



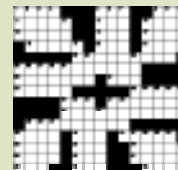
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Photo courtesy Investing in Kids (INKI)  
Melinda Gillespie

## Patriot Oaks Academy teacher named Rookie Teacher of the Year

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Melinda Gillespie, an elementary school teacher at Patriot Oaks Academy, was named as the 2022-2023 St. Johns County Rookie Teacher of the Year at a special recognition banquet on Feb. 2. Tracy Clauson, a Spanish language teacher at Sebastian Middle School was named the 2022-2023 St. Johns County District Teacher of the Year.

Gillespie is a first-grade teacher at Patriot Oaks Academy. Inspired by the book "Teach Like a Pirate," Gillespie implements new and creative lesson plans in the classroom to empower students and encourage an excitement for learning. In her social studies classes, she teaches students about the state of Florida by creating an edible map using a soft tortilla

**Rookie teacher** cont. on pg. 13

## Young professional engineers give back to their alma mater

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

Determined to help solve what he calls a "workforce problem" in the engineering industry, Drew Kenyon, along with Creekside High School teacher Kevin Davenport and Dylan Scanlon, came up with the idea to train high school students to use the computer drafting program AutoDesk Civil 3D and to learn more about the civil engineering industry. Kenyon, a Creekside High School graduate who went on to earn a bachelor's in civil engineering at the University of Florida, said that a big part of what he does in his professional engineering job is construction drawings using AutoCAD.

"I felt high schoolers could learn to do some of this work," he said. "This helps engineers have time for higher level tasks and the added benefit for the student is that being a certified CAD technician can be a good career."

Listening to a podcast about a similar initiative that had been structured as a foundation in Mississippi gave Kenyon the idea to replicate the non profit set up locally — and the Florida Civil Educators Foundation was born in 2022. The foundation's mission is to provide hands-on training, mentorship and internships to high school civil engineer-



Photos courtesy Kevin Davenport

35 Creekside Engineering Academy juniors meet with volunteer mentors one day a week before school.

ing and construction students.

"We are trying to be a part of the solution by taking an interesting approach to this workforce problem," Kenyon said.

Presently, Kenyon and Scanlon join Davenport, who is a professional engineer and their former teacher at the Creekside Engineering Academy, one morning a week before school starts to train academy students on basic AutoCad that can be applied to any business.

"We want to be in all schools," Scanlon, also a Creekside High School graduate, said. "Anywhere we can reach out to the local community so that local engineering firms can have a pipeline of potential students to work and intern."

Kenyon and Scanlon said that Pedro Menendez High School is currently upgrading its computers to accommodate the required software and that they will begin delivering their curriculum at that school in addition to Creekside in the fall.

Kenyon said that their plan is not just to teach concepts, but also provide real world working opportunities.

"This training isn't just in a vacuum," he said. "The best scenario is to get students

placed in engineering firms, so we advocate for paid internships as well."

Davenport recognizes the contribution of his former students to his profession.

"These young professionals in our community are giving back to the St. Johns County schools that educated them," he said. "They are trying to help the students as well as their engineering companies."

Davenport said there is a big need in the engineering industry for people to work — and not just as engineers.

"From a teacher's perspective, it's important when students leave high school that they have a skill," Davenport said. "Not everyone goes to college; it's just not for everyone. To have this hands-on vocational skill has been missing from school systems for the last several years."

Davenport said he wants to bring the industry into the classroom and to that end, he welcomes representatives from various local engineering firms to make presentations regarding their firms to his students.

The Florida Civil Educators Foundation is actively seeking individuals and engineering firms with a desire to support the next generation's workforce. Visit [www.fcefn.com](http://www.fcefn.com) or email [Andrew.Kenyon@fcefn.com](mailto:Andrew.Kenyon@fcefn.com) for more information.



Photos courtesy Kevin Davenport

Engineering Academy instructor Kevin Davenport (center) with previous graduates of the Creekside Engineering Academy Alex Anderson, Drew Kenyon, Drew McCullough and Griffin Reilly at a recent ACE Mentoring meeting.

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**- C. Berry**

Guest Column

# Scenic Highway group membership growing, but more work to be done

By Al Abbatiello

Membership in the William Bartram Scenic and Historic Highway Organization is growing thanks to advertisements in the January and February issues of “The CreekLine” and a mailing to 1440 homes along State Road 13. At this writing we now have 21 new memberships and three corporate memberships.

Residents are very interested in preserving our local history and scenic nature. The recent threat of an apartment complex in Fruit Cove and recently proposed commercial development on the Scenic Highway State Road 13 at Greenbriar Road has helped our early success in new memberships.

As readers may know, the Bartram Scenic Highway organization has been very active attempting to keep State Road 13 scenic and historic, while preserving local history. We’ve been vocal in meetings with county commissioners and making presentations at PZA and BCC hearings in the attempt to slow residential growth in our Northwest area. We’re also engaged with state agencies related to traffic concerns and potential impacts

of the First Coast Expressway crossing the St. John River.

We were active in the recent fight against the proposed apartment complex in Fruit Cove and we will be in the middle of discussions in the effort to prevent the earlier mentioned commercial development on the Scenic Highway at Greenbriar Road.

Our mission as a Florida State and County Scenic Highway is to protect, preserve, inform, and promote our treasure, the Scenic and Historic Highway and the American Heritage St. Johns River. This is being done through various channels including schools, public events, St. Johns County and state agencies, and other historical resources. There’s more to be done and we encourage you to join the fight.

We heartily welcome every one of our new members and everyone else wanting to join us to keep Northwest St. Johns County Scenic, Historic, and safe. If interested in joining us, contact Al Abbatiello at [alabbat@comcast.net](mailto:alabbat@comcast.net) or call and text (904) 699-8475 for more information.



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Michael & Tari Taylor  
Premier Homes Realty

As seen in the  
Fortune February/  
March 2022 issue



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# BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

**Breed:**

Australian Shepherd

**Favorite Activity:**

Going on walks and playing frisbee.

**Favorite Treat:**

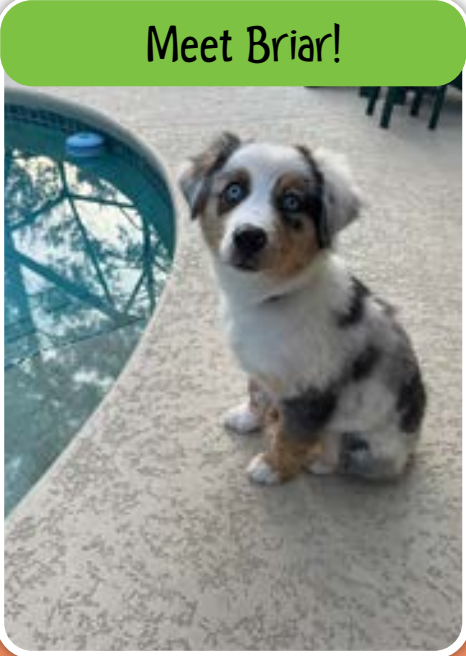
Cheerios

**Favorite Friend:**

Her Dachshund sister, Daisy

**How did your furry friend get their name:**

We made a list of names and kept narrowing it down ... and Briar was the winner.



Meet Briar!

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

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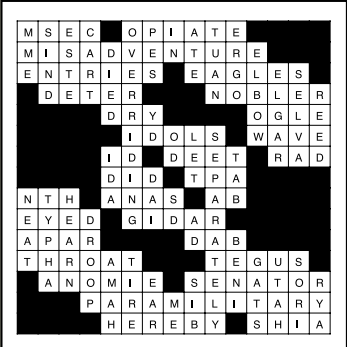
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## MYSTERY PHOTO



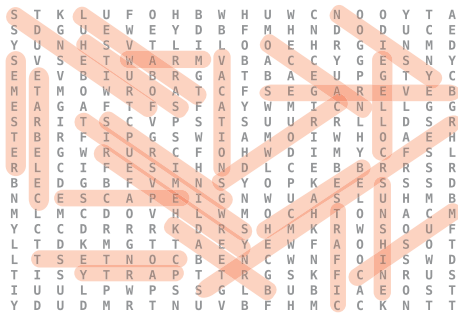
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Last month's Mystery Photo was Patriot Oaks Academy.



Answers  
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# March

## Community Calendar What's Happening in St. Johns

**Trout Creek Senior** Center offers activities for seniors on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 6795 Collier Road in Orangedale. Cards, crafts and games start each day at 9 a.m. with trivia, nutrition/exercise, Bunco and Bingo among the additional activities before lunch at 11:30 a.m. each day. Contact Program Coordinator Myra Fisher at (904) 209-3658 or [mfisher@coasjc.org](mailto:mfisher@coasjc.org) for more information.

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

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

**Men's afternoon** golf group forming with plans to play public courses within 45 minutes of World Golf Village with tee times after 12 p.m. Golfers must be able to break 110. Email [JaxGolfTour@gmail.com](mailto:JaxGolfTour@gmail.com) if you are interested in joining.

**2nd: Garden Club of Switzerland** will host a program meeting on wildflowers on March 2, at 10 a.m. in the Bartram Trail Branch Library. The speaker will be Bradford County Master Gardener, Pat Caren, who will talk about wildflowers of northeast and central Florida, the best spots to see their roadside displays, and the Florida Department of Transportation's Wildflower program. Visit <https://switzerlandgc.blogspot.com/> for more information.

**3rd: Lenten Fish Fry** will be held at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church from 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. on Fridays, March 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31 at the church, located at 5950 State Road 16 in the World Golf Village area. Traditional fried fish dinners will be available for purchase for dine-in and take-out. Call Frank Raccioppi at (904) 315-8110 with any questions.

**7th: Happy Hookers** crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on March 7 and March 21 from 5:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. The group crochets or knits blankets for cancer patients at area hospitals. All skill levels are welcome. Visit [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org) or call (904) 827-6960.

**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](http://honeybeequilters.org) for more information.

**11th: The Bartram Trail Genealogy Club** meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, March 11) from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. in the Bartram Trail Library conference room, 60 Davis Pond Blvd. Every level, beginners to experts, are welcome. If interested, come to a meeting or send a request to join the club at [www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClubGroup](https://www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClubGroup).

**13th: The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable** will meet on Monday, March 13 at 12 p.m. at St. Augustine Waterworks building, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. The featured speaker will be St. Johns County Commissioner Sarah Arnold.

Email [info@sjcroundtable.org](mailto:info@sjcroundtable.org) to register for the meeting or visit [www.sjcroundtable.org](http://www.sjcroundtable.org) for more information.

**13th: The Northwest St. Johns County** United for Progress Club will meet on Monday, March 13. The guest speaker will outline pending state legislative proposals that adversely affect public education in Florida. Contact [nwsjcp@gmail.com](mailto:nwsjcp@gmail.com) for reservations if you'd like to attend.

**14th: Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club** will hold its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, March 14 at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive off County Road 210. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. The luncheon's entertainment is to be determined; visit the group's Facebook page for updates. The cost of the luncheon is \$32. Make checks payable to BTNC and mail to Deborah Russell, 12376 Fireberry Court, Jacksonville, FL 32258. Payment must be received no later than March 9, no exceptions. Be sure to indicate entrée choice on the check memo line. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](https://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) for food choices and updated information.

**16th: William Bartram Scenic Highway Group** will meet on Thursday, March 16 beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the St. Johns County Annex, 725 Flora Branch Blvd. Join the discussion to keep NW St. Johns County Scenic and Historic and preserve the State Road 13 Scenic Highway. Virtual meeting access is available; contact [alabbat@comcast.net](mailto:alabbat@comcast.net) or call (904) 699-8475.

**17th: Adult Craft – Easter centerpiece** will be held at 10 a.m. on March 17 at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd. All supplies are provided by the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library. Register at [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org) or call the library


at (904) 824-6960. Space is limited to the first 20 patrons.

**18th: Herbs and Foods for Wellness class** will be offered on March 18 at 10 a.m. Attendees will learn about traditionally used herbs to promote wellness and health as well as how to create their own tinctures, teas, and salves. Included are guides, plant identification, lecture and herbal snacks. Pre registration is required via phone or text at (386) 972-1891.



**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](http://www.allstarquilters.org) for more information.

**21st: The Newcomers of North St. Johns** will host a luncheon featuring Bingo on Tuesday, March 21 beginning at 11 a.m. at Al Dente's Ristorante Italiano, 90 Shops Blvd. Members are encouraged to bring a children's book as a donation to the St. Johns County Public Library System. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$30 for members. All reservations must be received by March 13. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information.

**27th: ESOL class at the Bartram Trail Branch Library** on March 27 at 4:30 p.m. These classes are offered twice a month; sign up by phone, in person, or online. There is no charge, but a St. Johns County Public Library card in good standing is needed to sign up. Call (904) 827-6960 or email Donna at [dbrasch@sjcfl.us](mailto:dbrasch@sjcfl.us) for more information.




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

**Q: Can you bring us up to date on transportation for St. Johns Forest students [as of interview date of Feb. 17]?**

A: The current sidewalk [along 2209] is scheduled to be demolished shortly and a new safer one, rerouted farther from the roadway, will be built. While this is happening, the school district will provide temporary bus transportation to the approximately 200 affected students. The bus transportation will continue through the end of this school year even if the new sidewalk is completed by then. The walk zone will be completed by the start of next school year and bus transportation will end.

Because of the bus driver shortage we are experiencing, we will need to run some double and even some triple runs, so I'd ask everyone to please be patient. This interim transportation will cost more than \$75,000 and I'd like to give kudos to Sen. Hutson who worked hard to get the funds to make this happen.

**Q: Do you have an update on the new schools under construction?**

A: They are all coming along. Things look slow at first while they are completing the horizontal construction, but once things go vertical, it will look like a lot is happening.

**Q: Can you shed some light on the school district's decision to lease office space in the World Golf Village area?**

A: We voted in February to lease part of the second floor of the old Tree of Life building, which is located east of Interstate 95 at International Golf Parkway, because we are out of office space at Orange Street. We were able to negotiate a good price per square foot and utilities are included. We plan to consolidate our curriculum department in this central location, which will allow for collabora-

tion on curriculum issues so we can better support our schools and support our students.

**Q: Are there any specific areas for parent feedback at this time?**

A: Yes, there are a couple. First, our master calendars for the 2024 – 2025 and the 2025 – 2026 school years are on our website ([www.stjohns.k12.fl.us](http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us)). Two versions are available and one of them provides a full week off for Thanksgiving. We are looking for input from parents.

Also, this is the time of year for SAC surveys at the school level. We ask parents to please participate so that we can make any needed changes at individual schools and district-wide.

**Q: When can parents register their rising kindergarten children for next school year?**

A: Registration for new students to our district and kindergarten students opens on March 1. Online registration is available at [www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/student/enrollment](http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/student/enrollment) along with more information.

**Q: Do you have any kudos to share?**

A: Yes. We recognized Emma Cevallos, a fifth grader at St. Johns Virtual School at our February school board meeting. She earned first place in the elementary category in the Hispanic Heritage Month essay contest, which is sponsored by Florida's First Lady, Casey DeSantis. This year's theme was "Celebrating the Achievements of Hispanic Floridians."

**Q: How can our readers contact you?**

A: They can email me at [beverly.slough@stjohns.k12.fl.us](mailto:beverly.slough@stjohns.k12.fl.us) or call me at (904) 547-7510.



**with St. Johns County Tax Collector  
Dennis Hollingsworth**

**Q: When are property taxes due and how can they be paid?**

A: Property tax payments are payable Nov. 1 through March 31 and will become delinquent April 1. Payments can be made in person, mailed in, paid online or placed in our drop box. Payments that are mailed in must be postmarked on or before March 31, 2023. There is a 2.5 percent credit/debit card convenience fee or a \$1 echeck fee if paid online.

**Q: Can property taxes be paid in installments?**

A: Section 197.222, FL Statutes allows a taxpayer to prepay property taxes by an installment payment method. Payments are made on a quarterly basis and based upon an estimated tax equal to the actual taxes levied on the property in the prior year. Your taxes must be more than \$100 to qualify.

The first installment is due June 30, the

second installment is due Sept. 30, the third installment is due Dec. 31, and the fourth and final installment is due March 31.

Installment applications must be received prior to May 1 of the year in which the taxpayer elects to prepay taxes in installments. If the first installment payment is not made, the account is removed from the installment plan and you will receive a tax notice on or around the first of November for the entire amount due.

If you have any questions, or to apply for the installment plan, visit [www.sjctax.us](http://www.sjctax.us) or email [taxcollector@sjctax.us](mailto:taxcollector@sjctax.us)

**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](http://www.sjctax.us). I may be reached by calling (904) 209-2250 or emailing [taxcollector@sjctax.us](mailto:taxcollector@sjctax.us).

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APR 29  
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### QA

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

**Q. Your office provides marriage services, including licenses and ceremonies. Did the Clerk's office do anything special on Valentine's Day?**

A: Yes, we held our inaugural group Valentine's Day wedding. Seven couples registered to have a wedding ceremony officiated by the Honorable Judge Howard O. McGillin. We look forward to hosting it again next year.

**Q. What is the role of the Office of the Inspector General?**

A: The Office of the Inspector General, under the supervision of the St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller, performs internal audits, provides oversight of legal guardianships, investigates public integrity complaints, and conducts fraud, waste, and abuse investigations of County operations and financial records.

**Q. Does the Inspector General have any areas of focus for upcoming audits?**

A: The Inspector General has roughly 20 audits scheduled for Fiscal Year 2023. The list of audits includes examining credit card fees countywide, auditing the Clerk's office and county's cash collection procedures, and protecting driver and vehicle information from unauthorized access. To access the Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Audit Plan, visit [www.stjohnsclerk.com](http://www.stjohnsclerk.com).

**Q. What is the best way for people to get in touch with you?**

A: Residents can call my office at (904) 819-3601 or my cell at (904) 599-8688. My email address is [BPatty@stjohnsclerk.com](mailto:BPatty@stjohnsclerk.com). A lot of questions can be answered by visiting our website, [www.stjohnsclerk.com](http://www.stjohnsclerk.com), which is most commonly used to pay traffic citations or search court records.

### QA

#### with St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

**Q: Can you shed some light on the rental of residential properties?**

A: First of all, the Property Appraiser's Office has no jurisdiction over the rental of residential properties, either short term or long term. Those regulations come from the county, cities, homeowners associations, or CDD rules.

The only way we become involved is if a property is homesteaded. Specifically, if a homeowner rents his property, it might be subject to losing its homestead exemption.

**Q: Can homesteaded properties be rented at all?**

A: Yes, per statute, a homeowner may rent his homesteaded property for up to 30 days per year for no more than two consecutive tax years or he can rent up to six months in one tax year. Within these guidelines, a homeowner may keep his homestead exemption.

Our office actively monitors and investigates homesteaded properties that are rented. We use a number of different sources to accomplish this.

**Q: Have your investigations turned up any homesteaded properties that are not adhering to the statutes?**

A: Yes, in my term here of the last six years, we've liened 452 properties for a total of \$2.8 million. Interestingly, of these 452 liens, 417 have paid the liens for a total of \$2.13 million.

**Q: What if the property is not homesteaded?**

A: The Property Appraiser's Office has no authority to look at it at all in this case. It all comes back to local ordinances. We have no jurisdiction over noise levels or trash at rental properties as this is handled by code enforcement.

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

A: Our office is located at 4030 Lewis Speedway Ste. 203, (904) 827-5500. It is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Also, readers can email me at [Eddie@sjcpa.us](mailto:Eddie@sjcpa.us) or call me at (904) 827-5500.

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

**Q: What can you tell us about the upcoming transportation forum for St. Johns County?**

A: We have scheduled a public forum to discuss transportation issues on March 3 at 9 a.m. at the St. Johns County Auditorium. In attendance will be our St. Johns County Legislative Delegation, US Congressman John Rutherford and Greg Evans, the District Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation, in addition to the Board of County Commissioners. The plan is to have staff highlight the transportation needs we have in our county. We have been discussing in great detail our transportation needs and the lack of funds at the county level, so this will basically be a way to lobby for state and federal funds. It will be a rare opportunity to get federal, state, and local officials together at one time to discuss transportation needs in St. Johns County and work on solutions to include what funding solutions are available as well as timing.

**Q: Can you give an update on the new sidewalk to be built along County Road 2209?**

A: We have heard for years complaints from parents that the sidewalks are too close to the road and not safe. The Board of County Commissioners, in conjunction with the School Board, decided in 2021 to have the sidewalk moved over and reconstructed. We

were able to seek funds from the state since 9B is a state road and Rep. Cyndi Stevenson and Sen. Travis Hutson were very instrumental in helping us get the funds. The plan was to start construction of the sidewalk this summer and have it completed by the start of the next school year, but we were able to move it up and now construction is scheduled to begin before the end of February. The sidewalk will be moved farther from the roadway and guardrails will be installed, which will result in a much safer path to walk on.

**Q: What’s the latest on LAMP (Land Acquisition and Management Program)?**

A: In January 2021, the Board of County Commissioners voted to reinstate LAMP. What’s exciting now is that, nearly two years later, we are finally starting to see the first suggestions to our board as to what land is available for purchase and what funds and matching funds are available. We will finally start seeing land conserved as part of our growth plan. The LAMP board has been meeting monthly and it’s my understanding that they are ready to make suggestions to the commissioners, which I eagerly await.

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

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

## Guest Column

### Elections Office off to a busy start in 2023

By St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

[www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov).

St. Johns County residents may be noticing an influx of information regarding upcoming elections in Jacksonville, which are taking place on March 21 and May 16. It’s important to note that these elections are exclusive to Duval County registered voters and St. Johns County does not have any upcoming elections in 2023.

To kick off 2023, we began the exciting, much anticipated return of our Voter Education Program to St. Johns County high schools in January. To date, we have visited four high schools, and have had a wonderful experience. We plan on visiting every high school by the end of this school year. In addition, voter outreach continues to be an important part of the mission of the Supervisor of Elections, so plan to see our team out in the community this year, and please say hello when you do.

The 2023 Florida Supervisor of Elections Scholarship is being offered to eligible college students through March 10. The \$1,200 scholarship will be awarded to four eligible full-time students enrolled in a senior college or university in Florida, and who are majoring in Political Science, Public Administration, Business Administration, or Journalism/Mass Communication. For more information on eligibility requirements and how to apply, visit

Has your signature changed? At the Supervisor of Elections Office, voter signatures are very important verification tools we use to check vote-by-mail ballots, petitions, and other election-relation documents. We know it’s common for personal signatures to change over the years and we recommend that voters update the signature on file with our office frequently. To update your signature, visit our office at 4455 Avenue A, #101, St. Augustine, or visit our website at [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) to print a Florida Voter Registration Application, fill it out, and mail it in.

The legislative session in Tallahassee begins March 7 and will end on May 5. We anticipate changes in our current election law and will monitor the session closely to see what is accomplished. We can expect some changes stemming from 2022’s Senate Bill 524, which discussed the creation of the Office of Election Crimes and Security, increased penalties for election law violations, revised the procedures for list maintenance, and changed the name of the “drop box” to “Secure Ballot Intake Station.”

We anticipate changes in the areas of vote-by-mail and our election auditing procedures. We will be watching and working with our state legislators regarding any approved election bills. We hope they will look to us for guidance as elections administrators are the experts.

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**with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick**

**Q:** This month, a reader asked if you could provide any information about the different groups of people soliciting donations at the corner of State Road 13 and Race Track Road. What are the criteria to do this and can anything be done from a safety aspect, since they often leave the median and walk between cars stopped at the red light?

**A:** We get lots of questions about this topic in law enforcement ... why aren't we enforcing laws in these instances? The answer is that we were sued by an individual in 2019 whom we thought was in violation of Florida State Statute 316.2045, Obstruction of public streets, highways, and roads — and he won. So we are cautious at this point.

**Q:** Can you give some background on this case?

**A:** Yes. It is a matter of public record. Peter Vigue filed the lawsuit after more than 50 contacts with law enforcement between 2016 – 2018 and he was arrested a few times for trespassing and impeding traffic flow. The federal judge who decided the case found in Vigue's favor based on Vigue's First Amendment rights. The judge felt that his First Amendment rights outweighed the public safety aspect.

In 2022, the Florida Legislature had to revisit this statute in light of the lawsuit. They made changes, including removing the requirement for a permit to solicit donations or panhandle on state roads. Basically, FL Statute 316.2045 went from a two page statute to a half page, but it is now a much grayer area for us to operate in.

**Q:** Were any other changes made?

**A:** Our county, along with Duval and Clay counties, are currently considering local ordinances on this topic. The St. Johns County legal department is drafting an ordinance that would prohibit or restrict soliciting at intersections and doesn't distinguish between panhandling and charitable donations. Violation would be a second degree misdemeanor, as opposed to the non-moving violation that the Florida State Statute allows for. The goal of the ordinance is to improve safety of pedestrians and motorists at intersections.

The first draft of the ordinance is due to be completed in early March and then the next step will be for it to move to the Board of County Commissioners for required readings and adoption.

**Q:** What should citizens do at this point if they are concerned about a particular instance of panhandling or charitable donation solicitation at the intersection?

**A:** Citizens should continue to call the SJSO non-emergency number, (904) 824-8304 and we will let our deputies know and make a discretionary call about the particular situation.

**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](mailto:sheriff@sjso.org) or call me at (904) 824-8304. Also, our website, [www.sjso.org](http://www.sjso.org) has a wealth of resources, from alarm registration to Crime Stoppers to our Neighbors app.

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# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## Business Briefs

**Health care providers to join forces**  
Flagler Health+ and UF Health, the University of Florida’s academic health center, have entered into an exclusive, non-binding letter of intent to develop plans to transform health care delivery in the region, with a bold vision for the future.

The move comes in the wake of the recent decision by Flagler Health+ to explore joining a like-minded health system to enhance local health care services and expand access to care in the community. The Flagler Health+ Board of Trustees and leadership team selected UF Health because the nationally renowned health system offers the strengths of a top 5 public research institution coupled with innovative, high-quality, leading-edge care that will benefit the residents of Flagler, St. Johns, Putnam, Clay and Duval counties.

The two organizations will now move forward with detailed due diligence to-

ward the goal of Flagler Health+ becoming part of UF Health later this year.

“We envision a future where the services provided by Flagler Health+ meet all our community members’ needs. We are pleased with how our exploration is progressing and look forward to the possibility of making this vision a reality with the University of Florida,” said Flagler Health+ Board of Trustees Chairman Todd Neville. “Moving forward with UF Health is the right next step because of our shared commitment to those we serve.”

Mori Hosseini, chair of the UF Board of Trustees, said university and health system leaders are looking forward to magnifying opportunities to offer hope and healing for patients and their families through the delivery of world-class, compassionate care.

“UF and UF Health are re-energizing health care delivery throughout the state of Florida,” Hosseini said. “We seek to transform lives, and plans like these are

a step toward tackling patients’ greatest challenges and improving the health of our communities. Collaboration and a keen commitment to solutions is in our DNA. We are up to the task and intend to lead the way.”

Together, Flagler Health+ and UF Health pledge to deliver the highest level of clinical quality and safety, said David R. Nelson, M.D., senior vice president for health affairs at the University of Florida and president of UF Health.

“UF Health has a long track record of bridging scientific discovery with clinical advances that improve the lives of countless patients and of training the next generation of health care providers,” Nelson said. “We are excited about our shared vision with Flagler Health+ to take health care to the next level and look forward to our ongoing discussions as we collectively focus efforts on delivering outstanding care for area residents.”

### Financial advisor earns 2022 Ameriprise Client Experience Award

Chris Thompson, CFP®, CRPC®, a managing director and associate manager with Ameriprise Financial, Inc. in Jacksonville, has earned the 2022 Ameriprise Client Experience Award.

Thompson was honored with this award because of his ability to consistently deliver personalized, goal-based advice and exceptional client service. Award recipients earned an overall client satisfaction rating equal to or greater than 4.9 out of 5.0\* and maintained stellar business results.

The award represents an elite group of Ameriprise advisors recognized as leaders for their commitment to making a difference in the lives of their clients. As a Private Wealth Advisor/financial advisor, Thompson provides financial advice that is anchored in a solid understanding of client needs and expectations and is delivered in one-on-one relationships with his clients.

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## Rep. Cyndi Stevenson files golf cart legislation

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

On Feb. 20, Rep. Cyndi Stevenson filed House Bill 949 to improve the safe operation of golf carts and other utility vehicles.

Golf carts are increasingly used off the golf course and are often viewed as a safe mode of transportation; however, experience and research show that they can cause significant injuries, particularly

to children. Children are more vulnerable to serious golf cart related injuries, specifically, to the head and neck.

HB 949 would apply to drivers of golf carts and utility vehicles only when they are operating on public roads. The bill:

- Increases the minimum age of drivers from 14 to 16.
- Requires a learner’s permit or higher

level of licensure.

“The passage of this bill will reduce accidents and serious injuries,” said Stevenson. “I am grateful to St. Johns County Sheriff Robert Hardwick who brought this important issue to my attention.”

St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick said, “The safety and security of our citizens and visitors is our No. 1 priority at the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office.

This legislation will help to ensure those utilizing golf carts are better equipped to operate them. I am thankful Rep. Stevenson has agreed to lead the charge on this effort and I look forward to working with her on getting this bill passed.”

For more information on this bill, as well as other bills filed during the 2023 Session, visit [myfloridahouse.gov](https://myfloridahouse.gov) or contact the office of Representative Stevenson at (904) 823-2300.



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**Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society announces annual show and sale**

By NewsLine Staff  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto: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. 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](http://JacksonvilleViolets.org) for more information about “Pearls of the Plant World,” club activities, and educational resources in print and video.*



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

**Success and safety of swim lessons using flotation devices**

By Linda Bolger  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto:mail@floridanewslines.com)

Flotation Aided Swim Training is the newest program available in the United States to teach non-swimmers of all ages how to be comfortable and confident in the water by using United States Coast Guard-approved Type III life jackets. This is adaptable to all ages and abilities, and is approved and accredited by the Florida Department of Health.

Life jackets for young and old non-swimmers make sense. There are zero statistics related to drowning when a lifejacket is utilized properly. Additionally, you should always supervise your child within an arm’s length for safety.

Forced submersion is often used in swim lessons, but it has been known to traumatize both the young and the old, sometimes leading to drowning incidents both fatal and non-fatal. Both the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) state “make US Coast Guard life jackets and direct supervision by a responsible adult a must” for non-swimmers. Imple-

menting a lifejacket during lessons is just as essential.

Here are some things to consider when evaluating a potential swim program:

- 1) What water safety measures are utilized?
- 2) What is the student-to-teacher ratio?
- 3) How much instructional time does your child receive during each lesson?
- 4) How many students are participating in the swim lesson?
- 5) Are CDC and AAP water safety guidelines being enforced?
- 6) Search online for Florida Department of Health Swim Instructors Advisory Counsel to ensure the program is listed as approved. Liability is greatly increased should a non-listed program proceed with giving lessons.

*Linda Bolger is the founder of the FAST Swim Program. Email [jen@fastswimprogram.com](mailto:jen@fastswimprogram.com) for more information.*



Photos courtesy Jen Matthew

All ages can benefit from using flotation devices during swim lessons.

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# Field of Dreams celebrates Opening Day

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewsline.com

On a chilly but beautifully clear Saturday morning, Feb. 4, umpire George Vancore yelled “Play ball!” and the Field of Dreams baseball league’s games were underway on Opening Day. The Field of Dreams Baseball League is a voluntary organization that provides a safe ADA certified facility where special needs children of all ages (beginning with kindergarten) can play baseball for free and be an active part of a thriving athletic association.

“The day couldn’t have been better,” Vancore said. “The kids were excited, all the families were there, the Knights of Columbus were in full regalia, and you could smell the hot dogs being cooked at the concession stand.”

At Field of Dreams, children with special needs (intellectual or physical disabilities) have the opportunity to play baseball in an organized league; to wear a uniform; have their names announced; participate in the National Anthem before each game; and to be a player on an athletic team. Vancore said the number of participants this year so far is 210, spread across 12 teams.

Registration is ongoing and always free. In fact, everything is free at Field of Dreams — uniforms, equipment, concessions — due to the league’s generous business partners and sponsors that cover the \$98 required to field a player for the

season.

Volunteer buddies, at least one per special needs player, help with batting and rounding the bases. Some buddies are members of area youth or high school athletic teams who volunteer year after year. The Bartram Trail High School baseball team and softball team continued their tradition of serving as Opening Day buddies this year.

Every Saturday for 11 weeks (spread over 14 weeks due to school holidays), six games of two innings each that last approximately one hour and 15 minutes are played. The National Anthem is played before each game. All players have their name announced and everyone bats. Vancore said the league accommodates all types of special needs, from blind children to those in wheelchairs and walkers. Coaches are mostly local ESE teachers and the children come from all over northeast Florida to participate in Field of Dreams.

Vancore invites everyone to come out to witness the special atmosphere at Field of Dreams.

“We want you to see the smiles on the kids’ faces — and the positive atmosphere with no yelling,” he said.

For more information about Field of Dreams or to register, visit [www.fodbaseball.com](http://www.fodbaseball.com) or visit the league’s Facebook page, “FieldofDreamsBaseballStJohns.”



Photos courtesy Beverly Slough

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**Briefs**

**College exam prep classes scheduled**

Friends of the Bartram Trail Library are sponsoring a series of ACT and SAT prep classes to be held at the Bartram Trail Public Library. The dates of these classes are March 23, 30, April 6, 13, and 20. Classes are one hour and 15 minutes each.

Students may sign up for either or both series. ACT classes will be from 5 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. and SAT classes will be from 6:30 p.m. – 7:45 p.m. The sessions will include two English/Reading and two Math. Following a practice test completed at home, the fifth and final session will be a review session from 5 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. for English/Reading and from 6:30 p.m. – 7:45 p.m. for Math. Students should bring their calculators.

Each series of five sessions costs \$45, or \$90 to attend both.

This set of classes will be the final one for the 2022 – 2023 school year. There is a cap of 20 students per series. The last day to register is March 19, 2023, unless the cap is reached prior to this date.

Registration information can be obtained at the Bartram Trail Library or by contacting Phyllis Macy at [macyp17@yahoo.com](mailto:macyp17@yahoo.com)

**Church announces Lenten fish fry dates**

For more than 20 years, the Men’s Club and Ladies’ Guild of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church have pitched in to present an old fashioned Fish Fry dining experience in St. Augustine.

Dining-in is a casual, comfortable atmosphere with friendly table service for meals with background music accompaniment. Drinks are available. The setting is ideal for a family meal and suits a gathering of friends interested in good food and fun times. Traditional fried fish dinners will be available for dine-in and take-out; call-in and drive-through services are not supported.

The dinner menu will be served from 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. on March 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31. The menu includes two fried fish options: two battered fried cod filets or 12 large fried shrimp. A cod filet and six shrimp combo will be available also. All meals will include fries, coleslaw, hush puppies and a dessert. Donations are \$13 per entrée; children seven years and older will pay \$6 while children younger than seven eat for free. Cash and personal checks are accepted.

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church is located at 5950 State Road 16, St. Augustine, in the World Golf Village area. Contact Frank Raccioppi at (904) 315-8110 or Ted Kuchar at (904) 347-7015 for more information.

**Newcomers of North St. Johns announces Bingo and book drive luncheon**

Newcomers of North St. Johns will host its monthly luncheon meeting on Tuesday, March 21, beginning at 11 a.m. at Al Dente’s Ristorante Italiano, 90 Shops Blvd. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. The event will feature games of

Bingo and great prizes.

As part of this special luncheon event, members are encouraged to bring a children’s book as a donation to the St. Johns County Public Library System.

“Last year, we were able to collect more than 40 books to give to the Main Library in St. Augustine and also generated \$300 in cash donations,” said Pat Lett, co-president of Newcomers of North Saint Johns. “We were thrilled to be able to collect such a wonderful variety of children’s books. Because of our members’ generosity, kids in our area will be able to keep up their reading skills during the summer and beyond.”

Following lunch, attendees will play three games of Bingo with the opportunity to win prizes. As always, raffles for gift baskets and a fun 50/50 drawing spice up the luncheon.

The cost for the luncheon and program is \$30 for members and \$35 for guests. All reservations must be received by March 13. Visit <https://newcomersof-northstjohns.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, Bunco, Canasta, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, holiday parties, day trips and cultural events.

**Bartram Trail Newcomers’ and Women’s Club to host March luncheon**

The Bartram Trail Newcomers’ and Women’s Club will hold its March meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, March 14 at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club located at 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. The entertainment will be determined at a later date.

The cost of the luncheon will be \$32; make checks payable to BTNC and mail to: Deborah Russell 12376 Fireberry Ct., Jacksonville, FL 32258. Payment must be received no later than March 9 and be sure to indicate entrée choice on the check memo line. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](https://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) for food choices and updated entertainment information.

The Bartram Trail Newcomers’ and Women’s Club meets the second Tuesday of every month from September to May for lunch. In addition to the monthly meetings, the club has a wide variety of interest groups, including Bridge, Continental Rummy, Pennies Canasta, Mexican

Chicken Train dominoes, Bunko, Mah Jongg, golf, recipe exchange, monthly special events, book club, lunch and matinee, Lunch Divas, Ladies Night Out, a nature walk group and community projects. Email First Vice President Linda Beard at [bartramtnc@gmail.com](mailto:bartramtnc@gmail.com) for club information.

**St. Johns County launches Recycle Coach app**

Recycle Coach is live. St. Johns County teamed up with Recycle Coach to help educate residents on proper recycling. By downloading the Recycle Coach app

or visiting [recyclestjohns.com](https://recyclestjohns.com), residents can get their curbside collection schedule, sign up for alerts, and quickly learn how to dispose of different waste materials properly.

The Recycle Coach app also has image recognition software that can quickly identify if an item is recyclable.

Download the Recycle Coach app on the Apple App Store or Google Play.

**County Road 2209 sidewalk update**

St. Johns County Public Works has closed the existing sidewalk along County Road 2209. The existing sidewalk will be removed and a new, improved sidewalk along County Road 2209 will be constructed in time for the 2023-2024 school year.

By law, the State of Florida provides transportation funding for students who live two or more miles from a school. For students living within a two-mile radius of a school, a walking path to the school must be maintained. The existing sidewalk is used by students who live within a two-mile radius of Liberty Pines Academy.

Due to the sidewalk closure, the St. Johns County School District will provide temporary transportation in the way of school buses to the affected students living within a two-mile radius of Liberty Pines Academy for the remainder of the 2022-2023 school year. This began on Feb. 21.

Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, students living within a two-mile radius of Liberty Pines Academy will be able to use the newly constructed sidewalk to travel to school and return home.

**AAUW offers four scholarships**

AAUW St Augustine Branch is offering three scholarships this year honoring Jean Luoma, Diane Boyce and Alice Bosselman for their years of dedicated service to St. Augustine and AAUW. Local college and university students who are residents of St. Johns County and have sophomore status in fall 2023 are eligible. Two scholarships are \$2,000 each and the third one is \$1,500.

The fourth scholarship is a nursing scholarship in honor of Lisa R. Brasero, a compassionate nurse who passed away in 2021, offered by her parents Carol and Michael Rothfeld. Carol Rothfeld is a member of AAUW St. Augustine Branch. The awardee will receive \$1,000 per year throughout her nursing program until the achievement of an Associate of Arts Registered Nurse (AARN) or Bachelor of Science Nursing (BSN) degree. Upon graduation and entrance into the workforce, the awardee receives an additional \$500.

The scholarship criteria and application can be found at the following website: <https://staugustine-fl.aauw.net/scholarship/>

Deadline for receipt of the completed application to the scholarship committee is March 30, 2023. Information about AAUW St. Augustine is available at [staugustine-fl.aauw.net](https://staugustine-fl.aauw.net), [aauw.org](https://aauw.org), and on Facebook, AAUW St. Augustine.

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# Life

travel • pantry raiders • gardening  
fishing • entertainment • puzzles

## Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

### Claudia Smith

Born in Bogota, Columbia, Claudia Smith is now a Spanish teacher and L.E.E. instructor at Cunningham Creek Elementary, Freedom Crossing Academy, and Julington Creek Elementary who was recently named Florida Foreign Language Association's 2023 Teacher of Promise. The Florida Foreign Language Association's vision is for a linguistically and culturally inclusive Florida and L.E.E., which provides Spanish language instruction in St. Johns County elementary schools, is a member of the association.

Smith's passion for her native language and culture is strong. She delights in teaching others and serving her community.

"I am honored to be recognized by FFLA and the local program," Smith said. "My enthusiasm about teaching Spanish, which is my native language, helps me to instruct primarily English-speaking children as they engage in learning a second language. I am dedicated to training, teaching, practicing, and developing the best learning techniques to help young people become fluent in foreign languages."

Smith lives in St. Johns with her husband, Taryn Karl.

#### Q: What was it like growing up in Bogota?

A: I grew up in a family that loved reading and learning. Bogota is



Photo courtesy L.E.E.  
Claudia Smith

known as the "Athens of South America" because of all the culture and arts in the city. Throughout my childhood, I was cultivated to learn and speak with the best pronunciation of the Spanish language. I earned my university degree in logistics and was already working in international business by the time I came to the United States.

#### Q: How and why did you come to the United States?

A: I really wanted to improve the level of my English. I moved to Miami and took continuing education classes at the University of Miami. Then I moved to Gainesville to work for Santa Fe Community College before I moved to Jacksonville in 2001. I felt I needed to be near the ocean to most fully utilize my experience in international business. I feel that when you want something you pray about it and God opens doors. My first job in Jacksonville was with Beaver Street Fishery, where they had an international department, but no one spoke Spanish! For a time I did volunteer work as a

translator for a Latin magazine because when you have a passion for something, I feel you should help your community. Next I worked at Crowley, where I traveled to El Salvador to train people and make sure the company's customer service was up to plan.

#### Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: I met my husband, known as TK, in 2015 when I was attending a Latin church and teaching a Spanish class. He was confused that I was Latin, but didn't love to party at nightclubs. I told him that instead, I loved barbecue food and country music! We were married in 2016.

#### Q: How did you come to work with L.E.E.?

A: I had experience teaching Spanish lessons. When I first lived in St. Johns County, a family I knew asked if I could teach their son Spanish, so that's when I started giving lessons one-on-one. I started working with L.E.E. in 2021 after interviewing in both Spanish and English with Donna Guzzo. I had retired from my job in 2019 and dedicated my life to service to the community and teaching Spanish.

#### Q: What's your favorite part of teaching children Spanish?

A: I feel a passion for Spanish and I really love teaching it to others. My favorite part is when, every week when parents pick up their children from my class, the children love to share everything they learned. It shows that they love what they are learning and it shows the importance of learning another language.

Rookie teacher cont. from pg. 1

shell, icing, candies, and an edible pen to provide a learning-by-immersion method for students to be in charge of their own learning.

Gillespie recently received the honor of having her own classroom for the first time, with previous experience as an associate teacher and paraprofessional in the classroom. Her philosophy of teaching is that every child who enters her classroom will have a fair and equal chance to learn in a safe environment, and the tools to be the best human being they can be to better the world.

"I encourage my young students to know they are never alone in their education and are safe to share their thoughts in school. Our classrooms are places for all teachers to acknowledge and carry out their duties as trustworthy professionals who help their students explore and learn," said Gillespie. "I thank my husband and family for supporting my decision to become a teacher as my second career and I am grateful for the opportunity and honor."

Clauson is a seventh and eighth grade Spanish teacher at Sebastian Middle School with more than 12 years of teaching students in English, Spanish, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and reading. As Teacher of the Year, Clauson will represent St. Johns County at the State of Florida Teacher of the Year event in July 2023.

Ninety-nine educators from each public school in the St. Johns School District and the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind were honored during the event on Feb. 2 hosted by Investing in Kids (INK!). Tim Forson, St. Johns County Superintendent of Schools, congratulated all honored educators for their professionalism and profound dedication to their students. More than 950 guests attended the program themed "We're Wild About Teachers," including educators from throughout the District, families, friends, students, local school district officials, and dignitaries.

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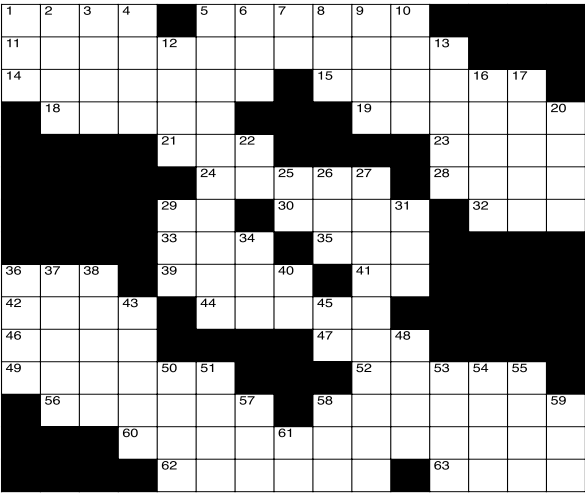
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Puzzles

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 reed mace  
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. Of 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 U C E  
S V S E T W A R M V B A C C Y G E S N Y  
M E V B I U B R G A T B A E U P G T Y C  
E 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 F 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 R 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  
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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Wacky Waffle Wednesday is back at Trout Creek!



Photos courtesy Carolyn Karger

Seniors at COA's Trout Creek Senior Center are delighted that their monthly "Wacky Waffle Wednesday" is back in action. This used to be a tradition before COVID, and now it's back and better than ever. The Trout Creek Senior Center will host "Wacky Waffle Wednesday" on the first Wednesday of each month. Contact Program Coordinator Myra Fisher at (904) 209-3658 or [mfisher@coasjc.org](mailto:mfisher@coasjc.org) with any questions and to register to attend.

Rotary Club to fund drinking water system in Honduras

By NewsLine Staff  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto:mail@floridanewslines.com)

The Rotary Club of Bartram Trail - Julington Creek has announced the approval of \$55,303 for construction of a water system for a mountain village in Honduras.

This project will provide a complete drinking water system that will satisfy the needs of the community. The proposed potable water system of the la Virtud village will have a system that will work by gravity, which will be fed from a stream which is channeled into a small water pond, located in the village. It will have a new dam that will be four feet high to provide the necessary flow to fill the recharge tank with 20,000 gallons of water. The proposed water system will supply 65 houses, two schools and one church, serving approximately 350 people and will improve the quality of living in the community.

The new water system will be under control of the local water board, made up of village users with oversight from authorities in San Pablo Sula. Individual users will be charged a flat fee for connection and usage. These fees will pay for the operation and maintenance of the system. Users will be trained in water conservation.

The village of la Virtud, Honduras is a community that produces mostly vegetable crops such as chili peppers,

chives, watercress, tomatoes, carrots, radishes, cabbage and potatoes, and plantations of coffee. The village is in the el Merendon mountain range, 16 miles from the city limits of San Pedro Sula. It has the basic services available (water, electricity and mobile telephone), but they lack a drinking water system from which they could supply each house in the community. Many have their own line from the nearest source by means of added hoses. The school, kindergarten and the Catholic Church do not have water supply; they pull in buckets for the bathrooms when they are in use.

The village's water source was abundant until 1998, when a landslide due to Hurricane Mitch destroyed the entire watershed and forest around it. The community has a spring that gives approximately two inches of water in summer and more water in the winter due to the rains.

According to Elle Lynch of the Rotary Club of Bartram Trail, the Rotary Club of La Virtud has contracted with professionals who will construct the project.

"Our club is planning a visit during the construction phase so we can at least be observers of the work," Lynch said. "We are in the final planning stages of this project, and actual construction should begin soon."

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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.

- 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](http://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.*

**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:**

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# The Pantry Raiders

## Get into the Irish spirit

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

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

# Fishing

## Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis  
mail@floridanewslines.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.



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## Gardening

### Spring decisions

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto:mail@floridanewslines.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/zhhvhvanz>.

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!

## Senior Night tradition at Nease

By Susan Rieger  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto:mail@floridanewslines.com)

Senior Night has been a big tradition

for Nease students for years — it's a great way to celebrate their last year in high school and wish them well into the



Photos courtesy Susan Rieger  
Nease High School girls' soccer Senior Night.



Photos courtesy Susan Rieger  
Nease High School boys' basketball Senior Night.

next chapter of their life. They are honored athletically and academically and shown that their school and team are proud of their accomplishments. Senior Night is typically the last home game in all sports seasons.

Students and parents go on the court or field during Senior Night, and fans, teammates, and coaches recognize their efforts. Posters, balloons, flowers, gifts, words of encouragement, and reflections from their coaches are all given to seniors. It is also an enjoyable time to honor everything the seniors have done with academics and sports for the last four years.



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



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Steel Magnolia House Bed and Breakfast.

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 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 Lasyone’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](http://www.bylandersea.com) to read more of local travel writer Debi Lander’s stories and travel tips.



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Cane River Park.

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