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Photo courtesy Linda McQueen
Cajun's Blueberry Hill, a standard fantasy African violet.

African Violet Society announces annual show

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society will stage a colorful exhibit and sale of African Violets and other Gesneriad specimens on Friday, March 24 and Saturday, March 25 at San Jose Church of Christ, 6233 San Jose Blvd. "Pearls of the Plant World" will be the society's 30th anniversary display and sale of African Violets. This event is open to the public.

The show and sale will feature an exceptional offering of these beautiful flowering houseplants, with colors and sizes for every taste and to fit every budget. Available also will be unusual varieties, starter plants, and hard-to-find supplies for this hobby.

Because they bloom year-round and are easy to grow, African violets have become the most popular houseplant.

African Violet cont. on pg. 9

Crown Point celebrates Literacy Week

By Mary Eyler
mail@floridanewslines.com

Crown Point Elementary students celebrated literacy week Jan. 23 – 27 at their school. Students and teachers participated in various reading activities throughout the week. They read numerous books, showed off their language skills, and paraded the hallways displaying their favorite book characters.

On Thursday, Crown Point opened its doors to community readers, including some from Mandarin United Methodist Church, Junior Achievement of North Florida, Fire Station 51, Chick-fil-A Mandarin, 101.5 Radio, State Farm, Voyage Chiropractic, Dawn Lopez with Action News, JSO, Mandarin Public Library, Duval County Public Schools executives and police department, ESOL department, school volunteers, and friends and family of school staff. These community readers read authentic literature and engaged in literacy discussions with students in every classroom.



Photos courtesy Mary Eyler
Dawn Lopez from Action News Jax reading to a group of third graders.



Photos courtesy Mary Eyler
Community readers celebrate Literacy Week at Crown Point Elementary.

Mandarin Art Festival: Meet the Artist

By Susie Scott
mail@floridanewslines.com

Jim and Lia Biondo have been jewelry designers and fabricators for more than 30 years and have been participating in the Mandarin Art Festival for 25 years. In 2022, Biondo Jewelry earned Best of Show honors and as such, their artwork will be featured in the 2023 Mandarin Art Festival posters and advertising materials. They live in NW St. Johns County.

The Bionds have almost retired from the art show circuit, but said they will continue to show in Mandarin for as long as possible.

"It's the best art show in Northeast Florida," Jim Biondo said.

Jim Biondo graduated from Penn State University with a degree in engineering and worked in different countries throughout Europe for 13 years. Upon his return to the United States, he became fascinated with gemstones and metals and began his formal jewelry training at Rowan State College in New Jersey. He then continued at the Center of Visual Arts and College of Arts in Philadelphia and has attended many workshops.

Jim Biondo's design inspirations have come from many different aspects of life, such as boot laces, gears, folded forms, teapots, and irregular shapes. His current metal of choice is pure silver, which is the whitest of all the precious metals.

Lia Biondo takes some of his unique pendants and designs Kumihimo (a

Art Festival cont. on pg. 11



Photo courtesy Susie Scott
Biondo Jewelry, Best in Show, Mandarin Art Festival 2022.

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"SHE SAVED MY LIFE"

Jacksonville resident Kate M. had been experiencing the painful side effects of Peripheral Neuropathy, "My feet and legs were extremely painful and my doctors told me there was nothing they could do. And that I would have to take Gabapentin for the rest of my life." Then she met Jacksonville's very own Dr. Jann Turpin.

Peripheral Neuropathy is the pain, discomfort and numbness caused by nerve damage of the peripheral nervous system. Kate explained that daily tasks like opening doors and using the bathroom were overwhelmingly painful. "How can you live for the next 30 years when you don't even want to get out of bed to do simple things?"

She was experiencing the burning, numbness, tingling and sharp pains that those suffering with neuropathy often describe. "The way that I would describe it, it's equivalent to walking on glass." Kate hadn't worn socks in five years and was wearing shoes two sizes too big so that nothing would 'touch' her feet.

Unfortunately Kate's story is all too familiar for the over 3 million people in the U.S. suffering from Peripheral Neuropathy.

If you're unfortunate enough to be facing the same disheartening prognosis, you're not sleeping at night because of the burning in your feet. You have difficulty walking, shopping or doing any activity for more than 30 minutes because of the pain. You're struggling with balance and living in fear that you might fall. Your doctor told you to 'just live with the pain' and you're taking medications that aren't working or have uncomfortable side effects.

Fortunately, four months ago Kate read an article about Dr. Jann Turpin and the work she was doing to treat those suffering from Peripheral

Neuropathy, without invasive surgeries or medications

Dr. Turpin, founder of Riverplace Acupuncture Integrative Medicine in Jacksonville, is using the time tested science of Acupuncture and a technology originally developed by NASA that assists in increasing blood flow and expediting recovery and healing to treat this debilitating disease.

"Now when I go to bed at night I don't have those shooting pains. I don't have that burning sensation. I don't have pain coming up my legs," Kate enthusiastically describes life after receiving Dr. Turpin's treatments.
"I can wear socks and shoes!"

Kate and her sister now operate a successful dog walking business, sometimes covering up to 5 miles a day.

"It's life altering. As far as I'm concerned Dr. Turpin saved my life!"

Dr. Turpin has been helping the senior community for over 11 years using the most cutting edge and innovative integrative medicine. Specializing in chronic pain cases, specifically those that have been deemed 'hopeless' or 'untreatable', she consistently generates unparalleled results.

What was once a missing link in senior healthcare is now easily accessible to the residents of Jacksonville, Florida.

If you've missed too many tee times because of pain or you've passed on dancing with friends because you're afraid of falling, it's time to call Dr. Turpin and the staff at Riverplace Acupuncture.

**It's time you let your golden years
BE GOLDEN!**

Great news! Dr. Turpin is now accepting new patients again. Unfortunately, she only has room for a limited number of new patients before March 31, 2023 so call (904) 720-8887 now to schedule a consultation.



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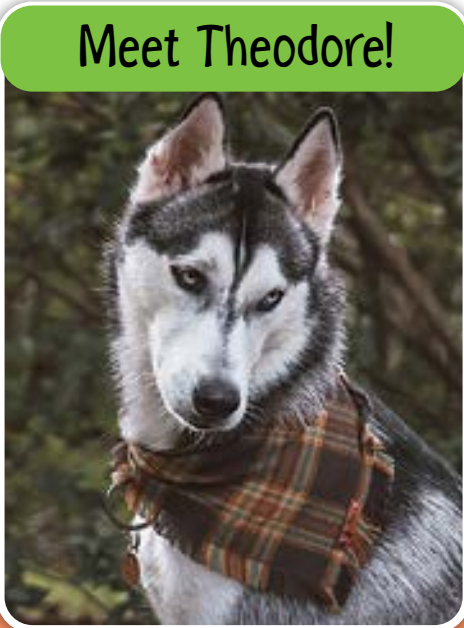
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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Breed:
Siberian Husky
Favorite activity:
Snuggling, playing with sticks and hiking with his moms.
Favorite food:
Apple slices and broccoli.
Favorite friend:
Atlas the dachshund mix.
How did your BFF get his name:
As soon as I picked him up, I knew he was a Theodore!



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

When you advertise, you encourage repeat business, create traffic, and attract new customers!

Don't miss our April Issue featuring our Summer Camp and Activities Guide! Deadline 3/17/23

Call Linda Gay today to reserve your space! 904.607.5062

Happy St. Patrick's Day
From your friends at
Mandarin NewsLine!

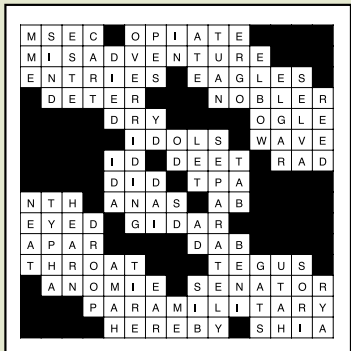
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MYSTERY PHOTO

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

Last month's Mystery Photo was Alberts Field on Orange Picker Road.

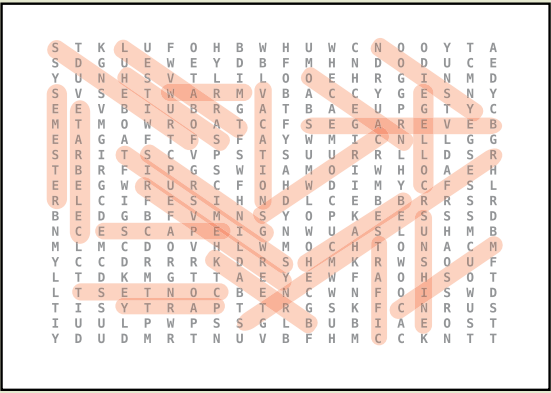


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Answers
to our
Puzzles
PG 10



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904.246.6832
wbu.com/jacksonvillebeach

World Golf Village
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(At Murabella)
904.209.5754
wwwbu.com/staugustine

March

Community Calendar

What's Happening in Mandarin

Shuffleboard is played on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. at Mandarin Park. The courts are at the park entrance next to the tennis courts. Try to get there a few minutes early for court assignments. Beginners are welcome. Just show up (a few minutes before playing time), unless it rains.

Toast of Jax Toastmasters meets every Saturday, except on holiday weekends, at 7:30 a.m. at Mandarin Lutheran Church, 11900 San Jose Boulevard. Guests are welcome. The meetings can also be attended online at <https://toastofjax.toastmastersclubs.org/>.

Acoustic Jam Session is held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Kids' Building of Trinity Mandarin, located at 2955 Orange Picker Road. This jam is open to everyone and all levels of ability are welcome. Come to play with the group or just sit back and enjoy the music. For more information, contact Burt Coulliette at (904) 302-0423.

Playing HOOKie, a group for those who enjoy knitting, crocheting and looming (with all items donated to charity) meets every Wednesday from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at The Table Cafe, 10391 Old St. Augustine Road. Visit the group's Facebook page (Playing HOOKie) or email playinghookie2022@gmail.com for more information.

3rd – 4th: Mandarin Garden Club's annual \$1 Clothing and Jewelry Sale will be held on Friday, March 3 and Saturday, March 4 from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. each day. Gently used clothes, shoes and accessories for the family will be sold for \$1 each. Some boutique and jewelry items will be priced slightly higher. Cash only is accepted. The event features free parking and admission. The Masons' "Famous" Barbeque lunch will be for sale both days. The Mandarin Garden

Club is located at 2892 Loretto Road. Visit mandaringardenclub.org for more information.

4th: The historic buildings of the Mandarin Museum, including the 1875 Webb/Jones farmhouse, 1876 Barn, 1898 St. Joseph's Mission Schoolhouse for African-American Children, and Losco Winery log cabin will be open from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on March 4 and March 18 in Walter Jones Historical Park, 11964 Mandarin Road. The 1911 Mandarin Store and Post Office will also be open on March 18 from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at 12471 Mandarin Road, just a mile west of the Walter Jones Historical Park. This building is on the National Register of Historic Places. Visit www.mandarinmuseum.net or call (904) 268-0784 for more information.

5th: The Under the Oaks community music jam, hosted by the Mandarin Museum & Historical Society and North Florida Folk Network will be held underneath the beautiful trees in front of Mandarin Museum on Sunday, March 5 from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. If you play an acoustic instrument, feel free to join the song circle. If not, just bring a chair and relax and listen. The schoolhouse and gift shop will be open during this time.

6th: Southside Newcomers Club will host its monthly Monday Breakfast on the first Monday of each month (this month, March 6) at 10 a.m. at iHop, 3250 Hodges Blvd. Ladies who are new to the area, have had a lifestyle change or wish to enlarge their group of friends are invited to attend. Contact sncmembership84@gmail.com or call (904) 683-4170 for more information.

6th: Square Dancing is offered every Monday night at 6:30 p.m.

at the Mandarin Senior Center, 3848 Hartley Road. The first two sessions are free and then the cost is \$5 per person. Call (904) 255-6750 for more information.

7th: Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, March 7 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church in the Loft on the County Dock Road side of the church at 2501 Loretto Road. Lisa Schreck, judge candidate, will share what the judges look for when judging quilts. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

11th: Southside Multiple Sclerosis group meets on the second Saturday of each month (this month on March 11) at 2 p.m. at the JCA, 8505 San Jose Blvd. Every other month there is a speaker and on alternate months there are group discussions on the current situation with our MS. Call group leader Susan Armstrong, (904) 396-1082 for more information.

11th: Second Saturday Arts and Farmers Market at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. on March 11 from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Visit www.facebook.com/SecondSatMarket/ for more information.

11th: The Southern Genealogist's Exchange Society will meet Saturday, March 11 at 10 a.m. at Watson Realty, 4194 San Juan Ave. in Jacksonville. This meeting is free and open to the public. Visit www.sgesjax.org or call (904) 778-1000 for more information.

20th: The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, March 20 at the First Christian Church, 11924

San Jose Blvd. Georgina Lewis will present a trunk show. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

23rd: Mandarin Women's Club will hold its monthly luncheon and annual fashion show at the Ramada Inn, 3130 Hartley Road in Mandarin on March 23. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. and reservations are required. Club members will model casual and smart casual outfits provided by Dillard's at the Town Center. The cost of the luncheon is \$25 and must be received by March 16; to make reservations and obtain payment instructions, contact Susie at spm104@aol.com or (904) 885-8952. Visit www.mandarinwomensclub.com for more information.

23rd: Mandarin Republican Club will meet on Thursday, March 23 at St. Mary's Seafood, 11290 Old St. Augustine Road. Social time begins at 6 p.m. and the meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. First time visitors are welcome.

28th: Jacksonville Fine Arts Forum luncheon will be held on March 28 at 11:30 a.m. at the Club Continental 2143 Astor Street in Orange Park. Photographer Will Dickey will be the featured guest. For reservations text Jean at (904) 210-6661. Be sure to include your full name.

31st: The Italian American Club of Jacksonville will hold its popular Spaghetti to Go on Friday, March 31 from 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. at the club building, 2838 Westberry Road. Visit www.iacofjacksonville.com or call (904) 586-2700 for more information.

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with Duval County School Board Member
Lori Hershey, District 7

Q: Do you have an update on the Sniffen and Spellman, PA report that was in response to the grand jury investigation?

A: In response to the grand jury’s report, the school board hired a Tallahassee law firm, Sniffen and Spellman, PA, to do a review of the district’s practices for school safety to ensure our alignment with state protocols and procedures.

In mid-February, we received a good report from them that showed we had corrected the errors noted by the grand jury. Now the school board has asked for a deeper dive to present a clearer understanding as to what caused us to be out of step as noted in the grand jury report.

Q: Can you shed light on the district’s stance on books in classroom libraries?

A: Duval County has taken the extra effort to comb through classroom library books with the focus to ensure that books in classrooms are appropriate for that class. It is possible for a book to be in a lower grade classroom and have it moved to a higher grade classroom. Books that are adjusted in a classroom library may still be available in a school’s media center.

The difference between a classroom library and the media center is that for a classroom library, books are appropriate for that grade level reading. In a media center, books are available to be checked out at will.

Q: Are there any new volunteer opportunities in the district?

A: The district will begin to scan books for media centers and classroom libraries. Anyone interested in helping create inventory lists for classrooms, reviewing school-based purchase decisions, and assisting in creating a multi-year plan for the acquisition of books should contact their school.

The district is also forming a committee to allow stakeholders to participate in curriculum review by reconsidering library books and supplemental materials when reconsideration of those materials is requested by a student’s parent or guardian or a resident of Duval County. Volunteers are needed for this committee; contact the school district for more information.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

A: They can email me at HersheyL@duvalschools.org or call me at (904) 390-2375.

100th Day celebration at Crown Point



On Wednesday, Feb.1, Crown Point Elementary School kindergartners celebrated 100 days of learning. The students had a lot of fun with the number 100. They decorated 100-day hats, made their own design shirts, counted items up to 100, and some came to school dressed as 100 year-olds. Pictured are teacher Kim Hickox and her kindergarten class getting ready to join the parade.

Advertise your kid-friendly business in our
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Contact Linda Gay 904-607-5062 or Linda@FloridaNewsLine.com to find out how!

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F.A.Q. — Early Voting

What is early voting?

As part of election reform legislation in Florida, early voting has been an available option since 2002. The early voting period must start at least on the 10th day before the election and end on the third day before the election. In addition, supervisors of elections have the option to offer more early voting on the 15th, 14th, 13th, 12th, 11th, or second day before an election. During this period, early voting may be provided no less than eight and no more than 12 hours per day at each site. It has already proven to be a success in Duval County and is getting more popular with each election.

How is it done?

It's simple. Registered voters can go to any of the locations designated as early voting centers and cast a paper ballot just as they would normally do on Election Day.

Why should I vote early?

The intent is to meet the needs of busy people who want more options than just voting on a single day at a single precinct. We want to remove any physical or psychological barriers that might prevent someone from voting. If you know, for example, that you have a full day's worth of activities on Election Day, you can make it easier on yourself by taking advantage of the early voting option. Between early voting, voting by mail and traditional polling on Election Day, there are a number of voting options so that no one should be prevented from voting.

Are there any drawbacks to early voting?

No. Early voting provides flexibility and convenience; however, some voters

may wish to wait until Election Day to cast their votes. Historically, there has always been a crush of last-minute news coverage or other information about the candidates that happens in the final days of a campaign. This information may be helpful in making a decision; however, if you know whom you support, early voting may be a good option for you.

Can I change my vote?

No. Once you have voted, either through early voting or by an absentee ballot, your vote is cast and final.

How does this affect vote-by-mail ballots?

Early voting is another option to allow people to participate in the election process. Voters who may be out of town on Election Day, or otherwise be unable to cast a ballot at that time, can now choose between voting early or requesting and mailing in the vote-by-mail ballot.

How will early voting affect the election?

Apart from providing more options as to how you vote, it is hoped that early voting will encourage more voter participation. By law, votes are tallied at the conclusion of Election Day, whether they have been through early voting, voting by mail or on Election Day.

What do I need to vote early?

All that is needed is your current photo and signature ID. You may also bring your sample ballot with you that is already marked with your choices. That way you can quickly enter your choices on the ballot, place your ballot in the tabulator, and be on your way.

Source: Duval County Supervisor of Elections, www.duval elections.com

Mandarin Polling Locations

Please check your Voter Information Card or visit www.duval elections.com/Voter-Information/Precinct-Finder to determine which of these precincts is yours:

512: Community Hospice Of NE FL, 4266 Sunbeam Road, Jacksonville 32257

601: Italian American Club, 2838 Westberry Road, Jacksonville 32223

602: All Souls Anglican Church, 4042 Hartley Road, Jacksonville 32257

603: Mandarin Regional Library, 3330 Kori Road, Jacksonville 32257

604: Mandarin Presbyterian Church, 2501 Loretto Road, Jacksonville 32223

605: Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, 12236 Mandarin Road, Jacksonville

32223

606: South Mandarin Regional Library, 12125 San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville 32223

607: Mandarin Moose Lodge #42, 4450 Losco Road, Jacksonville 32257

608: Freedom Christian Fellowship, 3423 Loretto Road, Jacksonville 32223

609: Burnett Park Recreation Center, 3740 Burnett Park Road, Jacksonville 32257

610: St. Justin Martyr, 12460 Old St Augustine Road, Jacksonville 32258

611: Holiday Inn Bartram Park South, 13934 Village Lake Circle, Jacksonville 32258

612: Mandarin Church of Christ, 12791 Old St Augustine Road, Jacksonville 32258

Vote as you please.
But please vote!

Unitary Election Guide

F.A.Q. Voting at the Polls

What hours are the polls open in Duval County?

On Election Day, the polls are open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. Early voting centers will also be available throughout the county prior to elections; however, the timeframe for the early voting centers will not be announced until closer to each election.

Where should I go to vote?

Your voter information card shows the precinct, polling place, and voting districts for your address. On Election Day, you must vote in the precinct in which you live. Please make sure that the Duval County Supervisor of Elections' office has your current address so that your name will appear on the correct poll register. Early voting centers, along with the times and dates of operation, will be announced prior to Election Day.

If your polling location changes, you will receive a new voter information card through the mail. Your polling location will also be on the sample ballot you receive in the mail prior to the election dates.

If you have moved and/or cannot find your voter information card, you should contact our office at (904) 255-8683 for instructions.

Do I need to bring anything with me in order to vote?

Yes. Florida law requires you to have a photo and signature identification. Any one of the following photo IDs will be accepted:

- A Florida Driver License
- Florida ID Card issued by a state agency
- U.S. Passport
- Military ID
- Student ID
- Retirement center ID
- Veteran health ID card issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- A license to carry a concealed weapon or firearm issued pursuant to s. 790.06, F.S.
- Employee ID card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the Federal Government, the state, a county, or municipality.

If you do not have a proper ID, you will be allowed to vote a provisional ballot.

Voting a Provisional Ballot

If you vote a provisional ballot solely because you did not provide an acceptable photo and signature iden-

tification at the polls, you do not need to provide any further evidence of your eligibility in order for your ballot to count. You will be provided a written notice of your rights as a provisional ballot voter. (Section 101.048, F.S.) The local Canvassing Board will simply compare your signature on the provisional ballot certificate with the signature on your voter registration record. If the signatures match, your provisional ballot will be counted.

If you vote a provisional ballot for other reasons (for example, your eligibility is challenged by another person, you are in the wrong precinct when you vote, you do not appear on the precinct register, etc.), you will be provided written notice of your right to present evidence of your eligibility. You must provide the evidence to your respective Supervisor of Elections no later than 5 p.m. of the second day following the election. (Section 101.048, F.S.) The local Canvassing Board will examine your provisional ballot certificate and all other information

and evidence available. Then based on a preponderance of the evidence, the board will determine whether to count your provisional ballot.

Instructions on how to find out if your provisional ballot was counted, and if not, the reason(s) why, will be contained in your notice of rights handed to you at the time that you vote a provisional ballot. Information as to whether your provisional ballot was counted or not must be made available no later than 30 days following the election. (Sections 101.048(5)-(6), F.S.)

What type of voting machines does Duval County use?

Duval County uses both optical-scan voting machines and AutoMARK voting machines at all voting precincts and early voting centers. The AutoMARK machines are equipped with audio capabilities and magnification features for any voter to use, including those with special needs.

Source: Duval County Supervisor of Elections, www.duval elections.com

Election Dates
First: March 21, 2023
General: May 16, 2023

Early Voting
First: March 6, 2023 - March 19, 2023
General: May 1, 2023 - May 14, 2023

Where do I vote?
Precinct Finder:
www.duval elections.com/Voter-Information/Precinct-Finder

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Life

Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewslines.com

Laura Renstrom

Laura Renstrom, who is celebrating her 12th year as a volunteer at THE PLAYERS, is also the tournament's newest Vice-Chair and the fourth female chairperson. In her first year of this prestigious position, she said she is excited to take on new challenges and is ready to see the tournament play out.

As the newest Vice Chair, Renstrom is in charge of the Volunteer Services Division, which oversees the 11 committees that basically ensure that volunteers at the tournament have the best experience possible. Included are committees such as uniforms, Darlene's Diner, credentials, and volunteer transportation.

Renstrom is a trial lawyer with the law firm of Holland & Knight, where she specializes in commercial litigation, including product liability, tort and class actions, as well as business, insurance and contract disputes. She lives in Mandarin with her husband, Nathan and two young daughters, aged four and two.

Q: What do you like best about living in Mandarin?

A: I love the natural beauty of Mandarin! On the weekends, you can regularly find my family exploring a new park or out on the water.

Q: How did you get started as a volunteer?

Get to Know ...

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

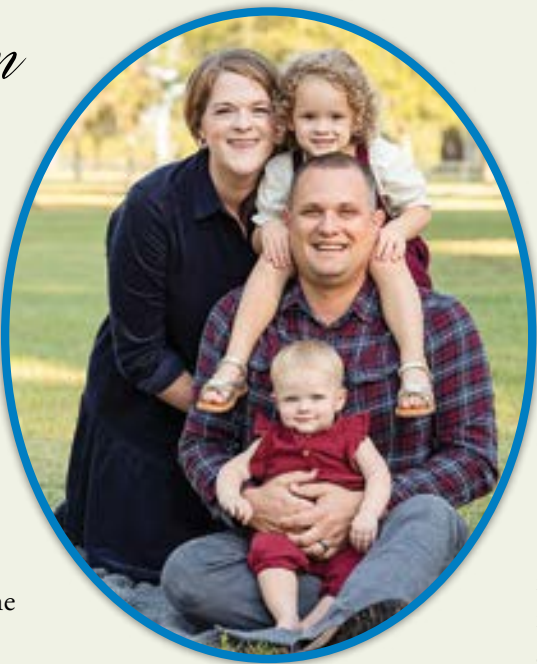


Photo courtesy Laura Renstrom
Laura Renstrom and family.

A: I was born and raised in Ponte Vedra Beach and my dad was a volunteer. I became involved with THE PLAYERS at a very young age, first serving as a youth runner and then in middle school and high school I was a standard bearer. After I graduated from law school and returned to this area, I wanted to get connected back to the community so I started volunteering at THE PLAYERS as an adult. My first position, which was great for me, was as the assistant chair of the standard bearers.

Q: What are some of the positions you have held up to this point?

A: I've held a variety of positions, including chair of the Benefactor's Tent, which was a hospitality venue on the 17th hole. I was also assistant chair of volunteer apparel and chair of the offsite shuttle committee. This called for some early mornings, like 4:30 a.m., as our volunteers shuttle in from Davis Park and many shifts start at 5 a.m. For the last two years,

I have been chair of the Tournament Support committee. We call this the "Swiss Army knife" of committees, as these volunteers help wherever they are needed that day. It was a lot of fun and my day was spent coordinating and tracking volunteers and making sure everyone was fully utilized.

Q: What was your favorite position?

A: I'd have to say that the hospitality position was very fun. The days flew by. The spectators were having fun, but the volunteers behind the scenes were working hard to make sure everything was seamless.

Q: What is it about THE PLAYERS that keeps you coming back?

A: For me, it's all about the community, with the tournament's community involvement being the first thing. I've always felt the need to give back and be a part of something bigger than myself. THE PLAYERS gives so much money to charities and it's very moving to see the results. Secondly, our volunteers are like family. So many return year after year and I see their special pride in being a part of this event in our local area. It's special to be a part of it.

Q: What would you say to someone who might be interested in volunteering at THE PLAYERS?

A: I'd say do it! We have more than 2,000 volunteers, but are always looking for new ones for next year. Volunteer registration is in the fall. Across the board, there are so many opportunities that you can pick an area that interests you. All the information is available at theplayersvolunteers.com.

African Violet cont. from pg. 1

On hand at the event will be member experts to answer questions. Is your treasured plant growing fewer or infrequent blooms? Is wick watering the best way to water a violet? How often should you fertilize? What type of fertilizer and how much? How much light should they get? Are LED lights beneficial? How often should you report?

And what are Gesneriads? They are cousins to the African violet and like the same growing conditions. Explore the episcias, streptocarpus, primulinas, alsobias, and many more.

The Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society has both experienced growers and "newbies." These members share the joy of growing plants and solve the occasional difficulty that may arise from common mistakes or setbacks.

Visit JacksonvilleViolets.org for more information about "Pearls of the Plant World," club activities, and educational resources in print and video.

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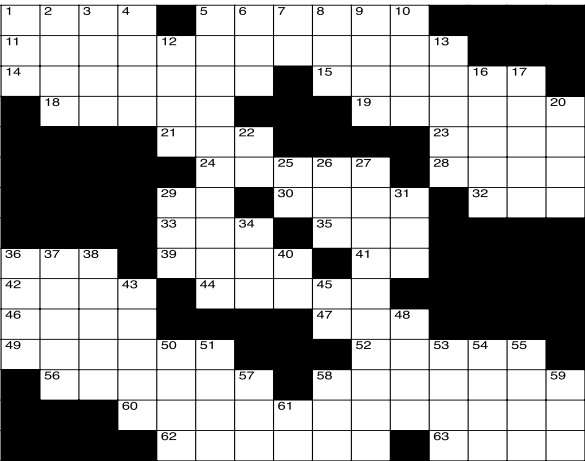
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Millisecond
- 5. Narcotic drug
- 11. Accident
- 14. Formal submissions
- 15. Popular 70s rock band
- 18. Discourage from doing
- 19. More socially elite
- 21. Arid
- 23. A way to look
- 24. Heroes
- 28. A surfer rides it
- 29. Potato state
- 30. Insect repellent
- 32. Cool!
- 33. Have already done
- 35. Collegiate women's fraternity
- 36. To the ___ degree
- 39. Gasteyer and de Armas are two
- 41. Blood type
- 42. Looked over
- 44. Language of Cameroon and Chad
- 46. Species of armadillo
- 47. Touch softly
- 49. Part of your upper body
- 52. Large, stocky lizards
- 56. Lack of social or ethical standards
- 58. Congressman
- 60. Unofficial force
- 62. As a result of this utterance
- 63. A main branch of Islam

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Woman (French)
- 2. Province of Pakistan
- 3. This (Spanish)
- 4. Transportation device
- 5. Greater in importance or priority
- 6. The human foot
- 7. Within
- 8. Consumed
- 9. Respectful Malaysian term
- 10. Therefore
- 12. Ceased to exist
- 13. Type of macaroni
- 16. English composer
- 17. Wooded tract
- 20. Tall, slender-leaved plant
- 22. 36 inches
- 25. Take too much (abbr.)
- 26. Allow
- 27. Individually
- 29. Journalist Tarbell
- 31. Bar bill
- 34. Hong Kong food stall: ___ pai dong
- 36. Not messy
- 37. Species that includes reedmace
- 38. Former MLB catcher Ed
- 40. Northern U.S. state
- 43. Wilt
- 45. Commercial
- 48. Bolivian river
- 50. Nursemaid
- 51. A car needs four
- 53. Guns (slang)
- 54. American state
- 55. Clusters of fern fronds
- 57. Body part
- 58. A person's brother or sister
- 59. Breed of sheep native to Sweden
- 61. Or I

SPRING BREAK WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- BEACH
- BEVERAGES
- BREAK
- CELEBRATE
- COLLEGE
- CONTEST
- CROWDS
- ESCAPE
- FRIENDS
- MUSIC
- NOISY
- OCEAN
- PARTY
- REFRESHMENTS
- REVELRY
- SEMESTER
- SOUTH
- SPRING
- SUNSHINE
- SWIMSUIT
- TRAFFIC
- TRAVEL
- VACATION
- WARM



Solve the code to discover words related to spring.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 9 = O)

- A. 23 8 9 9 4 14
Clue: Flowers
- B. 24 8 9 1 25 5
Clue: Petaled part of plant
- C. 1 2 5 4
Clue: Pleasant temperature
- D. 5 2 21 13
Clue: Precipitation



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Art Festival cont. from pg. 1

Japanese weaving technique) necklaces to accentuate the colors in the gemstones. She fell in love with Kumihimo braiding when she saw the beautiful work of an expert at a fine arts show. After making some time in between her work obligations, she took an intense course from that artist and has never looked back. Kumihimo braiding combined function and beauty when the braids were used by the Samurai warriors to attach swords to their sashes and to decorate the handles of their weapons.

The Bionds go to wholesale gem shows several times a year in search of special stones to make their jewelry pieces. They call it “treasure

hunting.” Sometimes it takes several years for the design inspirations to come. The Bionds are advocates of continuous education; however, most of their techniques have been learned through irreplaceable “hands on” experience. They say their goal is to help beautify every person who wears their creations. Visit www.BiondoJewelry.com to see pictures of their jewelry and their art show schedule.

The 2023 Mandarin Art Festival will be held Easter weekend, April 8 – 9, 2023 at the Mandarin Community Club. Visit www.mandarinartfestival.org for more information.



PopHistory

By Scott A. Grant
mail@floridanewsline.com

9300 Luftballons

Anyone who has ever flown to the west coast and then back knows that the trip home is shorter than the trip out. That is because of the jet stream. The jet stream is caused by the Earth's rotation and blows fairly consistently from west to east at a height of four to eight miles. The “river of air” can push an object, like a balloon, at speeds from 100 to 275 miles per hour.

The Chinese government recently took advantage of this to launch a spy balloon that passed over the United States from west to east riding the jet stream. Because the Chinese balloon flew at extremely high altitude, it traveled somewhat more slowly than a balloon would at lower altitude. This was not the first time that a foreign power has used the slower moving, high altitude jet stream, against the United States.

In 1944 and 1945, the Japanese launched 9300 “weather balloons,” each carrying an explosive charge. The concept was developed at the Noborito Laboratory, also known as the Imperial Japanese Army's Number 9 Research Lab. They called the bombs Fu-Go. Japanese scientists discovered the jet stream in 1927 and they attempted to use that knowledge against an enemy.

The Fu-Go were modified weather balloons fitted with incendiary and anti-per-

sonnel weapons. The idea was that they would float across the Pacific and then crash in the Pacific Northwest when they ran out of fuel to stay aloft. The Japanese hoped they would start fires, kill, and spread terror. Most of the bombs crashed harmlessly in the Pacific Ocean.

The trip across the ocean took three days, a distance of almost 5,000 miles. Only about 300 made it all the way. Those that did were the first intercontinental weapons used during warfare. A few exploded in Montana. One landed in Mexico. Some fell on Oregon and Washington, but did not start fires because the forests were too wet.

The US government knew about the weapons, but decided to keep that information a secret to avoid panicking the public. In May 1945, a group of Sunday School children stumbled upon a balloon bomb while on a picnic near Bly, Oregon. When they investigated their discovery, it exploded. Five children and the pregnant wife of the minister were all killed instantly. They were the first and only victims of the Japanese terror weapon.

Scott A. Grant is a local historian and author. He writes about things he finds interesting and welcomes your comments at scottg@standfastic.com.

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Jacksonville's Celebrate Reading Week is March 27 – April 1

By Jeremy Yates
mail@floridanewslines.com

Do your kids and teens love reading and talking about books? They could win \$100 in cash! All they have to do is write about their favorite book (and why others should read it). The most persuasive book review from each age group (kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth grade, sixth through eighth, and grades nine through 12) wins!

The “Celebrate Reading Week” Book Review Writing Contest is accepting entries now through March 10, 2023. Email entries (up to 300 words) to ilovebooks@coj.net with the reviewer’s name, parent’s name, grade level and

contact information. You can also find entry forms at the library. Winners will be notified by March 29 and publicly announced at a special event on April 1.

South Mandarin Library will be hosting another Live from the Library program during DCPS Spring Break. Don’t miss Scaly Sensations with Wild Wonders, an interactive, entertaining and educational program with local and exotic reptiles. Just be sure to register as spots fill up quickly.

Our popular Little Readers storytime (for ages birth to five years old) continues every Friday at the Mandarin Library at 10:15 a.m. and 11 a.m. Or join us for Pop-Up Storytime in the park at

South Mandarin Library every Thursday at 10 a.m.

Do you know a preschooler (aged two through five) with sensory sensitivities? The new Sensory Storytime meets at Mandarin Library Wednesdays at 11 a.m. and combines traditional storytime components with several supportive elements.

Read with Tenor, our friendly Newfoundland therapy dog at South Mandarin Library Saturday, March 11 at 2:30 p.m. and Wednesday, March 29 at 2:30 p.m.

Looking for hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) books and activities? Here you go:

Homeschool Labs: Robotics at South Mandarin Branch continues every Friday at 11 a.m. through March. Designed for teens and tweens (ages 10 through 14), they’ll learn what robots do, how they move and get hands on with some actual robots.



Photo courtesy Jacksonville Public Library
Celebrate Reading Week is March 27 – April 1.

You can also join us after school at the Mandarin Library for Junior Scientists (ages five through eight) Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. Then, on Thursdays at 3:30 p.m. you’ll train to be a “secret agent” and learn the science of cryptology in our new Junior Scientists: Spy Lab (ages nine through 12).

If your little ones are artistically inclined, join us Tuesdays at 4 p.m. at South Mandarin Library for Junior Artists (ages five through eight) or Junior Artists: Sculpture Lab Wednesdays at 4 p.m. (for artists aged nine through 12).

Find more programs and register online at www.jaxpubliclibrary.org/events.



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Retired Bolles teacher returns to share family's experience in Holocaust

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Bolles upper school social studies teacher Jennifer Gomez welcomed retired Bolles AP Art History and visual arts teacher Helen Meatte, a second-generation Holocaust survivor, to speak with her U.S. History students about the atrocities committed during this dark time in history.

She began the discussion by describing the Holocaust as a slow and deliberate process that led to tragedy and the death of millions. Meatte compared this series of escalations engineered by the Nazis with a frog being placed in a pot of water that gradually comes to a boil. She also taught the students about the pyramid of hate, which begins with prejudiced attitudes that develop into acts of prejudice before intensifying

into discrimination, violence and, ultimately, genocide.

Meatte asked the students about their World War II studies before sharing more about her family’s harrowing stories of loss, suffering and survival. Her blonde, blue-eyed mother hid in plain sight in Poland using forged papers and went undetected for five years working at a slave labor camp. Her father’s candy shop in Germany was confiscated by the Nazis, but he was able to escape and move to the United States. The rest of their family wasn’t as fortunate, with many perishing in Auschwitz.

Meatte visited the class as part of the LJD Jewish Family and Community Services Holocaust Survivors Speakers Bureau. She said she feels called to share her family’s stories to ensure history doesn’t repeat itself.



Photo courtesy Bolles
Bolles retired teacher Helen Meatte recently spoke to Bolles students about the Holocaust.



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By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale
mail@floridanewsline.com

According to NOAA, we can expect drought conditions until the end of April, which coincides with our expectations that spring is our “dry season” (<https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>). Unfortunately, temperatures are predicted to be higher than normal, so we should take particular care of new plants in our landscapes, especially shrubs and trees. Making sure there is sufficient mulch will help, and if you are practically inclined you might decide to install a simple drip irrigation system: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ae524>.

With the warmer weather you are probably looking at your lawn and considering what it needs. Please avoid “weed and feed” products. If you have a problem with annual weeds, use a pre-emergent product before they start growing. (Depending on local conditions, there may still be time before the end of February.) Fertilizer should only be applied when the grass is actively growing, otherwise it’s simply wasted as it will leach away before the grass has a chance to take it up. Basically, weeds will start to grow before the grass begins to green up, so there is no optimum time to apply a combined product for it to be properly effective. For more details on fertilizing your lawn, please see <https://tinyurl.com/mr275wsc> and for understanding weed control, see <https://tinyurl.com/zhhvhanz>.

UF has recently constructed a website for homeowners wishing to grow citrus. As you may know, “citrus greening,” spread by the tiny Asian psyllid, has been plaguing commercial citrus groves and has spread to home landscapes. This disease can be devastating to trees without a great deal of management, but now there are guidelines specifically for homeowners, and there are newer cultivars available that have been bred to be resistant to the

disease. Here is the information you need to choose, plant, and grow healthy citrus: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/home-citrus/>.

As our landscapes begin to green up, it’s a good time to see if any prohibited invasive plants have snuck in. These are plants that have been proven detrimental to the balance of our natural areas. They crowd out native plants and provide next to no benefits for our wildlife. An easy one to spot is elephants’ ears, which spread easily along ditches and waterways. Another is the high-climbing cat’s claw vine, which seeds itself around all too successfully. You have probably seen it blooming up in the treetops, and maybe have admired those sunny yellow trumpet flowers. It’s not to be confused with the fragrant spring-flowering native vine, Carolina jessamine, *Gelsemium sempervirens*. But its beauty is truly only skin deep. Mature plants develop large tubers which are especially hard to dig out along fence lines and from beneath shrubs. I know from experience! And weed killers have limited effectiveness, although they can keep some top growth down. To learn more, check out <https://floridainvasivespecies.org/forhomeowners.cfm>. This is a visual guide to plants assessed by UF/IFAS: <https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu/assessments/>.

I’ve already found aphids on my collards, so I’m using a relatively benign product, insecticidal soap, to stop them spreading. It’s too early for lady beetles to find them, but when they turn up I expect good things to happen. Nature has a way of balancing itself if given a chance and we need to do that at the personal level. The way we manage our landscapes, beginning with our soil, is so important. For guidelines on how to do it, check out the Florida-Friendly Gardening Guide: <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>. Happy spring!

Did you know? Organic foods gaining popularity

The popularity of organic foods is undeniable. According to a 2021 survey from the Organic Trade Association, total sales of organic foods topped more than \$60 billion in 2020. Data from Mercaris, which provides market insight and analysis on organics and non-GMO foods, supports that finding and indicates that organic food sales grew by 9 percent between 2009 and 2019.

During that same time period, conventional food sales grew only

3 percent, which illustrates just how popular organics have become over the last decade and a half. And despite being a year marked by a pandemic and the considerable economic uncertainty it unleashed, 2020 proved to be an especially good year for organics.

Mercaris reports that organic food sales increased by 13 percent in 2020, which serves as another indicator that consumers are increasingly demanding organics over conventional foods.

Mandarin Garden Club gets crafty with seniors



Photos courtesy Juliet Johnson
A group of kindly and artistic Mandarin Garden Club members helped Wyndham Lakes Assisted Living Center’s own garden club members decorate pine slices — bringing a connection between nature and garden art into their lives. Residents painted flowers, leaves, and butterflies on each wood slice to decorate their rooms. The Mandarin Garden Club, 2892 Loretto Road, is a non-profit organization that relies on fundraising to support the club and its gardens. The gardens (designated by the National Wildlife Federation as a Wildlife Habitat) are open to the public to enjoy and learn about the beauty of nature from dawn to dusk, except during special rental dates. Visit www.mandaringardenclub.org for more information.

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Fishing

Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis
mail@floridanewsline.com

Although the calendar says it's March, it might as well be April because it seemed like we skipped February. I can't believe how many 80 degree days we had last month. We'll see how much that jump starts spring fishing for us.

Specks are still biting, but expect them to be more scattered as those that are done spawning return to deeper haunts and a few late to the party will occupy the shallower waters. You may have to put in some time searching for them as you fish shallow and deep until you find where most of them are. I like using jigs for this since you can cover the whole water column.

Bass fishing is also a good bet this month. I typically start transitioning to bass fishing in mid- to late February as the speck fishing gets tougher and the big female bass start moving to edges waiting to bed. Whether you like throwing artificials or shiners, it's a great month to catch a giant.

Smaller redfish and sheepshead are showing up in the river, so you definitely have a reason to venture out to the main river. We caught shrimp in March last year, so it might be worth throwing the net a few times to get some bait until the season closes at the end of the month. Docks, shell beds, and points are good places to try if you find some shrimp.

Surf fishing is picking up and as soon as the beach water temperatures get 65 degrees and warmer, pompano will be back in the picture. Whiting will be too, but a lot of them have stuck around through the winter. Target clean water with high quality bait like clams, sand fleas, and the freshest shrimp you can get for best results. I'll buy live shrimp from the bait shop and use that.

Hopefully the 90 degree days hold off just a little longer so we can enjoy some great fishing in comfortable weather. Tight lines.

Special Olympics Florida comes to Jacksonville Equestrian Center

By NewsLine Staff
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The Jacksonville Equestrian Center, a multi-purpose facility managed by Northeast Florida Equestrian Society/H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc., a non-profit organization offering adaptive equine therapy programs with therapy horses, is hosting Special Olympics Florida for Equestrian Sports on March 5, 2023 for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualifier will include equitation, working rail, pole bending and barrel racing events.

The Special Olympics Florida's mission is to provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people with intellectual disabilities who wish to participate, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

"We are thrilled to welcome back Special Olympics Florida in 2023. This

year, we're able to align their mission with NFES/H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc., which works to provide adaptable riding programs and equine therapy to the Jacksonville area," said Sam Sykes, equestrian, Special Olympic coach and program director for the NFES/H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc.

Visit jaxhorsetherapies.org for more information.



Photo courtesy H.O.R.S.E. Therapies
Special Olympics Florida for Equestrian Sports will be held at the Jacksonville Equestrian Center on March 5, 2023

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Nutrition Check

National Nutrition Month

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

March is National Nutrition Month, which is when it is important to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. As part of this month's celebration, a goal is to increase the awareness of RDNs as the indispensable providers for food and nutrition services and recognize their commitment to helping people lead happy, healthier lives. In light of this month being about celebrating nutrition and working towards improved eating habits, I thought we could go over a couple of inclusive, supportive eating habits.

1. Develop a mindful eating pattern: Mindful eating is an approach that focuses on an individual's sensual awareness of the food and their experience of the food. Ways this can be achieved is:

- Pay attention to food you eat to include balance, moderation, and variety
- Eat slowly to enjoy the food's taste and flavors
- Listen to your body's signals of fullness and hunger

2. Enjoy food traditions and social

experiences:

- Be creative when eating, try a new dish or cuisine to explore different taste and textures
- Be open to cultural traditions while eating
- Pair eating with socialization with friends, family, or others

3. Appreciate foods' flavors:

- Savor each bite of your food
- Eat slowly, one bite at a time
- Try new flavors and experiment with diverse spices and seasonings

This month, step out of your comfort zone and try something new when it comes to how you eat and what you eat. The tips listed above are just a few ways that you can incorporate new ideas into your food culture. If you are ever unsure or would like to know more ways to improve your diet, do not hesitate to consult a registered dietitian nutritionist (RD/RDN). Visit www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert to find a nutrition expert.

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.

The Pantry Raiders

Get into the Irish spirit

By NewsLine Staff
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St. Patrick's Day began as an opportunity to honor St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, who was credited with bringing Christianity to this island nation. Through the years, St. Patrick's Day has transformed into a celebration of Irish culture as well as a day for fun and fanfare — and no celebration would be complete without delicious food.

Although corned beef may not be the most authentic representation of Irish cuisine, it certainly has become synonymous with St. Patrick's Day. During the early influx of Irish immigrants to North America, corned beef was more readily available than some other cuts of meat from the Emerald Isle. When cooking St. Patrick's Day dinner this year, the process can be made even easier with the use of a slow cooker. Try this recipe for "Corned Beef and Cabbage" from "Crock•Pot® 365 Year-Round Recipes" (Publications International) from the Crock•Pot kitchens.

Corned Beef and Cabbage

Makes 6 to 8 servings

12 new red potatoes, quartered

- 4 carrots, sliced
- 1 corned beef brisket (about 4 pounds)
- 2 onions, sliced
- 3 whole bay leaves
- 8 whole black peppercorns
- 1 head cabbage, cut into wedges

1. Place potatoes and carrots in bottom of slow cooker. Add brisket, onions, bay leaves, and peppercorns. Add enough water to cover brisket. Cover; cook on low 4 to 5 hours or on high 2 to 2 ½ hours.
2. Add cabbage. Continue cooking on low 4 to 5 hours longer or on high 2 to 2 ½ hours longer. Slice brisket against the grain, and serve with vegetables.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Corned Beef and Cabbage



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Travel

Girlfriend Getaway in Louisiana

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

Do you know that female friendships can actually increase your longevity? Research claims females receive physical, emotional, and mental benefits from spending time with like-minded women. That makes prioritizing friendships very worthwhile.

Girlfriend getaways (taking a trip with your female acquaintances) become one of the best ways to support and enjoy others and yourself. I suspect the same holds true for males, so it seems logical to encourage guy getaways and male bonding.

I recently attended a Sweet Magnolias-themed girlfriend getaway in Natchitoches, Louisiana. The small town in north-central Louisiana became the setting for the hugely popular movie (“Steel Magnolias”) released 35 years ago. The 1988 film maintains staying power because the story is real, written by Robert (Bobby) Harling, about his sister, Susan, and his family living in Natchitoches.

The female blockbuster cast featuring Sally Field, Shirley MacLaine, Dolly Parton, Olympia Dukakis, Daryl Hannah, and a very young Julia Roberts attracted attention and gained star power. While the authentic setting enhances the film’s impact, the emotional links and encouragement the characters give one another makes the poignant story timeless.

To my surprise, I learned the movie was entirely filmed on location and on a sound stage in the area. Many local residents played parts.

I stayed in the gracious Sweet Magnolia House, a bed and breakfast inn that became the main character’s home and wedding reception site in the film. The grounds stood as the backdrop for the outdoor party, decorated with pink accents in Shelby’s favorite colors: blush and bashful.

The house next door acted as Ouiser’s house (Shirley MacLaine’s character), and the American Cemetery, a few blocks away, worked as the site for Shelby’s funeral. Today a pocket park rests between those locations, dedicated to Susan Harling Robinson, and features a flowing fountain and the Natchitoches walk of fame plaques to the stars.

Follow the Steel Magnolias Trail (pick up a copy at the Visitor’s Center), and you’ll recognize the beautiful hillside on either side of the Cane River as the location of the Christmas Festival and Easter Egg Hunt. Those two annual celebrations continue to be held there today.

Natchitoches makes a delightful getaway because almost everything is within walking distance except St. Augustine Church, where the film’s wedding ceremony took place. It’s an easy drive. I was fascinated to learn that



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Steel Magnolia House Bed and Breakfast.

Bobby Harling, the author, acted in the role of the priest. And I got to meet 91-year-old Lori Tate, who portrayed the groom’s mother.

Historic Front Street offers an array of fun, interesting shops, boutiques, and restaurants. Don’t miss Kaffie-Frederick General Mercantile Store, which features “good old days” items like hardware, housewares, cookware and kitchen supplies, classic toys, and gifts. The original freight elevator still works, and the 1910 cash register rings up sales.

While in Louisiana’s oldest city, drop into Fort St. Jean Baptiste, established in 1714. The state historic site tells the stories of the early Natchitoches settlement. A replica of the original fort, a museum and interpretation from period-dressed docents, brings the history to life.

Nearby Melrose Plantation is home to nine historic buildings and a collection of work by world-famous African American folk artist Clementine Hunter, who lived and worked there.

No trip to Louisiana is complete without indulging in tasty cuisine. Meat pies are the local specialties, and La-syone’s Meat Pie Kitchen is the place to go. I recommend the crayfish pie, even for breakfast! The recipes have been handed down through generations with deep Southern roots.

I encourage you to visit Natchitoches, but even if you don’t get there, plan a girlfriend getaway soon.

More information: Natchitoches.com

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



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