the night and one location even stayed until 7:45 p.m. to ensure every vote was cast.

Eight of our precincts processed over 2,000 voters on election day. Some of our busiest election day locations included: 2,414 voters at Village Church, 4229 Pacetti Road, St. Augustine 2,387 voters at Celebration Lutheran Church, 810 Roberts Road, St. Johns 2,327 voters at St. Francis in the Field, 895 Palm Valley Road, Ponte Vedra Beach 2,191 voters at The Clubhouse at Beacon Lake, 850 Beacon Lake Pkwy, St. Augustine 2,158 voters at Switzerland Community Church, 2179 State Road 13 N., St. Johns 2,058 voters at Good News Church, 1357 Wildwood Drive, St. Augustine 2,028

voters at RiverHouse at RiverTown, 140 Landing St., St. Johns 2,010 voters at The Palencia Club, 600 Palencia Club Drive, St. Augustine Congratulations to those who won their elections and will begin their terms soon. There were many long hours put in on the campaign trail so I know there were a lot of weary people happy to see 7 p.m. arrive on Nov. 8; however, our work at the Elections Office never ends. We will take a short break for the holidays, but 2023 is our year of planning for the 2024 elections and implementing new list maintenance laws to improve the accuracy of our voter rolls.

There will be three elections in 2024 including the March Presidential Preference Primary, the August Primary and the November General Election. With such a busy year, we cannot start planning soon enough to ensure St. Johns County voters have safe, accessible, and successful elections. I sincerely hope you and your loved ones enjoy a peaceful holiday season. We will see you again in 2023 with more election news!

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story of the birth of
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St. Johns County Property Appraiser
Eddie Creamer

Q: How have storms Ian and Nicole impacted the work of your office?

A: Late in the season, we have had two reasonably severe storms. Many property owners have unfortunately had damage to their homes. After Ian, our office reached out to affected homeowners to see what we could do to help, assessment-wise and then did the same thing after Nicole.

Q: Will property owners see a decrease in their property taxes this year if their homes sustained damage?

A: There is no relief available for the payments due for this year, but depending on the severity of the damage and whether repairs are made by Jan. 1, 2023, there may be some relief for next year. I'd ask that homeowners who have received communication from our office please respond, and if you haven't heard from us and have sustained damage, please contact us so we can assess the property as early as possible next year. Of course, also don't hesitate to contact our office with any questions.

Q: Can you explain Gov. DeSantis' executive order as it pertains to tax payment due dates for homeowners impacted by the storms?

A: After Hurricane Ian, the governor issued an executive order delaying payment of property taxes for those properties either destroyed or uninhabitable. This only affects properties in counties named by FEMA, of which St. Johns County is one.

Note that this just delays payment by extending the deadline to pay to June 1, 2023; it does not eliminate or reduce the taxes due for 2022. The discounts for early payment are extended as well. While the governor has not said if this will also include properties destroyed or severely damaged by Nicole, our expectation is that the executive order will be amended to include Nicole. Be sure to stay tuned.

The governor has gone on to say he plans to call a special session of the legislature in December to address property taxes as a result of these late season storms.

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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St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Can you give some insight into the problem of drug overdoses in St. Johns County?

A: The overdose problem seems to be getting worse and we really can't put enough educational pieces out to the public. Most importantly, I want the community to know that if people are in need of help, my office is here for that.

I believe that drugs are truly the root of all evil. When you talk about crime, drugs are often involved. In fact, of the average of 400 arrests by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office each year, the majority involved some sort of illegal narcotics use.

Q: Do you have any statistics to share?

A: The number of deaths and near deaths are increasing in our county. So far in 2022, we have had 28 fatal overdoses, which is ahead of all of 2021 when we had 21. We have had 83 non-fatal overdoses; these are victims that we brought back using Narcan. This is ahead of 71 for all of last year and these numbers are just for SJSO responses and don't include Fire and Rescue.

In the past seven days, our narcotics unit seized half a kilo of cocaine, 760 grams of methamphetamine, and 100 grams of fentanyl. This doesn't include our patrol unit, which typically seizes even more.

When combined with St. Johns County Fire and Rescue, we responded to more than 600 overdose cases in 2022. Out of these 600, we had 400 deployments of Narcan. The average age of people that had Narcan administered was 51 and males are ahead slightly of females.

Q: What can the SJSO offer to help?

A: We are not trying to arrest our way out of the abuse of narcotics, but feel that it's sometimes the best way to get people into substance abuse programs. I would invite anyone who needs help in this regard to call our non-emergency number, (904) 824-8304, and a deputy can come and talk to you to help point you in the right direction for services.

I'd like to highlight some of the St. Johns County non-profits who offer services and with whom we partner: SMA Healthcare, which is located in our Health and Human Services Building; EPIC Behavioral Services; and also Flagler Health+, which now has a walk-in patient center on its main campus.

Q: Do you have any final thoughts?

A: It's important to note that narcotics abuse does not discriminate as it pertains to age, race, gender, or socioeconomic status. We as St. Johns County community members need to identify friends and/or family members who need help and assist them in getting it. Don't be ashamed about this addiction which is a sickness; seek help with wraparound services as soon as possible.

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.



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

Q: Your office and St. Johns County recently received a major recognition from a national organization for excellence in financial accountability. What is a "Triple Crown?"

A: The Triple Crown is among the highest honors in government finance and demonstrates St. Johns County's commitment and dedication to achieving the gold standard in transparency, financial responsibility and public outreach. This is the first time we have achieved this award and we are among just 317 governmental entities nationwide who received the Triple Crown for Fiscal Year 2020 from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. I'm really proud of our team and the county — this was a whole-of-government effort and exemplifies our pledge to protect the public trust in our stewardship of tax dollars.

Q: Has your office initiated any new projects that would benefit our readers?

A: We've launched our own YouTube channel, youtube.com/stjohnscountyclerk, and some of our first videos chronicle the stories of St. Johns County veterans who've recorded their separation documents, or DD-214s, with our office. Retired USMC Col. Ken Russom and former Marine Captains Thomas Upchurch and Ben Reep shared their stories with us, and we're honored to share their recorded interviews with viewers. Our office

has recorded military discharge papers for more than 100 years, and these important records help tell the stories of St. Johns County heroes over the decades. We showcase more than a dozen soldiers and sailors in our 2022 Virtual Veterans Exhibit, which also can be found on our YouTube channel. Another video on our channel is from our St. Johns County-Israel Friendship Day, which featured timely remarks from Board of County Commission Chairman Henry Dean, Sheriff Robert Hardwick and Rabbi Mendel Sharfshtein.

Q: Can you tell us more about St. Johns-County-Israel Friendship Day?

A: It started last year when we changed our investment policy to remove companies on Florida's List of Scrutinized Companies that boycott Israel. We were the first local government in Florida to address discriminatory anti-Israel practices by updating our investment portfolio. This year, our focus is on the fight against antisemitism. Here in St. Johns County, we do not support discriminatory practices counter to our American values and stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Israel and our Jewish friends and neighbors in promoting freedom, human rights and security.

Q: How do people get in touch with you?

A: Our office number is (904) 819-3600 or call my cell phone at (904) 599-8688 if I may ever be of service.



Nease NJROTC: Continued excellence

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

After being recognized as the top program in the nation last year, beating out more than 600 units, Nease's NJROTC program had high expectations coming into this year. Senior Naval Science Instructor Captain Scott LaRochelle retired and 63 seniors graduated, but the cadets were up for the challenge that comes with change. Nease NJROTC started this year off with a sweeping victory at its first major drill competition of the 2022 – 23 school year at the annual South

Effingham High School Drill Meet in Guyton, Georgia on Nov. 5.

In addition to claiming the overall trophy, Nease earned first place trophies in nine out of 12 events for Personnel Inspection, Academics, Unarmed Exhibition Drill, Armed Basic Drill, Armed Exhibition Drill, Athletics Overall, Pushups, Curl Ups and the 16 x 100 as well as second place in Drill Overall and Unarmed Basic Drill. A highlight was Cadet NS3 (junior) Caden Byas competing in the Curl Up event and

Nease NJROTC cont. on pg. 8

Upcoming Cruise Center World Travel 2023 Events

If you live in Northeast Florida, please consider joining us for one of these informative travel presentations! Special booking incentives will be given to those that attend!

RSVP 904-260-3401 x 250

1/23/2023: "Explore Rail Journeys with Rocky Mountaineer and Alaska with Princess Cruises" at 6:30pm at the Mandarin Garden Club. Join us for an informative and entertaining presentation as we review exciting Alaska Cruise and Cruise tour itinerary options, as well as amazing Rail trips through the Canadian Rockies and Western US. Space is limited and fills quickly. Please call to RSVP by 1/20/23 .

2/6/2023: "Discover Ireland, Scotland, Britain and Iceland featuring guided and independent land vacations with CIE Tours at 7pm at the Mandarin Garden Club. We hope you can join us and learn about the variety of travel options with CIE Tours! Please RSVP by 2/3/2023 space is limited.

2/20/2023: "River Cruising with AmaWaterways" at 7pm at the Mandarin Garden Club. Our AmaWaterways rep will share with you the many great itineraries and benefits of sailing with Ama in Europe, Egypt, Africa and Vietnam/Cambodia. RSVP by 2/17/22 space is limited

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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Business Briefs

SCORE Jacksonville to host zoom workshops

SCORE is a national service organization that supports small businesses nationwide. SCORE has a network of more than 11,000 volunteers operating in more than 340 local chapters around the country. The organization is supported by the US Small Business Administration (SBA).

In December, SCORE Jacksonville will host two free Zoom workshops for business owners. The first, "Use YouTube to Grow your Business in the New Year," will be held on Dec. 9 from 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. Attendees will learn how to tap into the power of YouTube. Get best practices for creating a YouTube Channel and compelling video content that promotes your products and services and drives engagement with your brand. Led by Pamela Starr, a professional trainer for Grow with Google, this is a presentation for people who already have a YouTube channel for their business as well as people who are curious about creating one. Visit <https://jacksonville.score.org/event/use-youtube->

grow-your-business-new-year-0 to register or contact Melody Petraglia at melody.petraglia@scorevolunteer.org or (904) 443-1911 for more information.

The second workshop is "Build Your Brand," to be held on Dec. 15 from 7 p.m. – 8 p.m. A strategic branding plan is both your best protection to prevent failure and your most effective asset to create success. Presenter David Harrison currently teaches MBA students full-time, in all business subjects as well as serving as a SCORE mentor. Visit <https://jacksonville.score.org/event/build-your-brand-2> for more information.

New aesthetic center announces new hires

Modern Aesthetic Centers, which will hold its grand opening on Dec. 2, is located at 2050 Saint Johns Parkway, Suite 106.

Jacksonville native Paul Hassan is the chief executive officer. He graduated from the University of North Florida, majoring in International Business. After college, he became a principal

in a local occupational health practice that offered comprehensive healthcare solutions for employers that were cost effective and efficient. Interested in enhancing the wellbeing of Northeast Florida's residents, Hassan recently started Modern Aesthetic Centers, offering a full suite of aesthetic procedures and skin care products including body contouring, laser treatments, injectables and skin rejuvenation.

Lisa Farides is co-founder and chief operating officer for Modern Aesthetic Centers. Her dedication to quality care goes beyond the office. Farides previously served on the board of the Medical Group Management Association and is currently a member of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce. What she loves most about serving the community through Modern Aesthetic Centers is the direct impact their work has on the individuals who visit.

Tanya Temple is the center's nurse practitioner. She has vast experience including emergency medicine, vascular specialty, dermatology, and

aesthetics. She enjoys the challenges, rewards and artistry of aesthetics and looks forward to continuing to build her practice and relationships with her patients.

Aesthetician Bobbie Stewart spent 15 years as a registered nurse before getting her license as a massage therapist. She then moved on to the aesthetic field and has spent the last 20 years as a licensed aesthetician. Her approach to clients' goals and challenges starts with building a trusting relationship through professionalism, kindness, and respect.

Kristen Parker serves as client coordinator. She graduated from UNF with a degree in health science and a focus in nutrition. She enjoys talking about the connection between being healthy and looking good on the outside.

Marketing Coordinator Parth Patel is currently an MBA student at the University of North Florida majoring in Marketing.

Visit <https://macflorida.com/> for more information.

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Briefs

Phone calls from Santa coming soon

The St. Johns County Parks and Recreation Department and the North Pole are holding their annual Santa calls. Parents with children aged eight years and younger, residing in St. Johns County, can sign up to receive a phone call from Santa Clause this holiday season. Calls may be scheduled from 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 6, Wednesday, Dec. 7, or Thursday, Dec. 8.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/bdz2y9d5> to register.

Public Library System’s Food for Fines program returns

The popular Food for Fines program returns this year to St. Johns County libraries and bookmobiles. An opportunity to eliminate most library fines, Food for Fines will run through Monday, Dec. 19. The food items collected will be used to stock the St. Johns County Health and Human Services (HHS) Food Pantry, providing food for St. Johns County families in need.

A donation of one non-perishable, unexpired food item will remove \$1 of fines from a patron’s library record. This fine-reduction program applies only to overdue fines and patrons may bring

in as many items as needed to reduce overdue fines. Fees related to damaged or lost items are not included in the Food for Fines program. Any library user is welcome to make donations and food may be dropped off at any of the St. Johns County library branches or bookmobiles.

Last year, St. Johns County residents provided more than 3,500 non-perishable items through the “Food for Fines” program. Visit www.sjcpls.org for more information about this program and other services of the St. Johns County Public Library System.

Coastal Friends host special holiday luncheon

Christmas and all the trappings will come early this year as Coastal Friends (formerly known as Newcomers Alumnae) will hold its monthly Holiday Luncheon on Wednesday, Dec. 7 from 11a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy.

Open to the community, members and guests of Coastal Friends will enjoy live holiday music while feasting on sun-burst salad with mixed greens, chicken cordon bleu with mashed potatoes and seasonal vegetables, and the chef’s special dessert. To help ring in the New Year, many prizes and gift certificates will be handed out, as well as participating in a Secret Santa Gift Exchange. Additionally, an unwrapped toy can be brought for BEAM/St. Vincent DePaul Society Giving Tree to hand out to local children in the community. The cost to attend this luncheon is \$25. Contact the luncheon chairman at bartshar@comcast.net as soon as possible to sign up.

Visit coastalfriends.wildapricot.org or contact brookemeister@msn.com for more information.

Newcomers of North St. Johns to host holiday luncheon

Newcomers of North Saint Johns will hold its December luncheon on Tuesday, Dec. 13, beginning at 11 a.m. at Maggiano’s Little Italy in the St. Johns Town Center. The event features a delicious lunch and entertainment by Roger Dodd and Johnny Piantadosi, who will be singing traditional holiday favorites. As always, raffles for gift baskets and a fun 50/50 drawing will be held at the luncheon.

Doors will open at 10:30 a.m.; the cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests and

non-members. All reservations must be received by Dec. 5, 2022. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information about the luncheon and membership.

The Newcomers of North St. Johns offers a variety of activities for St. Johns County residents to get acquainted and have fun, including smaller lunch groups, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, holiday parties, day trips and cultural events.

St. Johns Housing Partnership director receives national award

St. Johns Housing Partnership Executive Director Bill Lazar has received the Jean Diggs Weatherization Champion Award from the National Association for State Community Services Program. This award is presented at the association’s Annual Conference to individuals who are true champions for the cause of weatherization. The St. Johns Housing Partnership has been a weatherization provider in Northeast Florida since 1998.

“We always want to be at the front end of building industry trends. Our weatherization training has always been a key part to our success. Working in hot humid climates has more challenges with mold mildew and indoor air quality,” said Lazar.

The Department of Energy’s Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program administered by St. Johns Housing Partnership works to increase the energy efficiency of homes owned or occupied by low-income persons by reducing their total residential energy expenditures and improving their health and safety.

The St. Johns Housing Partnership not only rehabs homes, but is building new green certified homes and infill rental property for low-income households. Energy and water conservation along with accessibility are the baseline of St. Johns Housing Partnership green building certifications.

Lazar has built his career around improving substandard housing and providing clean, safe, affordable housing. He attributes a major part of that to the training he has shared over the years from weatherization.

For more information on the St. Johns Housing Partnership Weatherization Program contact the St. Johns Housing Partnership at info@sjhp.org or (904) 824-0902.

Diann Taylor completed the hardest course, finishing in second place which was a personal best for her on that level course.

Nease also welcomed their newest member of the team with CWO3 Michael Donato joining as the new Senior Naval Science Instructor in October.

If you are interested in seeing what Nease’s NJROTC program is all about, Nease is hosting a sanctioned drill meet Saturday, Dec. 17 at Nease High School, which is open to the general public.

“Considering these difficult and challenging times, we find great benefit from living here. This was a terrific decision and we’re glad we did it!”



John, Resident at Westminster St. Augustine

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Nease NJROTC cont. from pg. 6

completing 437 curl ups — earning him the medal for first place in that event.

Nease placed second and third out of 26 teams in South Effingham’s Air Rifle Meet on Oct. 22, qualifying for Regionals in Shoulder to Shoulder. Cadets Hailey Pitches, Danielle Reynolds and Kamrayn Schultz all shot their personal best and team high scores. Nease’s Orienteering Team also qualified for Regionals in October by placing sixth and seventh in Brunswick, Georgia’s hosted sanctioned meet. Cadet NS3

Life

travel • pantry raiders • gardening
fishing • entertainment • puzzles

Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

Hallie Murta

Hallie Murta grew up backpacking in national parks with her father, fully embracing the outdoors and a very active lifestyle with her entire family. When she was 14 years old, she watched a video on how to pack a bag lighter and more efficiently by a woman who happened to be on the Pacific Crest Trail. That location caught Murta's attention, and she immediately researched the trail. The following year she traveled to Crater Lake National Park in Oregon with her family and found where the Pacific Crest Trail intersected the park. She took a picture by the Pacific Crest Trail sign and made a mental note that she wanted to return one day to hike the trail. Earlier this year, Murta, 22, fulfilled the promise she made to her 14-year-old self, hiking 2,450 miles (she was not able to hike the full 2,650 miles because some areas of Pacific Crest Trail were closed due to wildfires) over five months from May 5 to Sept. 29.

She began at the Mexican border and finished at the Canadian border, experiencing many landscapes and a variety of weather conditions along the way through California, Oregon, and Washington. She hiked 20 to 30 miles per day. "I went through a heat wave in Southern California to waking up to a frozen tent and being



Photo courtesy Hallie Murta
Hallie Murta

caught in snowstorms in the high Sierra Nevada mountains," said Murta, who lost 35 pounds during the hike. The Nease and University of Florida graduate began the hiking adventure with a friend who ended up leaving, so Murta completed the hike by herself. "Thousands of people attempt the Pacific Crest Trail. We always say that you are hiking alone together. Everyone is on an individual journey, but not completely alone," she said.

Q: What did you learn about yourself from this experience?

A: It is okay to be alone. I am a very extroverted person, and I didn't like to be alone. I was forced to camp alone, and I ended up enjoying it.

Also, slow progress is still progress. You just have to keep going. I learned to keep things in perspective. There's always someone faster than you and always someone slower than you. Don't try and beat the trail or it will beat you. You need to become friends with the trail and take the challenges as they come.

Q: Describe some of what you brought with you in your backpack.

A: My backpack had a base weight of 12 pounds, excluding food and water. I packed a light tent, a blowup sleeping pad, a blow-up pillow, a sleeping quilt, a camping stove, one pair of clothes, sleep clothes, a water

filter, a satellite device, and a puffy jacket.

Q: What were the highlights of your trip?

A: Reaching the Bridge of Gods because that was one of the places that I visited when I was 14. Once I made it here, it was very emotional. I felt like I had made my 14-year-old self proud, and it made all the hardships worth it. For me, it is the little things: the smell of a mountain stream, the view of a sunset from an exposed ridge and a sky so full of stars so immense that it is hard to close your eyes at night. It is the oasis of shade after a long hot day in the desert or the sun finally peeking out from the clouds after a cold wet day in Washington.

Q: What advice would you give someone who is thinking about hiking the Pacific Crest Trail?

A: You can't go into the hike thinking that it is fun all the time. At some point, you are going to be a little bit miserable. There should be points where you feel happy and where you feel joy. I told myself that if I was miserable for a whole week, then I would go home. That never happened. It is also important to think of the hike as a bunch of little trips.

Q: What is your next adventure?

A: I will leave in January to teach English in Spain. My degree is in linguistics and teaching English as a Second Language. It is a six-month contract. I have always wanted to move abroad.

Get to Know ...

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

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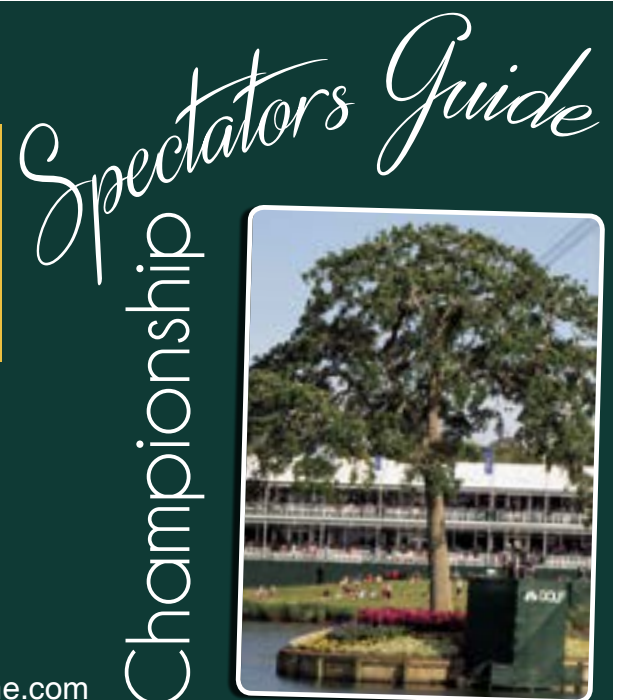
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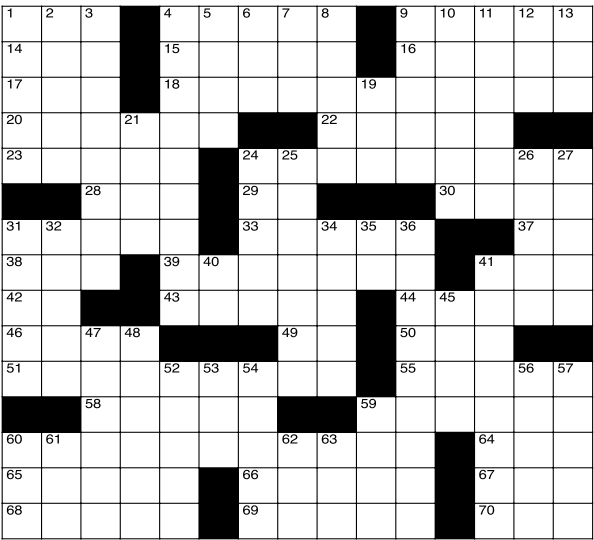
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Product or __ (abbr.)
- 4. Zodiac sign
- 9. S. China seaport
- 14. Former OSS
- 15. Early English printer
- 16. Aphid genus
- 17. General’s assistant (abbr.)
- 18. Aussies
- 20. Dissuades
- 22. Make law
- 23. Drench
- 24. Soak in a liquid
- 28. Male child
- 29. It cools your home
- 30. Small constellation
- 31. To call (archaic)
- 33. Explores beneath the Earth
- 37. Commercial
- 38. W. hemisphere organization
- 39. You can find it in a can
- 41. “Land of the free”
- 42 36 inches
- 43. Footwear
- 44. Challenges
- 46. They hold things together
- 49. Of I
- 50. Partner to flow
- 51. Not connected by kinship
- 55. Worries
- 58. Garlic mayonnaise
- 59. A way to take by force
- 60. Legendary English rockers
- 64. Your consciousness of your own identity
- 65. Fencing swords
- 66. Silly
- 67. Actor DiCaprio
- 68. Encircles with a belt
- 69. Mails a message
- 70. Longing

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Horse mackerels
- 2. It can be viral
- 3. Prickly plants
- 4. Consciousness
- 5. Type of sarcoma
- 6. Tax collector
- 7. Sun up in New York
- 8. One who scorches
- 9. Influential psychotherapist
- 10. Situated at an apex
- 11. Communicative
- 12. Forearm nerve
- 13. Former CIA
- 19. Folk singer DiFranco
- 21. Employee stock ownership plan
- 24. Large-scale
- 25. School environment
- 26. Remove
- 27. Male parents
- 31. Large rodent
- 32. Weighed down
- 34. Held tightly
- 35. __ route: going there
- 36. Explains again
- 40. Exclamation of surprise
- 41. Courteously
- 45. Lying down
- 47. Judge
- 48. Forcefully took
- 52. Loosely compacted sediment
- 53. High mountain
- 54. Portable conical tents
- 56. Cereal grass
- 57. Dining utensil
- 59. Thoughtful
- 60. Helps you walk
- 61. Indicates near
- 62. Midway between northeast and east
- 63. Local area network

CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- CAROLS
- CELEBRATION
- CHRISTIAN
- CHRISTMAS
- COOKIES
- DECEMBER
- EVE
- EVERGREEN
- FAMILY
- GATHERING
- HOLIDAY
- JESUS
- LIST
- MIDNIGHT
- ORNAMENT
- PRESENTS
- REINDEER
- ROAST
- SHOPPING
- STORES
- TINSEL
- VACATION
- WREATH
- YULETIDE



Solve the code to discover words related to Christmas.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 17 = A)

A. 26 13 18 5 1 17 23
Clue: Special day

B. 19 17 22 25 17
Clue: Bearded gift-giver

C. 15 8 18 8 3 7 17 25 8
Clue: Engage in fanfare

D. 21 13 18 18 23
Clue: Happy and cheerful

Renovation cont. from pg. 1

renovation plans were recently revealed to the community at an unveiling ceremony.

Brown said his family recognized that while the YMCA is still doing great work for the community, there is a need for revitalization in an ever-changing world.

“We want the Y to stay relevant and to become more relevant for the community. That’s what this revitalization is all about. There are so many exciting things coming,” he said.

The renovations are a part of a capital campaign project with a total cost of \$5.3 million. Charlie Chacos, district executive director, said that the Y is halfway to its goal and is looking to the community for support. The renovations will be completed in three stages with each taking about three months to finish, and the speed of construction will be dependent on fundraising efforts, he said. The Brown Family YMCA, located at 170 Landrum Lane, will not close during this time.

Renovation plans include an 8,600 square foot pre-engineered metal roof “airnasium” that will house a basketball court, rock climbing wall and a 1,000 square foot turf training area plus pickleball courts with an attached gazebo, a 600 square foot new child playground area, a new personal training room and new family locker room.

“Every affinity group, pickleball players, kids, seniors, weightlifters, group exercise, swimmers etc., will have their

area updated. So, however they use the Y experience, they will see a positive change,” said Chacos.

Naming opportunities include the “airnasium,” locker rooms, aquatics center, teen center, wellness floor, basketball gym, sports recovery, KidZone, pool, cycle studio, Studio A and Studio C – Yoga.

Brown asked for the community’s help with capital fundraising.

“We want to take this to the next level. We need everyone’s help to make that happen,” he said. Chacos said he is so grateful for the shared vision with the Brown family.

“None of this would be possible without the Brown family,” he said. “Their support is incredible and truly transformational for so many people in our community.”

Brown credited his adult children, Tyler and Katie, with contributing their time and effort to the project. “They are doing all the work for the Brown family,” said David Brown.

Tyler Brown said he has many fond memories of frequenting the Y for fitness, exercise, and, just as importantly, as an after school social spot.

“At the time I first started going to the Y, I was beginning to focus on my competitive golf and needed a good gym for strength and cardio training,” said Tyler Brown. “It quickly evolved into more than simply a fitness resource, but also a social spot where I would play basketball on a rainy day or

just meet up with friends after school.”

Tyler Brown said the Y helped him learn the value of a good work ethic and self-discipline.

“At the Y, I was able to set fitness goals, dedicate time and energy to those goals, and then see the results as I grew stronger and performed better in golf competitions. It is fun to look back and know that many of us who trained at the Y for our sports went on to play collegiately and professionally, plus we maintain those friendships over 20 years later.”

Katie Brown said the mission for the Brown Family Foundation is to help people achieve their potential by supporting their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs and assisting organizations that do that effectively. A large portion of the support is oriented toward children and families, she said.

“Given this, there is a natural alignment with the YMCA and the vision we share with them for the Brown Family YMCA to maximize its impact on the community by having the best facilities, programs and resources,” said

Katie Brown.

Brown Family YMCA board member and capital co-chair Steve Austin said the YMCA has always been an important part of his life, beginning with swim lessons at the age of three and later playing basketball. He noted that the Y serves more than 900 children with its programming offerings, and 100 children in summer camps. Most importantly, he said, no one is ever turned away due to financial hardships.

“This is much more than a gym. It offers the community so much,” said Austin.

[Author’s note: For more information about contributing to the capital campaign, contact Chacos at cchacos@fcmca.org.]

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Nutrition Check

Easy ways to reduce sodium intake over the Holiday Season

By Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RD and Rayonna Hills BS
mail@floridanewslines.com

It's the most wonderful time of the year for many as people celebrate the various holidays and observances; moreover, it is a great time for us to pay attention to the meals and snacks we consume during the season. With many holidays and observances, they celebrate or include food and beverages at their core. Rarely do we think about how much sodium is in those holiday meals and treats. Some popular American holiday season foods include meats (ham, turkey, beef, lamb), casseroles (green bean, potato, corn, wild rice), pie (sweet potato, rhubarb, pumpkin, berry) and canned entrees — just to name a few. Many of which have high levels of sodium.

Sodium is a mineral that is used for food flavoring, a stabilizer, and a food preservative. The majority of sodium in our diets comes from packaged and restaurant foods. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day, with an ideal limit for 1,500 mg for adults. Did you know the average American consumes more than 3,400 mg of sodium each day? (American Heart Association)

Tips to reduce sodium:

- Buy fresh or frozen fruits and

vegetables

- Choose canned vegetables without added salt or sauce. You can also rinse canned vegetables prior to adding them in a recipe.
- Select foods that are labeled as “low sodium, no salt, or reduced sodium”
- Replace using salt for seasoning with ingredients like garlic, spices, salt-free seasonings, or citrus juices
- Read the nutrition label facts to compare the sodium in food products. When buying a prepared meal, look for those that have less than 600 mg of sodium per meal, not just per serving (CDC).
- Purchase fresh meat, fish, poultry, and pork instead of salted, smoked, cured, or other processed meats.
- Cook at home instead of eating at fast food establishments or restaurants

You can still enjoy your tasty meals such as a honey-baked ham or your favorite casserole, but there are ways to prepare and serve these foods using less sodium. Enjoy this holiday season spending time with family, friends, and consuming less sodium.

The Pantry Raiders

Give holiday meals a flavorful twist

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The holiday season is rife with tradition. Family and friends often gather together around the dining room table to share conversation, memories and good food, making the holidays a special time of year. Home chefs looking to expand their culinary horizons can include this recipe for “Slow Cooker Spiced-Cranberry Pork,” courtesy of The Ohio Pork Council, on their holiday menus. Pork is a versatile protein that pairs well with the tart, holiday-centric flavor of cranberries.

sary. Place roast in 4- to 6-quart slow cooker. Use wire whisk to stir together cranberry sauce and sugar in medium bowl.

Stir in juice, mustard, cloves and pepper until well combined. Pour cranberry mixture over roast in slow cooker.

Cover slow cooker and cook on low for six to eight hours or until pork roast is tender. Season roast to taste with salt; serve juices with roast.

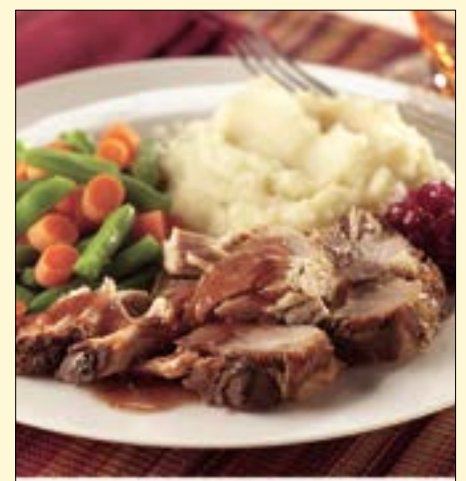


Photo courtesy MetroCreative

Slow Cooker Spiced-Cranberry Pork

Slow Cooker Spiced-Cranberry Pork

Serves 8

3 ½ to 4 lb. pork shoulder
1 6-oz can jellied cranberry sauce
⅔ cup sugar
¾ cup cranberry juice
2 tbsp. Dijon-style mustard
1 ½ tsp. ground cloves
1 tsp. ground black pepper

Salt to taste

Trim fat from pork roast, if neces-



Choose your Nutcracker

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.com

“The Nutcracker” is believed by many to be a time-honored holiday tradition. In Northeast Florida, the tradition continues with five productions of the ballet this December.

Since each performance is unique, following is a guide highlighting the dates, times and locations of each to help you choose “your” Nutcracker.

Community Nutcracker

Dec. 9 at 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 10 at 1 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Florida Theatre
www.jaxnutcracker.org

Artistic Directors Dulce Anaya, Debra Rankin and Mark Spivak continue this holiday tradition which began in 1992. Community Nutcracker is the only nonprofit, volunteer-run organization that offers a portion of its proceeds to local charitable agencies with each performance — and has donated more than \$750,000 in the past 31 years. The performing company is made up of local talent with more than 200 dancers ranging in age from nine to adult from Northeast

Florida auditioning and performing in the production. In an effort to promote the arts in schools, Community Nutcracker also offers matinee performances for school groups as well as a Community Service Night (invitation only).

Christ Church Nutcracker Ballet

Dec. 10 at 6 p.m.
Lazzara Theater, UNF Fine Arts Department
www.missfeliciasdance.com

This year marks the 27th performance of the Christ Church Nutcracker Ballet, directed by Felicia Rhoden of the Christ Church Dance Ministry as well as owner of Miss Felicia’s Dance. Nearly 300 performers, aged two to 90 years old, will take the stage.

Jacksonville Symphony's First Coast Nutcracker

Dec. 16 at 8 p.m.
Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Dec. 18 at 2 p.m.
Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts
www.jaxsymphony.org/first-coast-nutcracker/

Jacksonville Symphony’s First Coast Nutcracker has been a tradition in North Florida — and this year celebrates its 50th anniversary. Under the direction of choreographer and artistic director Rhonda Stampalia, the First Coast Nutcracker showcases internationally renowned principal dancers, the area’s finest young dancers, and Tchaikovsky’s best-loved melodies performed

by the Jacksonville Symphony. Educational performances are offered on Dec. 16 – 17 in an effort to introduce school children to the symphony, the ballet and how to be a good audience member.

The Nutcracker 2022 by the Florida Ballet

Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Nutcracker cont. on pg. 14



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Nease boys and Ponte Vedra girls are state swimming champs!



Photos courtesy Susan Rieger
The Nease High School boys' swim team won a 3A state championship on Nov. 4 and the Ponte Vedra High School girls' swim team also took their second 3A state win at the same time. The Florida High School Athletic Association organizes more than 3,500 championship series games through which 144 teams, and 294 individual schools are awarded state

champions in their particular sport. Student athletes each year experience team bonding, through a series of home, away games or meets before moving on to Districts, Regionals and State competition. Through participation in these athletic programs, students have opportunities to receive lessons in good sportsmanship, leadership and achieving personal goals.



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Families gather for fall fun at Ocean Palms

By Lisa Farese
mail@floridanewsline.com

Everything fell into place on Oct. 13 for Ocean Palms Elementary School's Fall Family Night. With about 1,000 attendees, the school raised \$2,600 to help support replacement pieces for the playground and technology for the school.

Families enjoyed inflatables, face painting, balloon artists, a candy walk, carnival games, a DJ, and even shopped at the Scholastic Book Fair. The event's main draw was the slime party, where students had the opportunity to slime teachers and administration by the cup or bucketful — a fan favorite! Approximately 600 slime cups or buckets were sold that night.

Students and their families also had a chance to come together as a school community to laugh, play, and enjoy a pizza dinner among friends. Sponsors included Lazzara Orthodontics, event sponsor; Trasca & Co Eatery, food sponsor; and Ponte Vedra Pediatric Dentistry & Orthodontics, book fair sponsor.



Photos courtesy Ocean Palms Elementary School
What is a fall festival without face paint? Students enjoyed face painting with friends at Ocean Palms on Oct. 13



Photos courtesy Ocean Palms Elementary School
Ocean Palms's Scholastic Book Fair was open the night of the event where families could shop and pick up a new book.

Nutcracker cont. on pg. 12
Dec. 18 at 2 p.m.
Lazzara Theater, UNF Fine Arts Center
floridaballet.org

The Florida Ballet's Nutcracker features swirling snowflakes, waltzing flowers, and dancing bonbons. From the captivating dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy to the iconic snow scene, this enchanting classical ballet is set to the beloved music of Tchaikovsky and features more than 100 local dancers.

St. Augustine Ballet Nutcracker
Dec. 17 at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Dec. 18 at 2 p.m.
Lewis Auditorium at Flagler College
www.saintaugustineballet.com

This year's production of "The Nutcracker" marks the 14th annual performance by the St. Augustine Ballet and features sparkling snowflakes, dancing dolls and mischievous mice. The St. Augustine Ballet, under the artistic direction of Luis Abella, is a non-profit organization with a mission to involve community members of all ages in

meaningful dance experiences.
Nutcracker! Magical Christmas Ballet
Dec. 21 at 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Florida Theatre
www.nutcracker.com/your-city/get-tickets/jacksonville

It is a year of rebirth after a two-year touring hiatus for Nutcracker! Magical Christmas Ballet, a national touring production that features an international cast and prop designers. The production features larger-than-life puppets, breath-taking acrobatics and dazzling costumes. The globe-spanning team includes puppeteers from the Czech Republic and South Africa, Chuvash, and St. Petersburg all the way home to New York. Dancing alongside the full international professional cast, featuring stars of Ukraine ballet, are local Jacksonville children from Alius Dance School.

All of these performances are designed to enchant, enthrall, and bring families and community members together for the holiday season. Which one is right for you?



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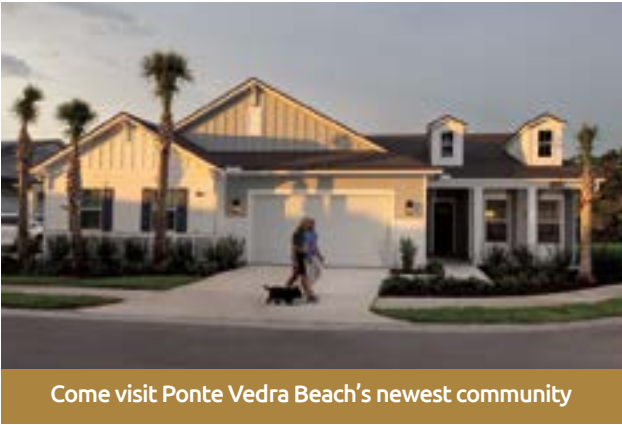
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