

Ponte Vedra NewsLine

JANUARY 2023 Volume 10 Issue 1

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

A Florida NewsLine Publication



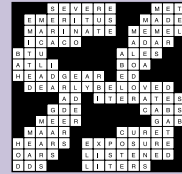
page 3
BFF Best Furry Friend



page 6
Q&A with
Kelly Barrera



page 9
Get To Know ...
Elizabeth Joshi



page 10
Puzzles

St. Johns Reads 2023 book announced

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The St. Johns County Public Library System has announced its St. Johns Reads 2023 title — “Buttermilk Graffiti,” by author and chef Edward Lee, for this year’s community reads event.

In addition to a variety of book discussions and virtual and in-person programming throughout the month of January 2023, Chef Lee will visit St. Johns County for a special author talk at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 14, in the Character Counts Conference Center at First Coast Technical College, Building C, located at 2980 Collins Ave. in St. Augustine.

According to the book’s publisher, “American food is the story of mash-ups. Immigrants arrive, cultures collide, and out of the push-pull come exciting new dishes and flavors. But for Edward Lee, who, like Anthony Bourdain or Gabrielle Hamilton, is as much a writer as he is a chef, that first surprising bite is just the beginning. What about the people behind the food? What about the traditions, the innovations, the memories?”

A natural-born storyteller, Lee decided to hit the road and spent two years uncovering fascinating narratives from every corner of the

St. Johns Reads cont. on pg. 10

Meet County Commissioner Krista Joseph

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

Newly elected County Commissioner, District 4 Krista Joseph credits her array of life experiences with making her a good fit for her new position — she’s been a nationally-ranked runner on scholarship at the University of Arizona and had careers in marketing, television, and real estate. She has volunteered for veterans’ causes as well as Daughters of the American Revolution.

“I’m learning as fast as I can,” she said. “So far it’s been fun and throughout the campaign and my first few weeks as a commissioner, I’ve met some of the most interesting people.”

Meeting people, and now representing the citizens of St. Johns County, is something that energizes Joseph.

“I realize with my one vote on the commission that I represent so many people’s lives,” Joseph said. “As a woman and part of that group that has only had the right to vote since 1920

— and now being in legislature, is awe inspiring to me and I’m honored to have the privilege to do this.”

Joseph has been married to her husband Ron, a retired orthopedic hand surgeon, for 32 years. Their blended family of five children includes a youngest daughter who is homeschooled and swims for Ponte Vedra High School, and two Navy Seals, one of whom, Charlie, died for his country in Iraq in 2016. His sacrifice made Joseph a Gold Star Mom, which she calls “humbling,” and she



Photo courtesy Krista Joseph

New County Commissioner Krista Joseph with her husband, Ron Joseph.

continues to honor her son with a series of children’s books as well as a
New Commissioner cont. on pg. 10

Something Berry Good at the Farmers Market

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewslines.com

Ryan Smith has become a familiar face at the Palm Valley Market every Tuesday, representing Berry Good Farms and sharing his love of farming with the community.

“I love to grow fruits and veggies. I also love to sell it,” said Smith, crediting his father with teaching him sales techniques.

Smith is a marketing assistant and a North Florida School of Special Education (NFSSE) graduate. Berry Good Farms is run from the NFSSE’s campus, using hydroponics, aquaponics and raised beds. Every week, Smith, along with Berry Good Farms manager Jordan Williams,



Photo courtesy Tiffany Merlo Phelps

Berry Good Farms’ Jordan Williams and Ryan Smith.

brings lettuce, pea sprouts, herbs, radishes, flowers and other organic fruits and vegetables to sell at the market.

The goal of Berry Good Farms, under the umbrella of NFSSE, is to educate and employ individuals with intellectual

Berry Good cont. on pg. 13

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Briefs

Newcomers of North St. Johns announces January Luncheon

The Newcomers of North St. Johns will celebrate January with line dancing at their monthly luncheon on Tuesday, Jan. 17, beginning at 11a.m. at the St. Johns Golf & Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. The event features lunch and special line dancing instruction by expert dance instructors Phyllis and Jerry Casper. With more than 30 years' experience in dancing and teaching, the Caspers have taught lessons all down the East Coast, from New Jersey to Florida. In addition to line dance instruction, they are experts in Couple's Dance (Waltz, Cha Cha, East Coast Swing, Rumba and Shag) and Pattern Partner Dance as well as have conducted numerous workshops for dancing and dance marathons.

Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. As always, raffles for gift baskets and a fun 50/50 drawing will be part of the luncheon. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$32 for members and \$37 for guests. All reservations must be received by Jan. 6, 2023. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information about the luncheon and membership.

The Newcomers of North St. Johns offers a wide variety of activities including smaller lunch groups, Canasta, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, holiday parties, day trips and cultural events.

Local attorney to speak at Coastal Friends luncheon

John McE. Miller, founding attorney at Rock Solid Law & Title, will be the guest speaker at the Jan. 4 Coastal Friends monthly luncheon, to be held at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Miller, in practice for more than 35 years, will be addressing various legal matters such as trusts, health surrogates and directives. Afterwards, there will be a question and answer period, followed by lunch and chef's special dessert.

Open to the community, members and guests of Coastal Friends (formerly Newcomers Alumnae), the cost to attend this luncheon is \$25. Reservations must be made in advance to reserve a seat by contacting the luncheon chairman at bartshar@comcast.net as soon as possible.

Coastal Friends is a social group of women who live in Ponte Vedra Beach, Nocatee, Jacksonville, Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach, Atlantic Beach, St. Augustine, and the surrounding area. Formed in 1988, some of the activities offered are adventures and outings, book club, Bunco, canasta and canasta lessons, happy hour, lunch in, lunch out, Mah Jongg and wine socials. Luncheons are held the first Wednesday of every month and new members are welcome throughout the year.

Contact brookemeister@msn.com or visit coastalfriends.wildapricot.org for more information.

U.S. Small Business Administration to offer disaster loans with no interest and no payments for first year

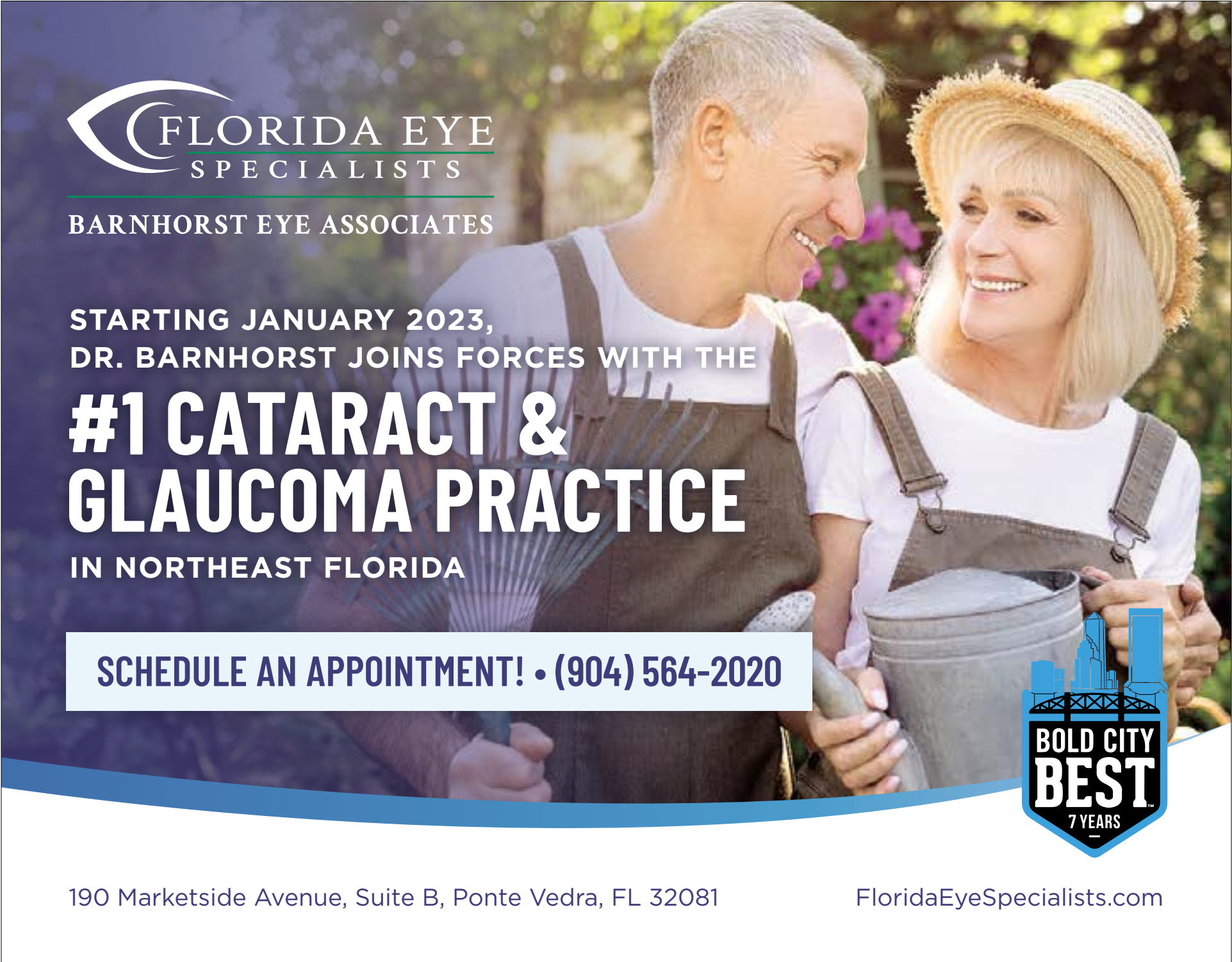
The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has announced the agency will waive the interest rate for the first year on new disaster loans and extend the initial payment deferment period automatically to 12 months.


New disaster loan borrowers will now have up to one year from the date of the note to begin making payments, instead of the standard five months. Interest on the loan will not begin to accrue until 12 months from the date of the initial loan disbursement. Previously, interest began to accrue on all disbursed loan funds including during the initial payment deferment period. This will benefit disaster survivors and help them to decrease the overall cost of recovery by setting the interest rate to 0 percent for the first 12 months and reducing the overall amount of accrued interest they must repay. SBA disaster loans offer individuals and businesses direct access to affordable financial assistance to help fully repair or replace disaster-damaged property. By offering affordable loans with no interest and no payments for the first year, and low

fixed-interest rates for the remaining 30-year term, SBA is maximizing disaster survivors' likelihood of a successful recovery and minimizing further financial hardship.

The extended deferment to 12 months is automatic and loan borrowers do not need to take any additional action. There is no prepayment penalty and borrowers can begin making loan payments during the deferment period if they choose. The change is effective for all disaster loans approved in response to a disaster declared on or after Sept. 21, 2022, through Sept. 30, 2023. The effective date covers SBA disaster loans currently available for Hurricane Fiona and Hurricane Ian declared earlier this year. SBA does not have the authority to forgive interest that has already accrued on disbursed loan funds.

Applicants may apply online prior to Jan. 12, 2023 by using the Electronic Loan Application (ELA) via SBA's secure website at <https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/ela/s/>. Disaster loan information and application forms may also be obtained by calling the SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or by sending an email to DisasterCustomerService@sba.gov. Loan applications can be downloaded from the SBA's website at sba.gov/disaster. To learn more, visit www.sba.gov.






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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Indiana!



Breed:

Goldendoodle

Favorite Activity:

Indy is a therapy animal with Pet Partners and loves going to "work!" She loves being with her family and running on the beach.

Favorite Treat:

French Fries

Favorite Friend:

Many dog friends in our neighborhood but her bestie is a labradoodle named Lana

How Did Your BFF Get Her Name:

We are from Indiana so our daughter suggested it.

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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Don't miss our February issue featuring our Love and Marriage Guide! Deadline 1/20/23

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From your friends at Ponte Vedra NewsLine!

Table of Contents

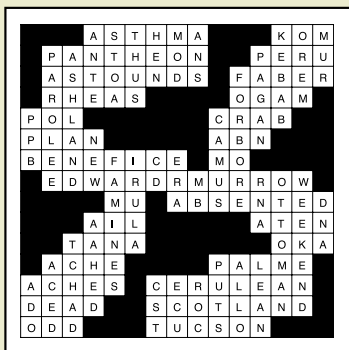
- 2 Briefs
- 4 What's Happening in Ponte Vedra
- 7 St. Johns Business Monthly
- 11 PopHistory
- 14 Health and Wellness Guide

MYSTERY PHOTO



Can you guess where this is?
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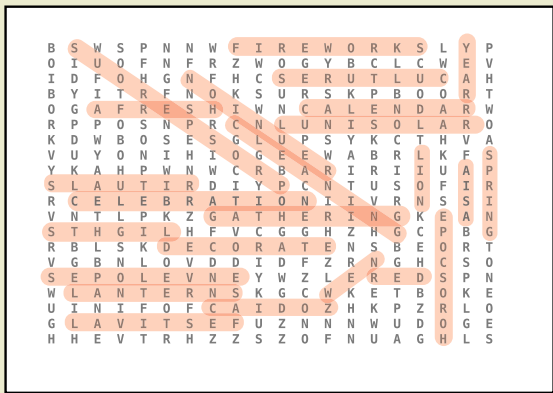
Last month's Mystery Photo was the entrance to The Fountains.



Answers
Puzzles
PG 10



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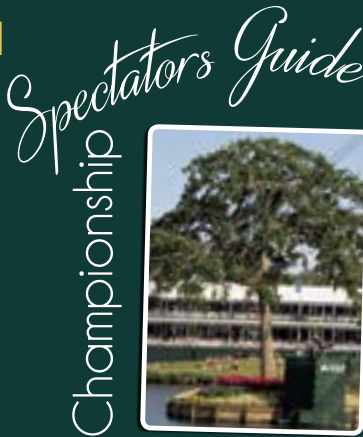
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January

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.

3rd: Vicar's Landing January Boutique Sale will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 3 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at 1000 Vicar's Landing Way. The public is welcome. The sale includes household items and furnishings as well as framed art. The Vicar's Employee Scholarship Fund receives all of the proceeds. Cash or checks only please. Contact Rose Murdock at (904) 891-1777 or Beverly Webb at (904) 315-2610 for more information.

4th: Coastal Friends (formerly Newcomers Alumnae) will host its monthly luncheon on Jan. 4 at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. in Ponte Vedra Beach from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. John Miller, founding attorney at Rock Solid Law and Title, will address legal matters such as trusts, health surrogates and directives. 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.

5th: Bingo will be held at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on Thursdays from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. for four weeks beginning Thursday, Jan. 5. Contact Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information and to register.

6th: The GTM Research Reserve will hold a new volunteer orientation on Jan. 6 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.

7th: The Northeast Florida Chapter of Sisters in Crime will meet on Jan. 7 at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. (FOL Room). The meeting starts at 12 p.m. and will include the group's final Mini-Workshop No. 3 – reviewing and critiquing Mini-Workshop No. 1 (Streaming Consciousness) and Mini-Workshop No. 2 (Developing Characterization). Input for 2023 programs will also be solicited. Bring your coffee and bring a friend. Visit www.nefloridasistersincrime.org for more information.

7th: Essential Tremor Support Group Meeting will be held on Jan. 7 at 6 p.m. at Mayo Clinic in the Mangurian Building, #1600. Featured speaker neuropsychologist Dr. Michelle Prosje will discuss "Enfeeblement in ET: What is it and how does it impact me and my loved one?" Contact Jan Kary at jkary@verizon.net or (202) 438-6750 for more information.

9th: The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable will meet on Monday, Jan. 9 at 12 p.m. at St. Augustine Waterworks building, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. The meeting will feature guest speaker Dick DeSouza, Chief Engineer, Growth Management Department, St. Johns County with an update on transportation issues and priority funding list. Email info@sjcroundtable.org to register for the meeting or visit www.sjcroundtable.org for more information.

10th: The Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library will present the Noel Catura Jazz and Blues Ensemble at the Crosswater Hall in Nocatee on Tuesday, Jan. 10. Doors open at 6 p.m. and the concert starts at 6:30 p.m. If you are a Friends member, email lekleiman@gmail.com; if not, register online on the Nocatee site.

13th: Food Truck Friday will be held on Jan. 13 and Jan. 27 from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. This event is open to the public.

14th: Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Panel, sponsored by the AAUW St. Augustine Branch, will be held on Jan. 14 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at St. Johns County Health and Human Resources Building, 200 San Sebastian View in St. Augustine. The public is encouraged to attend the forum.

14th: St. Johns Reads: Author Event with Chef Edward Lee, author of "Buttermilk Graffiti" will be held on Saturday, Jan. 14 at 2 p.m. at First Coast Technical College Character County Conference Center, Bldg. C, 2982 Collins Ave. in St. Augustine. This event is free and registration is not required. Visit <https://sjcpls.org/st-johns-reads-2023/> for more information.

14th: The Ponte Vedra Writers Group will meet on Saturday, Jan. 14 at 2 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Independent filmmaker Franklin Ritch, winner of multiple film festival awards, will speak to the Florida Writers Association Ponte Vedra Writers group on the topic of "Writing for Film" at the group's initial 2023 meeting. The meeting is free and open to members and non-members alike. Visit www.floridawriters.org for more information.

14th: The Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library Speaker Series will feature Dr. Daniela Owen on Saturday, Jan. 14 at 2 p.m. in the library's FOL Room. Dr. Owen will speak about the "Right Now" and "Everyone Feels" children's books on managing anger, anxiety, sadness and fear to teach children how to be calm, confident, brave and happy. She has a PhD in clinical psychology and treats social skill deficits, mood disorders, stress management and more in children, as well as effective parenting strategies. Parents are encouraged to bring children three years and older to this program.

17th: Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will meet on Tuesday, Jan. 17 at 6 p.m.

for Chat & Chew before the 6:30 p.m. meeting at Christ Episcopal Church, Room 106, 400 San Juan Road. The program will feature speaker Steve Voguit, former history professor at Flagler College and his program, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Man, The Myth, and his lessons for today." Email jkary@verizon.net for more information.

18th: Ponte Vedra Woman's Club General Meeting will be held on Jan. 18, from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. Local historian Scott Grant will give a talk about Jacksonville's history. Registration and dinner payment is on the Ponte Vedra Woman's Club website under Events at www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php.

21st: The Nocatee Farmers Market will be held on Saturday, Jan. 21 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. The Farmers Market is open to the public.

26th: "What Happens if you Die without a Will?" will be presented by St. Johns County Legal Aid's Megan Wall, Managing Attorney on Thursday, Jan. 26 at 11 a.m. at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.

26th: The Savvy Job Hunters Ministry Workshop will host "Do What You Are: Connecting Personality Types to Careers" presented by Margaret MacNaughton, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) Qualified Practitioner, on Jan. 26 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Sign in and networking begin at 9:45 a.m. The workshop is in-person and will be held at Christ Episcopal Church, 400 San Juan Drive, in Room 106 of the Formation and Arts Building. Email pottesen66@gmail.com to register.

31st: Clear Caption presentation at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, will be held on Jan. 31 at 11 a.m. For those who struggle to hear callers on the telephone, learn how to get a no-cost visual phone. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.



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with St. Johns County Tax Collector
Dennis Hollingsworth

Q: Can you clarify how to sell your vehicle to an individual (known as a casual sale)?

A: Florida Statutes, Section 319.22 provides for the transfer of certificates of title. You must have the title to transfer ownership of the vehicle. Once you have found a purchaser, the transfer of title section on the face of the Florida certificate of title must be completed in full. If your title is electronic, you have two options. The buyer and seller can agree to meet at the Tax Collector's Office and complete the transfer of ownership. The seller can also have the title printed and then complete the transfer of title section on the face of the Florida certificate of title.

We recommend that the seller meet the buyer at the Tax Collector's Office at the time of transfer. This ensures that transfer

of ownership is completed. If you are unable to meet the buyer for the transfer of ownership, be sure and fill out a notice of sale. Form 82050 can be found on our website, www.sjctax.us, and brought into an office, mailed or emailed to our office. Note that ownership status is not changed until the buyer transfers the title into their name. The seller can still be held liable until this is complete.

Q: Do you have anything else to share?

A: Remember a 2 percent discount is applied to property tax payments in the month of January.

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

A: A lot of questions can be answered by visiting our website, www.sjctax.us. I may be reached by calling (904) 209-2250 or emailing taxcollector@sjctax.us.



with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Can you give a run down of current crime trends in St. Johns County?

A: I think it's important for our citizens to know that this is not a crime-free area. Most of our largest increases are in the non-violent categories, including some, like burglary from a motor vehicle, which are mostly preventable (lock your car doors!)

A caveat to the numbers I'm going to share is that about two years ago, we changed reporting systems that we use to report to the federal government from UCR (Uniform Crime Report) to NIBRS (National Incident Based Reporting System), which is more incident-based. This year will be our first full year using this new reporting system and everyone, including the FBI, expected an increase in crime reporting data due to the change.

Q: What categories saw the largest increases?

A: The significant increases were not in violent crime, but in property crime. Shoplifting, for example, increased by 86 percent (from 209 cases last year to 390 year to date this year). A big reason for that is that we nearly doubled our retail property with the addition of the Durbin Pavilion center as well as Costco, Home Depot and Buc-ee's. The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office is working with these businesses to combat shoplifting by utilizing undercover operations as well as bike and foot patrols. Also, we are working with the State Attorney's Office to ensure proper charges are applied, especially in the case of repeat offenders. Additionally, our Real Time Intelligence Center is using the latest technology to assist in solving these crimes.

Other categories with increases were General Theft (a catchall category of theft that doesn't include shoplifting or construction theft) with an increase of 35 percent. Construction site theft also increased 35 percent, from 20 cases in

2021 to 27 cases in 2022. Commercial burglary increased from 25 cases in 2021 to 44 cases in 2022.

Q: What were the statistics for violent crimes?

A: Fortunately our numbers are low here, but we still unfortunately had increases. Aggravated assault, which is the intention of doing bodily harm with a weapon, but not actually doing it, was up from 44 cases in 2021 to 64 cases in 2022 (45 percent). Sex crimes, which include lewd and lascivious and sexual assault, was up from 28 cases last year to 40 cases this year. And, tracking with the national average, battery on a law enforcement officer was up 40 percent, from 22 cases in 2021 to 31 cases in 2022.

Q: What about the "mostly preventable" crimes that you mentioned?

A: With the new NIBRS reporting, we now call this burglary of a motor vehicle, and it's up 14 percent, from 223 cases in 2021 to 256 cases in 2022. We've discussed this before — more than 90 percent of these cases are items stolen from unlocked cars. Many of these cases can be prevented by locking your car door at night.

Q: What else do you have to share?

A: We want you to call us to report crime. If you see something, say something! If it's an emergency, call 911. You can call our non-emergency number at (904) 824-8304 if that's appropriate. We want to work together to live in one of the safest communities in the state and in the nation.

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.



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Upcoming Cruise Center World Travel 2023 Events

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RSVP 904-260-3401 x 250

January 23rd "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. Please RSVP by 1/20/23 space is limited.

February 6th "Discover Ireland, Scotland, Britain and Iceland featuring guided and independent land vacations with CIE Tours 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.

February 20th "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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Guest Column

New Year at Supervisor of Elections office

By St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Happy New Year, St. Johns County voters! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season with your family and friends. We are excited about what 2023 has in store for the Supervisor of Elections Office. While there are no elections scheduled this year, we are still going to be very busy changing our processes to comply with new laws which just took effect, updating voter rolls, and providing voter education.

We will also spend a significant amount of time this year recruiting new poll workers in preparation for the 2024

elections. We currently have about 475 poll workers on the roster, but as with any workforce, there is constant change as some workers retire and new faces join our team. The continual growth in the county also necessitates more workers as we expect between 240,000 and 250,000 registered voters to participate in the Nov. 5, 2024 Presidential General Election in St. Johns County.

Our goal in 2023 is to increase our workforce and communication with poll workers to ensure they have the information they need to be prepared when training begins in January 2024. Want to join the elections team? Visit www.votesjc.com

and fill out a poll worker application to be considered for poll worker and election technician positions.

This year will also be a good time for vote-by-mail voters to request their ballots for the 2024 elections. Due to a change in the law, all vote-by-mail ballot requests on file this year expired following the November 2022 election. If you vote by mail, please visit www.votesjc.gov to check your voter status and make your request for 2024 if you wish to continue to vote-by-mail. Vote-by-mail remained one of our most popular voting methods in 2022 and we want to ensure it remains available for any voter who wants to use this convenient option to cast their vote.

We have also resumed Elections Office

tours this year. If you are interested in learning the facts about how elections are conducted locally and in Florida, visit the Office Tours page on our website, www.votesjc.gov/office-tours, to see scheduled dates and times and book your tour. If you have a small group who would like to schedule a tour, please contact our office and we will be happy to make arrangements.

We will also spend a significant amount of time next year preparing for a busy 2024 when we will hold three elections, including a Presidential Preference Primary on March 19, a Primary on Aug. 20, and a General Election on Nov. 5. Generally speaking, it takes about four months of planning, communication, and execution to hold an election. So, we're preparing to be in election mode for the entirety of 2024!



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

Q: Can you give an update on the construction of the three new schools?

A: In December, we approved the construction bid for K-8 “OO,” which will be under construction soon in Beacon Lakes. We approved the plans for K-8 “PP,” to be built in RiverTown and eventually converted to a middle school once an elementary school is built later in the neighborhood. K-8 “NN” is already under construction in Shearwater. All three of these schools are to be completed in time for a fall 2024 opening. Our facilities department is really working hard. It bears repeating that we have to be able to demonstrate the need for space before we can begin construction of a new school; basically, we have to be overcrowded before we build.

Q: It’s school choice time. Do you have the deadlines?

A: We held our High School Showcase, which gave students and their families the opportunity to learn about the high school Programs of Choice and meet representatives from each high school, on Dec. 14. Eligible students may apply online (<https://cte.stjohns.k12.fl.us/>) during the application window: Jan. 5, 2023 through Jan. 31, 2023 at 5 p.m. Academy nights at the high schools will also be held during this time; visit <https://cte.stjohns.k12.fl.us/timeline/> for a schedule.

Q: Can you share the District 4 Teacher and Rookie Teachers of the Year?

A: The ceremony to select the district winners will be held in early 2023. Congratulations to the following school level teachers and rookie teachers who were selected:

Landrum Middle School, Cynthia Benfield and Gavin Lambert; Nease High School, Melissa Fifield and Samantha Morrison; Ocean Palms, Amanda Nannetti and Jessica Webster; Palm Valley Academy Elementary, Christopher Arcuri and Audra Wilson; Palm Valley Academy Middle, Ryan Velsor; Pine Island Academy Elementary, Tammy Root and Emily Anderson; Pine Island Academy Middle, Shanon Cally and Ali Cox; Ponte Vedra High School, Molly Collett and Jeff Desjardins; PVPV, Char-Leah

Hendricks and Taylor Cronenberg; Valley Ridge Academy Elementary, Haley Alvarado; Valley Ridge Academy Middle, Teresa McCormick and Elizabeth Garland.

Q: What can you tell us about the recent recognition of the School Related Employees of the Year?

A: The School Related Employee of the Year celebration was held on Nov. 16 at Toco Creek High School. I’d like to congratulate District 4 school level School Related Employees of the Year: Landrum Middle School, Diane Melnyk; Nease High School, Christopher Lawrence; Ocean Palms, Zane Williams; Palm Valley Academy, Patricia Stenwall; Pine Island Academy, Andrea Jackson; Ponte Vedra High School, Claudia Winter; PVPV/Rawlings, Anne Rubocki; and Valley Ridge Academy, Chase Scott.

Q: What is the school district’s legislative priority for next year?

A: We are heading into the new legislative session and have submitted our priorities. The first one is to support funding to address salary compression created by the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation and minimum wage increase in order to better support and retain veteran teachers and personnel.

Q: Do you have any kudos to share?

A: The regional spelling bee will be held in March. Congratulations to Landrum Middle School sixth grader, Sree Vidya Siliveri, who won our district competition and will represent St. Johns County at the regional bee. Congratulations also to all the school representatives at the district spelling bee: Noah Gharacholou, Ocean Palms; Avery Wu, Palm Valley Academy; Eli de Jesus, Palm Valley Academy; Piper Ross, PVPV; Elizabeth Teplova, Pine Island Academy; Jacob Jacinto, Pine Island Academy; Lucas Posse, Valley Ridge Academy; and Ashley Reeder, Valley Ridge Academy.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

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

ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Resolve to take control of your finances in the New Year

By Chris Thompson, CFP®, CRPC®

Many of us take advantage of the New Year to turn over a new leaf. This can include everything from starting a new exercise regimen to committing to cooking more at home. It's also a prime time to assess your current financial situation and take concrete steps to improve it. Here are a variety of steps to take as the New Year begins to enhance your financial life. Some may be more appropriate than others for your circumstances.

Review where you stand: Start by taking a comprehensive look at your current financial position. Are you generating enough income to meet expenses? Where could you cut back on living costs? Are there loans or debt you can pay off quicker? Are you saving enough for your key goals?

Ask the tough questions to get a good sense of where you stand. Then consider any of these following steps that seem appropriate.

Deal with debt: Make a plan to pay down debts as quickly as you can. A priority should be to repay high interest borrowing like credit card debt as quickly as possible. To the extent loans are manageable, you can continue to make monthly payments, but the more you pay off, the easier it will be on your monthly budget.

Build your savings: Financial security is closely related to the amount of money you have available to you. Commit to building up an "emergency fund" equal to six months of your income to help deal with unexpected short-term needs. Then commit to boosting your retirement

savings contributions per month if you can.

Resolve to get a better job: Many employers are having a hard time finding the right kind of people to fill roles. This may be the best opportunity in a long time to find a job that offers better compensation and that you may actually find more enjoyable.

Invest more effectively: Do you think you might be able to get more out of your portfolio? Take a closer look at what's working and what isn't. It may be time to "cut your losses" on investments that have proven to be disappointing while putting some of that money to work in assets that offer greater potential.

Make 2023 different: If you feel like there's more you could be doing to

shore up your financial position, make a pledge to get that process started now. It may be beneficial to consult with a financial advisor to help you find a path to a more prosperous future.

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.

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Beachside swimmers have successful inaugural year

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

St. Johns County has experienced record-breaking growth over the past couple of years and with that growth, opened a new high school on the east side of Interstate 95, Beachside High School, on Aug. 15, 2022. Despite being brand new, the Beachside Barracudas' swim team, the swimmers, the coaches, and the parents jumped right in to assist and help build the success of the program.



Haylee Hite and Gina Faunce with the District trophy

The 2022 – 23 inaugural swim and dive team is made up of swimmers at all different skill levels, aged 14 – 17. There are no seniors this year as the first graduating class will be in 2024. The swim team consists of 28 swimmers — 21 female swimmers and seven male swimmers.

This small but mighty swim team performed above and beyond throughout the season at a local 2A level. The Beachside Barracudas went on to compete at the 2A Districts competition in Gainesville with all seven male swimmers competing, along with 12 female swimmers and one diver. Beachside walked away with the girls' 200 Medley Relay championship and the 200 Free Relay championship with Haylee Hite, Gina Faunce, Kyra Lagatoris, and freshman Reese Boswell leading the way to an overall second place girls' finish. Other notable finishes include: Boys' 400 Free Relay – third place; Boys' 200 Medley Relay – second place; Nico Garvey – third place, 50 Free; Peter Manelis – Champion, 100 Breaststroke; Reese Boswell – third place, 100 Back; Gina Faunce – second place, 100 Back; Haylee Hite – Champion, 100 Back and Champion, 200 IM; Olivia Riegler – Champion, Diving.

The next stop was the Regionals 2A

in Pensacola at the University of West Florida campus. The Barracudas swimmers competed with 17 swimmers and one diver and finished with:

Hite, second place, 200 IM

Hite, champion, 100 Back

Riegler, third place, diving

As the season concluded, the Barracudas attended the 2A State competition in Stuart with the team bringing an impressive nine swimmers and one diver that included two relay teams and four individual event contenders. The Beachside Barracudas came home with medal-placing finishes:

Manelis, second place, 100 Breaststroke and second place, 100 Butterfly

Hite, fifth place, 100 Back and sixth place, 200 IM

Riegler, second place, diving

The Beachside Barracuda swim team is under the supervision of Coach Lauren Huss and Cyro Tavares. These gifted athletes have made the school proud while adding to the trophy collection now featured at the school.

PVHS Career Academy students visit Landrum Middle School

By Sade Goodridge
mail@floridanewsline.com

Each year, eighth-grade St. Johns County students face a choice — the graduating middle schoolers must decide whether to apply to a St. Johns County Career Academy at any of the district's nine high schools.

The St. Johns County Career Academy website describes career academies as “a sequence of specific elective courses designed around a career theme. Career Academies create a ‘school within a school’ feel since students select to be grouped by a common area of interest. Each Career Academy has a Program of Study that helps guide students in course selection and plan for postsecondary experiences.”

Ponte Vedra High School has four Career Academies: The Academy of Biotechnology & Medical Research, The Academy of International Business & Marketing, The Academy of Information Technology, and the St. Johns County Academy of Future Educators.

To aid with the process, the middle school's zoned high school visits each middle school and presents a presentation encouraging eighth graders to attend their zoned high school and to join a career academy. On Friday, Dec. 9, PVHS Career Academy ambassadors and PVHS Academy Coordinator, Marisa Leonard visited Landrum Middle School. Career Academy

ambassadors are current academy students who represent the academy to students and parents.

During the school visit, Academy ambassadors gave a presentation outlining their respective Academies and shared their experiences within the program. Afterward, middle school students had the opportunity to speak one-on-one with Academy ambassadors if lingering questions remained.

According to the Career Academy website, eighth-grade students interested in joining an academy or special program can complete an online application through the student's Home Access Center (HAC), opening on Jan. 5, 2023. The application will close promptly on January 31, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.

Students interested in applying for the International Baccalaureate (IB) or the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) program should request a completed teacher recommendation form from the student's four core content area teachers. Finally, students interested in applying for the St. Johns County Center for the Arts at St. Augustine High School, need to apply and audition by Jan. 21, 2023.

Students or parents with remaining questions can refer <https://cte.stjohns.k12.fl.us/academies/> for more information.



Photo courtesy Sade Goodridge

Landrum students ask questions to the PVHS International Business and Marketing Academy ambassadors.




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Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

Elizabeth Joshi

When Elizabeth Joshi moved to Ponte Vedra Beach one-and-a-half years ago, it was a dream come true. She has family in town, loves the weather and values the beauty of the area. "I always thought that this was one of the most beautiful areas of the country. We are very fortunate to live here," said Joshi, who grew up in New York. Enjoying being outside and getting exercise as a stress reliever, Joshi started to go for daily walks. It wasn't long before she noticed all of the litter along her path on Palm Valley Road. One day, she decided to take a trash bag with her and fill it as she walked the four-mile path. That was a year ago, and Joshi has continued to walk and collect trash for an hour every day ever since. "I am lucky enough to live here, so I can contribute and provide that to the community," said Joshi. "This is our community. If we want to keep it beautiful, then we must help keep it clean." Other community members sometimes join Joshi on the clean-ups, and she also contacted St. Johns County to find out what more could be done to beautify the area. Joshi, who used to practice law, and her husband, an anesthesiologist, have two children, Shefali, 20 and Shaan, 18. Shefali is a sophomore at the University of Texas in Austin, and Shaan is a sophomore at Ponte Vedra



Photo courtesy Elizabeth Joshi
Elizabeth Joshi and family.

High School. Shaan was born with a rare genetic disorder known as Joubert Syndrome in which a part of the cerebellum is missing, impacting his motor skills, vision, and kidneys. Shaan is nonverbal and underwent a kidney transplant from his father six years ago. "Having a child with special needs is a great equalizer. You realize what is important in life," she said. "We live in a place of gratitude for what we have. Simple things are important to us."

Q: What are your thoughts about beautifying the community?

A: If you can take action to improve something, you should. It does not have to be something grandiose. I don't expect everyone to get out there

and pick up trash for an hour; however, everyone can do their part like keep a bag with you when you walk, bring reusable bags to the grocery store, and own a water bottle. We can all do small things to keep our area beautiful, nice, and protected. None of us are perfect and we never will be. If we take small steps then cumulatively, it makes a difference. There will always be people who are thoughtless and rude. Show your kids what it looks like to help the community. Let's pick up that can along the way. It may not be ours, but it is our community.

Q: How much trash do you usually pick up, and what types of items do you find?

A: I will fill an entire bag every day when walking Palm Valley Road. One drainage area near Sawmill Lakes turned out to be a very big job and filled 20 bags. I pick up a lot of cigarette butts. I think that there is still a misconception that it will disintegrate. Plus, a lot of chemicals from the butts are being put into nature if they sit there for a while. I find a lot of construction debris, food wrappers, lots of Styrofoam cups, alcohol bottles, and vapes. One of the weirdest things that I find is parts of cars, bumpers, and hub caps. You can learn a lot about people by cleaning up after them.

Q: Where did you attend college?

A: I attended Notre Dame for undergrad, and I attended DePaul University for law school in Chicago. I practiced law for 10 years in civil defense litigation. I stopped practicing law when my son was born.

Q: Where did you meet your husband?

A: We met in Chicago through a mutual friend. The common friend's name is Shefali (the name I chose for our daughter), and that friend is now a U.S. Ambassador.

Q: What concerns you the most about all the litter you see?

A: Some of the trash can make it into the water drainage area and into the woods, basically into areas that I cannot reach. Wherever I go, I try to get to the trash before it goes any further. When someone litters, the damage can be done to the environment before someone can clean it up.

Get to Know ...

Interested in being featured? Email Martie Thompson at
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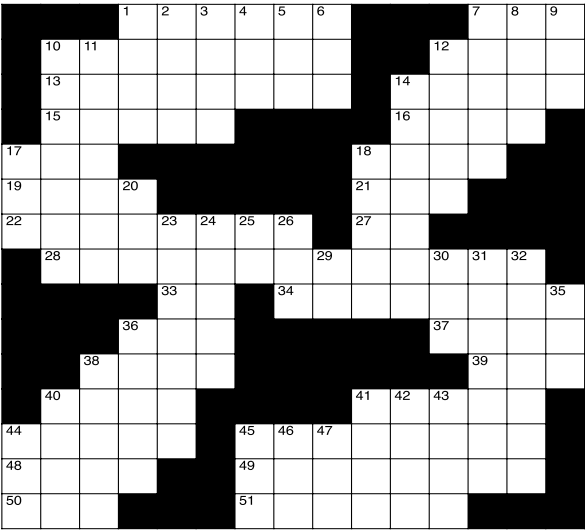
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Respiratory disorder
- 7. Bulgarian mountain peak
- 10. Group of important people
- 12. South American nation
- 13. Amazes
- 14. ___-Castell, makers of pens
- 15. Perlman and Seehorn are two
- 16. Early medieval alphabet
- 17. Legislator (slang)
- 18. Tasty crustacean
- 19. Course of action
- 21. Airborne (abbr.)
- 22. Permanent church appointment
- 27. Larry and Curly's pal
- 28. Famed American journalist
- 33. 12th letter of Greek alphabet
- 34. In a way, vanished
- 36. Afflict in mind or body
- 37. Egyptian Sun god
- 38. Source of the Blue Nile
- 39. Egyptian unit of weight
- 40. Be the source of pain
- 41. Esteemed award ___ d'Or
- 44. Partner to pains
- 45. Deep blue
- 48. No longer living
- 49. Country in the UK
- 50. Not even
- 51. Arizona city

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Wager
- 2. Classical portico
- 3. As a result
- 4. Bird
- 5. A type of "Squad"
- 6. Autonomic nervous system
- 7. Dish with food on a stick
- 8. City northwest of Provo
- 9. C. European river
- 10. One out of jail
- 11. Henry Clay estate
- 12. Heathen
- 14. Refrained
- 17. Parts per billion (abbr.)
- 18. "The Stranger" author
- 20. Not old
- 23. Periods of starvation
- 24. Language of tribe in India
- 25. Savings account
- 26. Pitching stat
- 29. Megabyte
- 30. Ribonucleic acid
- 31. A place to put your feet
- 32. The fun part of a week
- 35. We all have our own
- 36. Partner to "oohed"
- 38. African nation
- 40. Breezed through
- 41. Sets out
- 42. Other
- 43. Not fattening
- 44. "Much ___ about nothing"
- 45. Central Time
- 46. Former EU monetary unit
- 47. Charles S. Dutton sitcom

LUNAR NEW YEAR WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- AFRESH
- ASIA
- CALENDAR
- CELEBRATION
- CLEANING
- CULTURES
- DECORATE
- ENVELOPES
- FESTIVAL
- FIREWORKS
- GATHERING
- HOROSCOPE
- LANTERNS
- LIGHTS
- LION
- LUNISOLAR
- NEW
- PROSPEROUS
- RED
- REUNION
- RITUALS
- SPRING
- YEAR
- ZODIAC



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

- A. 7 14 24 17 13
Clue: Relating to the moon
- B. 3 19 13 19 23 6 19 5 26
Clue: Prediction based on stars or symbols
- C. 6 3 11 24 17
Clue: Asian country
- D. 10 26 23 22 11 12 17 7
Clue: Large celebration

New Commissioner cont. from pg.1

memoir, "Charlie Don't Be a Hero, A Mother's Story of the Extraordinary Life of Her Son, U.S. Navy SEAL Charles Keating IV." Joseph said she holds the veteran community in high esteem and works to support them in any way she can.

She sees the biggest issue facing the county commission at this time to be the unbridled growth in St. Johns County.

"We need to think about the people who already live here," she said. "I feel like there hasn't been an ear for these people and I'm trying to be that."

She points to water and agriculture as being important resources. Having previously lived in Arizona and Crystal River, Florida, she knows the importance of water. She also wants to champion keeping the county's agricultural lands viable and not built out with development, saying that St. Johns County, and even Florida as a whole, need to protect resources that can feed and sustain its own citizens.

As for other priorities, "I want to do the right thing," she said. "I want to be thoughtful and not be swayed by donors."

She feels her most important strength is her family background and her ability to relate to many different groups of people. Joseph makes it a point at least two times per week to go to mass at Our Lady Star of the Sea.

In her spare time, Joseph enjoys out-

door activities, including running, hiking, and paddle boarding. It is this attachment to nature that makes her cognizant of the battle between quality of life in St. Johns County and the area's beautiful environment. She regularly runs in 5Ks and in fact campaigned while running by carrying her sign in communities throughout the county.

As for the future, Joseph said, "I plan on working hard for the next four years and do as much as I possibly can — based not on a plan to necessarily run again, but to do what's best for St. Johns County. I'm not a politician and I don't know what the future holds, but I know I'm a representative of all the people in District 4 of St. Johns County and I want to do the best job I can."

St. Johns Reads cont. from pg.1

country. There's a Cambodian couple in Lowell, Massachusetts, and their efforts to re-create the flavors of their lost country. A Uyghur café in New York's Brighton Beach serves a noodle soup that seems so very familiar and yet so very exotic — one unexpected ingredient opens a window onto an entirely unique culture. A beignet from Café du Monde in New Orleans, as potent as Proust's madeleine, inspires a narrative that tunnels through time, back to the first Creole cooks, then forward to a Korean rice-flour hoedduck and a beignet dusted with matcha. Sixteen adventures, sixteen vibrant new chapters in the great evolving story of American cuisine. And forty recipes, created by Lee, that bring these new dishes into our own kitchens."

In its 18th year, St. Johns Reads is

the St. Johns County Public Library System's annual "One book, One community" event focused on creating a shared conversation of a selected novel. Funding for this program was provided through a grant from Florida Humanities with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of Florida Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities. St. Johns Reads is also generously sponsored by the SJCPLS Friends of the Library groups.

"Buttermilk Graffiti" is available for checkout in a variety of formats including print, digital audiobook, and e-book. To view a full schedule of St. Johns Reads 2023 events, visit www.sjcpls.org/st-johns-reads-2023 or call your local branch library.

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By Scott A. Grant
mail@floridanewsline.com

PopHistory “Poor Dad”

In 1997, Robert Kiyosaki self-published a book called “Rich Dad, Poor Dad.” The book initially sold poorly before becoming popular with Amway sales-people who used the book to motivate those beneath them in the pyramid. Then, on April 27, 2000, Robert Kiyosaki appeared on “The Oprah Winfrey Show.” The book took off and enjoyed some popularity before fading and then being whole-heartedly re-embraced by a new generation of followers.

Criticism of “Rich Dad, Poor Dad” centered on two aspects. First, many argued the advice was not that good. Second, was the broader question of who was Rich Dad, and did he even exist? At times, Kiyosaki suggested he was an unnamed Hawaiian businessman who taught him to play Monopoly, or perhaps a composite figure, or maybe even motivational guru and inventor of the geodesic dome, Buckminster Fuller.

Monopoly is a cutthroat game that was originally invented to highlight the evils of capitalism. You win the game by making everyone else go bankrupt. You need to be ruthless to win. Robert Kiyosaki was ruthless in his portrayal of his “birth father” and vilified his reputation for an entire generation. So, the question that intrigued me was: who was Poor Dad?

Ralph Kiyosaki was born in 1919 on the

island of Maui. He was the son of Japanese immigrants. As a young man, he recalled walking barefoot down the dirt roads of his native island and deciding that the only way to escape the poverty of colonialism was through education. He would dedicate most of his life to education — first his own and then then that of the youth of Hawaii.

Kiyosaki senior attended the University of Hawaii. After that, he attended Stanford, Northwestern, and the University of Chicago. Today, Stanford is highly regarded. It was well respected in Kiyosaki’s day as well and was noted as the alma mater of President Herbert Hoover. But, in Kiyosaki’s day, the University of Chicago, first home of the atomic bomb, had an even better reputation.

Kiyosaki returned to Hawaii and took a position as a teacher and then later a school principal before becoming Superintendent of Education for the State of Hawaii. Kiyosaki was an innovative educator who gained a national reputation. His term as superintendent was considered transformational. He unveiled a “Three on Two” program of three teachers for every two classrooms and a revolutionary freeze-dried lunch program modeled after the airline industry.

Ralph Kiyosaki was so well regarded

that in 1970, he was slated to run for Lieutenant Governor alongside running mate, former federal judge, Samuel King. King and Kiyosaki ran as Republicans in a highly Democratic state and lost badly to incumbent John Burns and George Ariyoshi. The younger Kiyosaki considered this to be one of his father’s many mistakes, saying he was “black balled” from future office.

However, Ralph Kiyosaki went on to be head of the Hawaii Teachers Union, a powerful position in any state. His wife died and he remarried another teacher named Edwina Bright. In 1975, Kiyosaki resigned his position with the teachers union to “pursue other interests.” He opened a Swensen Ice Cream franchise. Swensen’s was a San Francisco institution that just started to franchise. An ice cream parlor seems like a natural for Hawaii, but this one failed. Maybe we need to rethink what it means to be a “Poor Dad” in a society overly enamored with the pursuit of material wealth at any cost.

Scott A. Grant is a local author and historian. By day, he is a fiduciary asset manager at Standfast Asset Management in Ponte Vedra. He does not believe in “get rich quick” schemes. This article contains the answers to two popular Trivia Night questions. scottg@standfast.com.

Did you know?

- January is named for the Roman god Janus. Janus was the protector of gates and doorways. Janus was always depicted with two faces and purportedly could see into the past and into the future simultaneously.
- Many famous people were born during January, including famed statesman, inventor and scientist Benjamin Franklin, French heroine Joan of Arc, singer Elvis Presley, and prized fighter Muhammad Ali.
- Garnet is the birthstone for January. The name comes from the Latin “garanatus,” meaning “seed-like.” It refers to the red seeds of the pomegranate.
- People can view the Quadrantid Meteor Shower, which is a meteor shower that happens every January. The body responsible for producing the Quadrantids is an asteroid rather than comet fragments, which are the typical matter sources for meteor showers.
- In the northern hemisphere, January tends to be the coldest month of the year. It should come as no surprise then that it is National Soup Month, as soup helps to chase away some of that chill.

Scout creates flagstone walkway for local church

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The entrance into Lord of Life Lutheran Church was transformed last Saturday when BSA Troop 291 Scout, Sofia McIntosh, oversaw the creation of a flagstone walkway out of nothing as part of her Eagle Scout project.

“We’ve never had a proper walkway into Lord of Life,” said church council president Sheila Kolesaire. “We walked over grass to a concrete pad and then entered the sanctuary.

But we’ve been aware for a long time that this isn’t easy for people with mobility issues, or even women in high heels.”

McIntosh approached Lord of Life several months ago to discuss what needs the church had and was excited to take on a significant project to enhance the appearance of the church and improve accessibility. Flagstone was chosen for its relative ease to install, longevity and beauty. Her Troop 291 is chartered with Lord of Life.

“We had a dozen Scouts from my troop and others come out for about 10 hours to do this project, which involved a lot of measurements and calculations for the amount of crushed stone, flagstone, sealant and other materials we’d need to do this,” said McIntosh. She raised money for the project, including asking relatives to give her money instead of gifts for her birthday so she could add it to the amount needed. Stone Plus of Jacksonville also discounted some items to contribute to this project.



Photo courtesy Sheila Kolesaire

“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!”



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Neighborhood youth build global friendships via international program

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

More than 50 Jacksonville-area youth represented the USA at international CISV (cisvjax.org) programs in 2022. CISV (cisv.org) is a global, nonprofit organization dedicated to educating and inspiring action for a more just and peaceful world. It helps its young participants develop to their full potential as future leaders and active citizens, to make a difference in their communities and the world. CISV (formerly known as Children’s International Summer Villages) also gives them the opportunity to build global friendships and networks that last a lifetime.

Currently, CISV seeks mature, friendly kids aged nine to 18 to represent the USA at its international summer programs.

CISV’s flagship program is called “Village.” It brings together 10 and 11 year olds from 10 to 12 countries around the world for a month to learn to live cooperatively, share cultures and build global friendships.

CISV also offers a free, two-week overnight mini-Village for local Jacksonville kids called FACES of Jacksonville.

For 12 or 13 year olds, CISV offers eight or 15 day international youth meetings that bring together youth from eight countries to explore issues that affect us all.

Ponte Vedra resident Caroline Youell, age 12, spent eight days at a camp in the California redwood forests at a 2022 youth meeting. “My favorite memory was on the last night we were listening to music at a bonfire and were all holding hands looking at the stars and wishing it didn’t have to end.”

Another CISV program called “Interchange” offers Jacksonville families the chance to host a child from another country for two weeks and then their child goes to live with the family of the child the Jacksonville hosted for two weeks. Children have the chance to experience family life in another country and share their own community and home. In summer 2022, CISV Jacksonville held an Interchange with Graz, Austria for 14 – 15 year olds, which included seven Jacksonville families. St.

Johns resident Chloe Geoghegan, age 15, said “My time as an Interchange Delegate was both other worldly and grounding. Traveling to another country without my parents, staying with a family I had only met over Zoom conferencing, and immersing myself in an unfamiliar culture, taught me to be resilient and open-minded. I feel like I have matured in such a short period of time. Most importantly, I made friendships that would’ve never happened if it wasn’t for CISV.”

Youth aged 16 and 17 can apply for a 21-day international “Seminar” camp being held at locations around the world, a two week domestic “Fort-night” program, or to serve as a junior counselor at a free two week overnight camp for Jacksonville youth aged nine to 11.

Children aged nine to 12 are invited to the following “play dates” to see what CISV activities are like:

Saturday, Jan. 7 and Saturday, Jan. 21, 9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., 7860 Southside Blvd. Jacksonville, FL 32256.

Parents and youth may learn more about CISV and its 2023 international leadership opportunities at upcoming CISV “101” informational sessions. Youth and adults who have participated in CISV’s programs will share what it is like to make friends with people from around the world, explore cultural issues, and build their self-confidence and independence. Upcoming CISV 101 sessions are:

- Saturday, Jan. 7 or Saturday, Jan. 21, 9:15 a.m. at 7860 Southside Blvd. Jacksonville, FL 32256

- Sunday, Jan. 8, 5 p.m. at 1674 Osceola Street, Jacksonville, FL 32204

- Saturday, Jan. 14, 10 a.m. via Zoom

- Tuesday, Jan. 17, 8 p.m. via Zoom

- Friday, Jan. 27, 7:15 p.m. at 860 Oak Street, Jacksonville, FL 32204

Visit <https://jacksonville.cisvusa.org/news-events/events-calendar/attend-a-cisv-101/> to register for a CISV 101 meeting. More information about CISV is available at <https://jacksonville.cisvusa.org> or by email to cisvjax@gmail.com.

Berry Good cont. from pg. 1

differences, while providing the community with a valuable service.

Smith, aka “The Market Guy,” visits Home Depot twice a month in search of seasonal plants for the farm and has become well-known for returning to the farm one day with a Carolina Reaper pepper plant, according to Williams. That led to the farm making hot sauce, he said.

Williams said that Berry Good Farms provides sustainable food in an ecological manner through the training of NFSSE transition students and through the compensated employment of post-graduates such as Smith. The mission is to assist students in becoming independent and productive community members.

Leslie Taylor, Palm Valley Market co-organizer, said she is thrilled to have Berry Good Farms at the market because it gives the market a wider array of organically grown fruits, flowers, vegetables and herbs.

“It’s wonderful to work with a business that provides job training and paid employment for young adults with intellectual and developmental differences. Jordan and Ryan always offer the best customer service and are so knowledgeable about their products — we learn something from them every time they are with us. They add so much to our community, and we are grateful that they are a part of this market,” said Taylor.

Students enrolled in horticulture at the school work in the 30 by 60 greenhouses and learn to cultivate wheatgrass, microgreens and veggie starter trays for wholesale and retail customers, Williams said. Students plant seasonal vegetables and herbs, maintain the garden, and harvest in both the Culinary Arts program and “Berry Good Farms On the Go,” a food truck that makes stops all around the community.

Williams said that there are 25 hydroponic towers, an aquaponics area and 30 raised beds at the school’s one-acre farm.

“Our farm is a display garden of sorts. We use a lot of different growing mediums,” said Williams. “It is an opportunity to show we can grow fruits and vegetables organically and how we can source locally.”

It is also an opportunity to promote a green lifestyle: reduce, reuse and recycle. Community outreach is important to the program, according to Williams.

“We are kind of a hidden gem in Arlington,” said Williams. “When folks see our space and see how hard our students work, they are usually blown away.”

The school marked its 30-year anniversary this year and has 200 students in its elementary to post-graduate programs. North Florida School of Special Education began with four students; the farm began with 50 blueberry bushes and now has 150.

Farm assistant Jenna Thompson said students help with composting, filling up beds, pulling weeds, seeding, harvesting, arranging cut flowers, and helping with tea dehydration and packaging. Thompson said that her job at the farm combines two worlds that she cares about deeply — farming and special education.

“It is so great, a feeling that is almost indescribable. It is very humbling to work with people with so many different abilities and commonalities,” said Thompson. “They have taught me to take life moment-by-moment and to start looking at people individually and for themselves.”

[Author’s note: To take a tour of the farm, contact Williams at JWilliams@north-floridaschool.org. To purchase from Berry Good Farms, Williams and Smith are at the Palm Valley Market every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 148 Canal Boulevard.]

PV lacrosse brotherhood on and off the field

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

Mulch Madness is in full swing for the Ponte Vedra High boys’ lacrosse team as they are taking orders for bagged mulch and preparing for delivery March 31 – April 2. It is their biggest fundraiser of the year with a goal of selling 20,000 bags of mulch this year, 4,000 more units than last year.

The JV and varsity players, totaling 70, will spend prom weekend making the deliveries. According to organizers, Mulch Madness also serves as a great team building exercise and provides valuable business experience for the student athletes.

“This is an amazing bonding experience that carries onto the field. These are the things that make our team better overall,” said Kristina Greco, Mulch Madness co-coordinator. Greco works alongside co-coordinator Laura Shoemaker-Reed.

Greco, who has two sons on the team, said that Penske trucks are rented to make the deliveries directly to homes and businesses in Ponte Vedra Beach and parts of Nocatee. Parents also use their own trucks when needed. Five different types of bagged mulch are sold by the team, and the PGA TOUR provides an empty lot to stage the event.

“It is like a landscaping company for the weekend. We have dads operating the forklifts, parents using their own trucks, and everyone is on board to make things run smoothly. It is great to see everyone come together,” said Greco. “It is a mandatory commitment coaches, players and parents have made for 14 years now.”



Photo courtesy Kristina Greco

The team will place the bags wherever instructed by customers and work from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. to get the job done all weekend, she said. All money earned goes towards the program for travel expenses.

Junior Matthew Greco said working sun-up to sundown is tough, but it is well worth the effort and brings the team together in an important way.

“A life lesson that I have learned while doing mulch is that working as a team and relying on your friends is better than trying to do it all by yourself,” he said. “The support from the community means a lot to the team because without it we would not be able to afford the buses and hotels that we need as a team to play the better teams around the country.”

Greco said that she and the team are grateful to the repeat customers of Mulch Madness over the years, adding that the team could not achieve state championship level lacrosse without the community support.

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Health & Wellness Guide

Nutrition Check

Have a fiber-full day

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

Did you need help finding a healthy New Year’s resolution? Start this year with a nutrition-related goal that is beneficial for your whole body, from your heart to your gastrointestinal tract. Consuming at least 25g of fiber each day can be a great start for you. Fiber is the carbohydrate or starch that our bodies cannot digest. It acts as the broom to sweep out the digestive tract.

There are two different types of dietary fiber: soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber can help lower blood cholesterol and glucose levels. It is found in oats, carrots, apples, beans, peas, and citrus fruits. Insoluble fiber promotes the movement of material through your digestive system and increases stool bulk, which can help those who struggle with irregular stools or constipation. (CDC) This is found in wheat bran, nuts, beans, and vegetables such as potatoes and cauliflower.

Daily recommendations for adults (Mayo Clinic):

- Women: 21g to 25g
- Men: 30g to 38g

Health benefits of fiber: (Anderson et al., Nutr Rev. 2009)

- Normalizes bowel movements and supports optimal colon health

- Reduces risk of developing heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and certain gastrointestinal diseases
- Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels to support a healthy heart
- Helps control blood sugar levels and improve insulin sensitivity
- Supports achieving a healthy weight

It is important to gradually increase fiber in your diet, in order to avoid intestinal gas, bloating, or cramping. There are many ways you can incorporate fiber into your diet. For example, choosing a high-fiber cereal, this would be cereal that has five or more grains of fiber per serving. Another way to ensure you’re consuming your needed fiber is to eat fresh fruits and vegetables.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/high-fiber-foods/art-20050948>

Start making just one small change each week by adding in more fiber. You don’t need to hit the 25g per day right at the start!

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.

Fiber content of foods:

Food	Serving Size	Total fiber grams
Black beans, lentils, or split peas	1 cup	15.0-16.0
Green peas	1 cup	9.0
Berries	1 cup	8.0
Quinoa, oat bran, oatmeal	1 cup	5.0
Broccoli/turnip greens	1 cup	5.0
Apple/Pear	1 medium	4.5 - 5.5
Pistachios, almonds, or sunflower seeds	1 ounce	3.0 - 3.5

New glaucoma treatment options: Safer, faster, more effective

By Rajesh K. Shetty, M.D., Florida Eye Specialists
mail@floridanewsline.com

Nearly 3 million Americans have glaucoma. The prevalence of the disease has been on the rise for the last two decades, a rise that will continue with the aging population. The days of having to delay invasive surgery while patients suffer from discomfort are moving behind us.

Most recently, the FDA recently approved an exciting new usage for a device called the XEN® Gel Stent to treat glaucoma patients. The XEN Gel Stent is a small implant, the size of an eyelash. Soft and easy to insert, it is injected right beneath the surface of the eye, shunting fluid directly to the subconjunctival space and ultimately relieving pressure.

Primary open-angle glaucoma is the most common form of glaucoma, which is technically a group of eye conditions that damage the optic nerve. When pressure is too high, usually due to a backup of fluids inside the eye, the nerve cannot continue to be healthy, which can lead to vision problems. Unfortunately, once vision loss progresses, the damage is irreversible.

In the past, surgery often had to be delayed to try to control intraocular pressure (IOP) with eye drops and multiple oral medications and treatments. Treatment options advanced with the advent of micro invasive glaucoma surgeries (MIGS), which allow intervention for patients in earlier stages of glaucoma; however, the newest treatment for glaucoma, the XEN Gel Stent, allows the treatment of patients with moderate to severe glaucoma with less risk and much faster recovery time than the tradi-

tional trabeculectomy or tube shunt. This has led to improved results for patients.

The eyes are incredibly delicate and intricate organs — that’s why treating them, and diseases such as glaucoma, must be done with equal care and intricacy. Previously, glaucoma was treated by creating a drainage system for fluid to be redirected from inside to outside of the eye. A sophisticated network of flaps and stitches was used, which could take weeks to heal properly.

With the XEN Gel Stent, the procedure takes only 10 to 15 minutes. It’s minimally invasive with the injection of a tiny tube, and is self-healing, so it doesn’t require any stitches. This dramatically reduces recovery time for patients, with many patients returning to normal activity the next day.

This innovative technique of implanting the XEN Gel Stent has resulted in low pressures similar to traditional trabeculectomies, but with drastically improved postoperative results. Visual recovery is faster, outcomes are predictable, and post-operative visits and medications are reduced.

It’s critical for all patients 60 and older to receive regular, comprehensive eye exams to detect glaucoma and begin treatment right away. If you’re overdue for your latest exam, don’t wait any longer.

Rajesh K. Shetty, M.D., is a board-certified, double fellowship-trained ophthalmologist specializing in cataract and glaucoma surgeries. Visit FloridaEyeSpecialists.com for more information.

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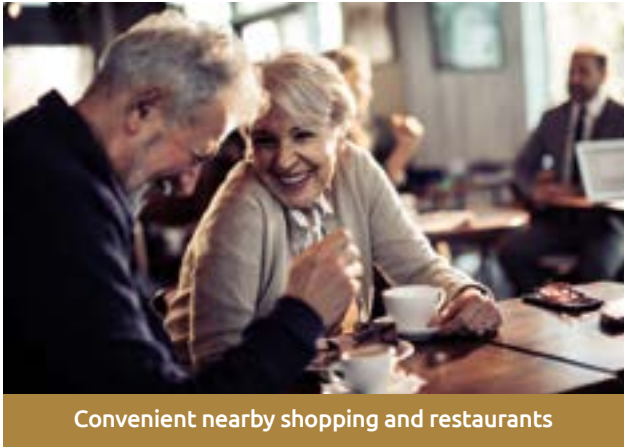
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