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**Sisters-in-Arms** cont. on pg. 11





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**How your BFF got their name:**  
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Meet Duke!

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



## Summer Camp and Activities Guide in this issue! Page 15

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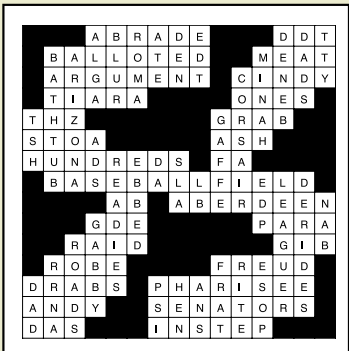
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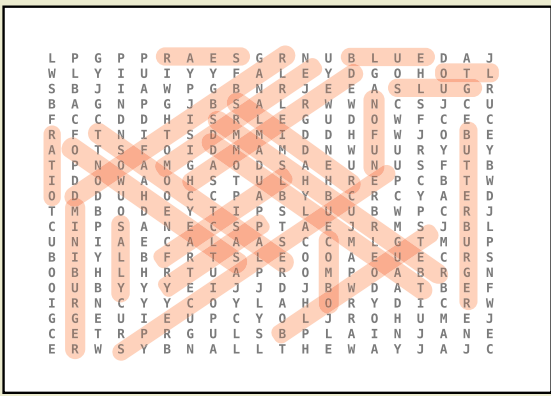


## Answers Puzzles PG 10

### CRYPTO FUN

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A. toppings B. grill C. fat D. buns



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# May

## Community Calendar

### What's Happening in Ponte Vedra

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

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

**2nd: GriefShare support group starts** May 2 at 4 p.m. at Ponte Vedra Church, 76 S. Roscoe Blvd. This is a 13-week Christian based support group for those who have recently lost a loved one. Class time consists of a 40 minute video and discussion of questions in the workbook. For more information about the class contact mfarns934@gmail.com or for classes in other locations visit www.griefshare.org.

**2nd: Vicar's Landing March Boutique Sale** will be held on Tuesday, May 2 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at 1000 Vicar's Landing Way. The public is welcome. The sale includes household items and furnishings as well as jewelry and framed art. The Vicar's Employee Scholarship Fund receives all of the proceeds. Cash or checks only please. Contact Beverly Webb at (904) 315-2610 or Mary Lane Johnson at (904) 612-9277 for more information.

**3rd: Coastal Friends will host its monthly luncheon** on May 3 at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. in Ponte Vedra Beach from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Guest speaker Donna Fenchel, co-founder of The Villages of Hope, will speak about her non profit, which provides housing for women survivors of sex trafficking. The cost of the luncheon is \$25 and reservations must be made in advance by contacting bartshar@comcast.net as soon as possible. Visit <https://coastalfriends.wildapricot.org> for more information.

**4th: Bingo** will be held at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on Thursdays from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. for four weeks beginning Thursday, May 4. Contact Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information and to register.

**5th: The GTM Research Reserve** will hold a new volunteer orientation on May 5 from 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Learn about volunteer rules and responsibility as well next steps to volunteering. Complete the volunteer application online ([www.gtmnerr.org](http://www.gtmnerr.org)) before attending. Contact Abigail Kuhn at [Abigail.Kuhn@FloridaDEP.gov](mailto:Abigail.Kuhn@FloridaDEP.gov) to assure that your application was received.

**6th: The Northeast Florida Chapter** of Sisters in Crime will meet on May 6 at 10 a.m. in the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. (FOL Room). The speaker will be a St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Representative with a unique presentation about crime and those who fight against it. Bring your coffee and bring a friend. Visit [www.nefloridasisistersincrimet.org](http://www.nefloridasisistersincrimet.org) for more information.

**6th: Local artist Jan Bialka** will present a non-scholarly talk titled "From Known to Unknown: Women

Artists in the 19th Century" as part of the Ponte Vedra Beach Speaker Series on May 16 at 6:30 p.m. Bialka earned a BA in history and has spent the last 30 years increasing her knowledge through travel and studies in the United States and Europe. The program is free and open to the public; doors open at 6 p.m.

**8th: The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable** will meet on Monday, May 8 at 12 p.m. at St. Augustine Waterworks building, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. The featured speaker will be St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick. 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.

**9th: The Lantana Trio, presented** by the Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library will perform chamber music at the library on May 9 with doors opening at 6 p.m. The trio is composed of three members present and retired from the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, Melissa Barrett (violin), Betsy Federman (cello), and Ileana Fernandez (piano). The program is free and open to the public.

**12th: Food Truck Friday** will be held on May 12 and May 26 from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. This event is open to the public.

**13th: Divorce Questions Answered**, a Second Saturday class (held quarterly) will be held on May 13. The in-person class will be held at 822 A1A N., Suite 102 from 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. The virtual class will be held from 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Both classes are free. Visit [www.secondsaturdayjax.org](http://www.secondsaturdayjax.org) to register online. Call Robert Franskousky at (904) 899-4074 or Sharon Hardy at (904) 638-2091 for more information.


**17th: Ponte Vedra Woman's Club** General Meeting will be held



on May 17, from 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club. Dinner will be served before the program, in which the club will donate to a representative from each of its select charities for 2022 – 23, including BEAM, Betty Griffin Center, Hugs Across the County, and Port-in-the-Storm. Scholarships will also be awarded from the club to three student applicants from Duval and St. Johns counties: two academic scholarships and one scholarship based on character and community service. Other topics will be PVWC summer gatherings and program ideas for the PVWCs club year 2023 – 24. Registration for the meeting and dinner may be found on the Ponte Vedra Woman's Club website under Events at [www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php](http://www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php).

**20th: The Ponte Vedra Writers Group** will meet on Saturday, May 20 at 2 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. The group will host attorney Rod Sullivan, who will speak on "Libel, Slander, Defamation of Character, and the Right to Privacy." Sullivan, who has argued and won a case before the U.S. Supreme Court, has practiced law for over 39 years. The meeting is free and open to members and non-members alike. Visit [www.floridawriters.org](http://www.floridawriters.org) for more information.

**20th: The Nocatee Farmers Market:** BMX will be held on Saturday, May 20 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. The Farmers Market is open to the public.



**25th: "How to avoid predatory lending"** will be presented by St. Johns County Legal Aid's Megan Wall, Managing Attorney, on Thursday, May 25 at 11 a.m. at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.





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

**Q: Is it too early to register children for the next school year?**

A: Not at all — especially this year, as our budget is very tight. We are trying to hire the correct number of personnel, so it’s imperative that families register as early as possible and declare their intentions.

**Q: How can parents register their children for school?**

A: They can check with their local school, and most of the paperwork is done online. There is an address locator on our main website ([www.stjohns.k12.fl.us](http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us)) that will let residents know exactly which schools their home is zoned for. We encourage parents to register as soon as they can.

**Q: What’s happening in May in the district?**

A: Importantly, we will honor teachers for their hard work each and every day with Teacher Appreciation Week the first week of May. I ask our community to join me in supporting our teachers and celebrating their hard work and the invaluable contributions they make to our students’ education and well being.

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

A: Yes, we’ve had a number of recognitions and award ceremonies lately. Each school as well as the district has named its Volunteer of the Year in Adult, Senior, and Student categories. Congratulations to Sharon Kehoe, who was named the St. Johns County Senior Volunteer of the Year in addition to her school, Ocean Palms Elementary. Other volunteers honored were:

Landrum: Ethan Manley (Youth), Kristin Glunt (Adult), David Solomon (Senior)

Nease: Jacqueline Gaffney (Youth), Sean McClafferty (Adult)

Ocean Palms: Evie Smith (Youth), Jennifer Werba (Adult), Sharon Kehoe (Senior)

Palm Valley: Abigail Fasula (Youth), Aimee Moore (Adult), Kay Moser (Senior)

Pine Island: Brittany Barron (Adult)

Ponte Vedra HS: Alexis Magnano (Youth), Shannon Carter (Adult)

Valley Ridge: Wynter Whitehead (Youth), Lynn Postell (Senior)

The 2023 All-County High School Art Show Award winners from District 4 were:

Corinna Cioffi, Nease, first place in Drawing

Emily Churilla, Nease, second place in Drawing and third place in Ceramics/Pottery

Rylee Harris, Nease, honorable mention in 3d Mixed-Media/Sculpture

Isabel Yang, PVHS, second place in Painting

Kalena Russo, PVHS, first place in Digital Art

Ella Holder, PVHS, honorable mention in Ceramics/Pottery

Also, Finley Pilinko from Landrum Middle School won the Medical History Award for outstanding entry with a medically related topic for her exhibit titled “Elizabeth Blackwell: Forging a Frontier in Medicine” and Jack Sproull from Landrum Middle School won the African American Heritage award for outstanding entry examining African American history from any era for his exhibit, “The Effect of Jackie Robinson.”

**Q: Do you have anything else to share with District 4?**

A: As the school year winds down, we often see an increase in high risk behaviors from students. We ask parents to continue to closely monitor their children. Engage them in conversations about risky behaviors for themselves and at school and the potential consequences that arise. We want to help support families with their efforts in keeping our children safe.

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

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



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

**Q. Can you give background on the deceptive mail campaign posing as the County Records Office?**

A. Several residents have reached out to my office about a letter from a Tampa-based company claiming to be the County Records Office. The letter informs the recipient their deed has been recorded in the Official Records and lists the new property owner’s name. The company offers to sell the property owner a copy of the recorded deed for \$89.

In Florida, the Clerk of Courts and County Comptrollers are the record-keepers for official records, such as deeds and mortgages. Residents are encouraged to contact my office or visit our website to obtain a free copy of their deed.

**Q. If a deed or document is recorded with a property owner’s name on it, how can the property owner be notified?**

A: The Clerk’s Office provides a free recording notification service. If you subscribe to the Property Fraud Alert system, you will receive an email alert when a document including your name is recorded into the Official Records of St. Johns County.

The alert provides an early warning system for subscribers to become aware of what may have otherwise gone undetected. Subscribers armed with this notification system will be able to take prompt, appropriate action if they determine the activity to

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Guest Column

By St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Did you know that citizens may propose amendments to the Florida Constitution through an initiative petition process? The initiative petition process, in addition to other requirements, requires a specific number of petitions to be signed by registered Florida voters before the proposed amendment can appear on the ballot. Per the Florida Constitution, the number of signatures needed is based on 8 percent of the voters who cast votes in the last Presidential election. In addition, the signatures must also come from voters in at least one half of the congressional districts of the state. The statewide total valid signatures needed for the initiative to make it to your ballot in 2024 is 891,523. A proposed amendment requires at least 60 percent approval from Florida voters to pass.

Statewide, groups often submit over a million signatures on the initiative petitions. In order to be valid, the signature submitted must be that of a registered voter in the county to which the signature has been submitted, and the signature on the petition must match the signature on the voter's record.

Once proponents obtain 25 percent of the total number of required signatures, the Secretary of State sends the initiative language to the Attorney General, who then forwards the language to the Florida Supreme Court. The Supreme Court will determine if the initiative is legal. During the review by the Court, proponents may continue gathering the remaining signatures needed to place it on the ballot. If the Court declares the initiative invalid because it is unconstitutional, violates Florida's strict single-subject requirement,

or any other reasons, the initiative is dead.

Throughout the year, the St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Office verifies thousands of initiative petitions signed by St. Johns County voters. Pursuant to Florida Statute 100.371(11)(b), St. Johns County's actual cost of signature verification of an initiative petition is \$0.55. Since January 2023, our office has received and verified almost 19,000 signed petition forms. The most popular petitions currently circulating are "Adult Personal Use of Marijuana" and "Right to Clean and Healthy Waters." Once a month, an Initiative Petition Summary is uploaded to our website at [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) for public viewing.

After the petitions are verified by the Supervisor of Elections Office, they are forwarded to the Secretary of State. Once the Secretary of State has determined that the required number and distribution of valid signatures has been obtained, the Secretary will issue a certificate of ballot position for that proposed amendment.

Initiative petitions are circulated by either paid petition circulators or volunteer petition circulators. To become a paid petition circulator, one must visit the Florida Division of Elections website and complete an online application. Petition circulators are working in St. Johns County, so don't be surprised if you are approached at a public library, government building, grocery store, or gas station by a circulator asking for your signature on a constitutional amendment petition. Initiative petitions must be filed no later than February 1, 2024 in order to obtain ballot position for the 2024 General Election.

QA

with State Attorney, 7th Judicial Circuit, R.J. Larizza

**Q: Is your office, like many businesses, in need of employees?**

A: The 7th Judicial Circuit covers Volusia, Flagler, St. Johns, and Putnam counties. We are struggling to fill prosecutor positions. We currently have approximately 68 Assistant State Attorneys, but we are about six or seven short. It's difficult to find people to apply for a number of reasons, but for one thing, enrollment is down at law schools due to the high cost and then when students graduate, they often have a lot of student loans. Seven years ago or so, we would interview at the University of Florida and Florida State University and get between 10 and 15 candidates interested in an interview. Last year we had just one.

**Q: How are you addressing this to try to attract qualified candidates?**

A: We have raised the starting Assistant State Attorney salary to a minimum of \$65,000, but you can easily add \$20,000 to \$25,000 on top of that if you consider benefits we offer like health insurance and retirement.

Inexperienced prosecutors start in misdemeanor, and that pays the \$65,000 minimum. A felony line attorney makes \$75,000 minimum and for drug

prosecutors, the minimum is \$82,500. Felony intake attorneys, who make the filing decisions, earn a minimum of \$90,000 and criminal prosecutors earn a minimum of \$100,000. Finally, homicide attorneys and managing attorneys each make a minimum of \$120,000.

The 7th Circuit is the highest paid in the state. I want people who work with us to be able to take care of their families and be comfortable ... and to stay with our office.

**Q: What is a unique benefit of working with the State Attorney's office?**

A: There's an emotional and mental satisfaction of a well-prosecuted case. We are serving the victim and the community. When you successfully prosecute, for example, someone who has sexually assaulted a child or an adult, and when you get justice for that victim, there's a special satisfaction of getting the crime element off the streets. It's like nothing else.

**Q: How should interested parties learn more about employment opportunities with your office?**

A: All of the information about the positions, including how to apply, may be found on our website, [www.sao7.com](http://www.sao7.com)



# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## Business Briefs

### 31st annual Small Business Week Celebration to be held

The U.S. Small Business Administration will present the Small Business Week Awards and Top Lender Awards at the 31st annual Small Business Week celebration on May 5 at the Herbert University Center on the campus of the University of North Florida.

In recognition of the small business community’s contribution to the economy and society, the President of the United States designates one week each year as National Small Business Week. The U.S. SBA, in conjunction with the FSBDC at UNF, will host this special event at the local level to honor and present awards to local entrepreneurs and those who support and advocate for small businesses

The keynote presentation will be “Who’s Going to Do the Work? How the Demographic Drought Will Reshape Small Business in America,” during which attendees will hear about the declines in the working-age population and why companies are finding that many people are choosing to stay out of the workforce and what can be done about it. The presenter is Ron Hetrick, Senior Labor Economist with Lightcast, a global leader in labor market analytics. Visit [www.sbdc.unf.edu/events/sbw2023](http://www.sbdc.unf.edu/events/sbw2023) for more information.

### Newsweek names local hospital one of the World’s Best Hospitals

Baptist Medical Center Beaches has been named one of the “World’s Best Hospitals 2023” by Newsweek maga-

zine for the fourth consecutive time. This places Baptist Beaches among the top 10 Florida hospitals earning this recognition.

The award methodology was based on Baptist Beaches’ publicly reported data on patient satisfaction, safety and effectiveness of care, which was reviewed along with 2,300 hospitals in 80 countries by Statista, Inc., a global market research firm that partnered with Newsweek for this study.

The hospitals on the World’s Best list are not only innovative and offer first-class care, but also consistently attract the best people and provide the best outcomes for patients as well as the most important new therapies and research.

### New executive director of THE PLAYERS Championship named

The PGA TOUR has announced that Lee Smith has been named executive director of THE PLAYERS Championship and replaces Jared Rice, who has taken a new role leading business development for the TOUR’s Championship Management portfolio of events.

Smith comes to THE PLAYERS Championship after spending the last five years as general manager at Liberty National Golf Club in Jersey City, NJ, where he was instrumental in helping the PGA TOUR contest THE NORTHERN TRUST in 2019 and 2021. While overseeing an onsite staff of nearly 150 team members at

the club, he secured the LPGA Tour’s Mizuho Americas Open, which will debut at Liberty National in June. Since 2008, Smith has been a key member of the TPC Network, serving as head golf professional at TPC Sugarloaf outside Atlanta; general manager of TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas; and regional director of operations for TPC Networks, a role he held concurrently with his position at Liberty National. He has been a Class A member of the PGA of America for more than 20 years.

THE PLAYERS Championship is set to return to TPC Sawgrass, March 12 – 17, 2024, as the strongest field in golf competes for the richest purse on the PGA TOUR. Visit [www.theplayers.com](http://www.theplayers.com) for more information.

### SCORE Jacksonville recognized as Chapter of the Year for Central/North Florida

SCORE Jacksonville has received the Central/North Florida District Chapter of the Year Award for outstanding performance in 2022.

“We are honored to receive recognition from the district,” said Jackson-

ville SCORE Chapter Chairperson Derrick Smith. “Our volunteers have a passion for helping small businesses. They are committed to the success of the businesses in this community. We are proud to be recognized for the exceptional growth in the services provided as well as the high levels of client satisfaction because of our outreach.”

SCORE has been a part of the local small business community for 57 years. In 2022, the chapter’s volunteers provided free face-to-face mentoring as well as free or low cost workshops for 8,868 new aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners. Last year also saw the launch for the JAX CEO Forum, a consortium of business owners who meet monthly to network and share cutting-edge new ideas and solutions specifically curated to bolster and enhance their own senior management skills.

Visit [www.score.org/jacksonville](http://www.score.org/jacksonville) for more information about the services provided, how to request a mentor, workshop registration or volunteer opportunities.

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**Briefs**

**Summer reading volunteers needed**  
RSVP of St. Johns County is looking for community members to assist once a week in the summer reading program in the St. Johns County School District. Hours are flexible. If you are traveling this summer, you can help while you are in town. Orientation for reading volunteers will be Monday, June 5 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Fullerwood Auditorium, 10 Hildreth Drive in St. Augustine.

“There are students who can greatly benefit from the help of those willing to give just a small amount of their time,” said Cheryl Freeman, RSVP director. “Assistance from community volunteers can make all the difference in helping these students succeed.”

To make a training reservation or for more information, contact RSVP at (904) 547-3952 or Cheryl.Freeman@stjohns.k12.fl.us.

**Senior living facility receives Governor’s Gold Seal Award for Excellence in Long-Term Care for 10th time**  
River Garden Hebrew Home has once again been awarded the Governor’s Gold Seal Award for Excellence in Long-Term Care, a clear indicator that the agency remains on-track as a premier care facility for seniors in northeast Florida. The award was presented by Kimberly R. Smoak, deputy secretary of Health Quality Assurance at the Agency for Health Care Administration to Dr. Lawrence Goldberg, River Garden Hebrew Home board president, during the River Garden Senior Services annual meeting on March 26. River Garden Hebrew Home has proudly achieved this esteemed status since the award was created 21 years ago.  
The Gold Seal Award for Excellence

in Long-Term Care was created in 2002 by the Florida State Legislature to recognize Florida’s premier quality nursing homes that have exceptionally high standards and display excellence in the quality of care delivered to their residents. Prior to receiving the award, a nursing facility must undergo a rigorous examination to ensure strict regulatory compliance and the provision of enhanced programming and services. In addition, a site visit is made to the facility by representatives of the Governor’s Panel on Excellence in Long-Term Care.  
Currently, there are more than 700 nursing homes in the state of Florida and only 10 are recognized with the Governor’s Gold Seal Award for Excellence in Long-Term Care. River Garden and one other facility have maintained the recognition since its inception in 2002.

**Fort Mose historical and artistic event to be held**  
Fort Mose Historic Park will host the St. Augustine History Festival, an event for the community, on May 12 – 13 to celebrate the historical significance of the park.  
An Afro-Cuban art exhibit will be held from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. each day. Working with the Fort Mose Historical Society, the St. Augustine Friendship Association will display works by Afro-Cuban artists Orlando Piedra, Roel Caboverde, Mildo Matos, Laurence Zuniga, Oscar Lasseria and others on the grounds of Fort Mose.  
The Fort Mose Militia reenactment will occur at 11 a.m., 12 p.m., and 1 p.m. each day.  
Historian Jane Landers will speak on ties between St. Augustine, Fort Mose and Cuba on May 13, 2 p.m. – 3:30

p.m. St. Augustine historian Susan Parker, PhD, will be the interlocutor.  
Many know that Fort Mose was the first community of free Africans recognized by European powers in what would become the continental United States. Florida’s Spanish colonial government created the community in 1738 to encourage enslaved Africans in the English colonies to flee the north to escape to St. Augustine, where in exchange for conversion to Catholicism and males’ military service to the Spanish colony, runaways received freedom and land. Women and children farmed the land and occasionally sold extra produce in St. Augustine.  
Less well known is the fact that when England gained control of Florida from 1763 – 1783, the community of Fort Mose faced a dire crisis. It was doubtful that England would recognize community members’ freedom, so community members had to choose between flight or possible punishment and re-enslavement. Most chose to follow the evacuating Spaniards to Cuba, where some established the community of San Agustin de la Nueva Florida — St. Augustine of New Florida.  
Visit <https://fortmose.org/> for more information.  
**Florida libraries launch local author contest**  
The St. Johns County Public Library System will participate in the sixth annual Florida Author Project contest, which creates opportunities for indie-published authors. In partnership with “Library Journal” and BiblioBoard, the Florida Author Project gives libraries a chance to engage with a growing group of fresh literary voices in their communities and an opportunity to play an active

role in the discovery and promotion of new works.  
Submissions will be accepted through May 31, 2023, for local authors of adult and young adult fiction to be recognized as the top indie-published eBooks in Florida. Winners in each category will receive \$1,000 as well as:  
• Honors at the 2023 Indie Author Day Reception  
• Opportunities to promote the winning title in participating Florida public libraries  
• Inclusion in a full-page spread in “Library Journal,” one of America’s oldest and most renowned trade publications for library news  
• Opportunities to earn royalties through the IAP Select collection (ePUB format required for eligibility)  
For indie-published authors, the contest is a fantastic prospect to elevate their careers and expand their readership. Along with the accolade of the award and its perks, being recognized by librarians creates credibility and visibility in the growing marketplace of digital content and indie-published books.  
Authors may submit their work at [indieauthorproject.librariesshare.com/florida](http://indieauthorproject.librariesshare.com/florida). Each book submitted to the contest must be independently-published, in the category of adult or young adult fiction, written by a Florida resident, and available in either ePUB (strongly encouraged) or PDF format.  
To learn more about writer’s resources at the St. Johns County Public Library System, visit [sjcpls.org/writers-](http://sjcpls.org/writers-)

**Briefs** cont. on pg. 13



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Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Craig O'Neal

While Craig O'Neal had a successful career in banking and finance for 30 years, he always felt a strong pull towards photography. "I have a creative side of my brain that is a lot stronger than the analytical," he said. While still working in finance, O'Neal purchased a Canon camera and shot photos of a triathlon just for fun. Those photos were noticed by a local media outlet and that led to more shoots. O'Neal, a Florida Master Naturalist, then focused on nature photography, capturing some of his best photos right in his backyard. His photos can be found at the kiosks located at Bird Island Park and at Guana River Wildlife Management Area. Soon, O'Neal, a Minnesota native who moved to Ponte Vedra Beach in 1989, began giving slide show talks at the library and rotary club about his nature photography and wrote a column for five years. In 2014, O'Neal started "Craig O'Neal Photography" with corporate clients such as Firehouse Subs, Petco and Hilton Garden Inn. He retired from banking in 2017. The pandemic brought a lot of O'Neal's corporate work to a halt, but it also inspired O'Neal, 68, to give back to the community. He decided to offer to take free headshots of those who lost their jobs during COVID in hopes of helping them land a new job. Next, O'Neal took photos for the



Photo courtesy Craig O'Neal  
Craig O'Neal.

Jacksonville USO at NAS Jacksonville for sailors transitioning into civilian life, and he continues to offer his services free of charge to any local veterans today. A veteran himself, O'Neal joined the U.S. Army when he was 17 years old because he wanted to get away from the cold winters of Minnesota and farm life. O'Neal left the Army at the age of 20 as a sergeant. He volunteers as a photographer for the Jacksonville Humane Society and has signed up to do a daily weather and event map of the world with Team Rubicon, a disaster response group of volunteers.

**Q: You mentioned that you enjoy weather photography and storm chasing. What interests you about both?**

A: Weather has always interested me.

Storm chasing allows me to see and feel the events. It also adds an element of excitement and perhaps danger that I like. Capturing supercells and tornadoes with my camera allows me to share this information with others.

**Q: Do you have favorite places to take nature photographs?**

A: It is not about where I go. It is about what I am going to concentrate on. I learned a long time ago that with nature photography you have to understand the animals and the insects. You have to understand lighting. A lot goes into a photograph. There is always something really cool happening all the time. You just don't see it. If you look for it, you won't

find it every time, but odds are, it is there.

**Q: Your wife gifted you with a trip to Cuba that included a photography guide. What did you learn there?**

A: The most important takeaway was learning street photography and especially how to approach people without being intimidated. How to engage in conversation. The second thing I learned had nothing to do with photography, but the people. I learned that even in Cuba, people can love their country, but, at times, not the government. Kind of like America.

**Q: You mentioned that you were adopted and connected six years ago with your paternal brother and three sisters. What did you discover through this connection in relation to photography?**

A: My siblings told me that our father loved photography as well. Then a few years later they gifted me with our father's 1958 Leica film camera. I cherish this camera and use it from time to time. It takes wonderful images. If you research Leica, you will find they are one of the few cameras that can be passed from generation to generation. They were made to last.

**Q: What are some of your hobbies?**

A: I love rucking, and I joined the group in Nocatee. What I really enjoy is some of the friends that I have made. I have made a couple of really close friends through rucking. I also play pickleball at the Y several times a week. I enjoy spending time with my three grandchildren as well.

Get to Know ...

Interested in being featured? Email Martie Thompson at  
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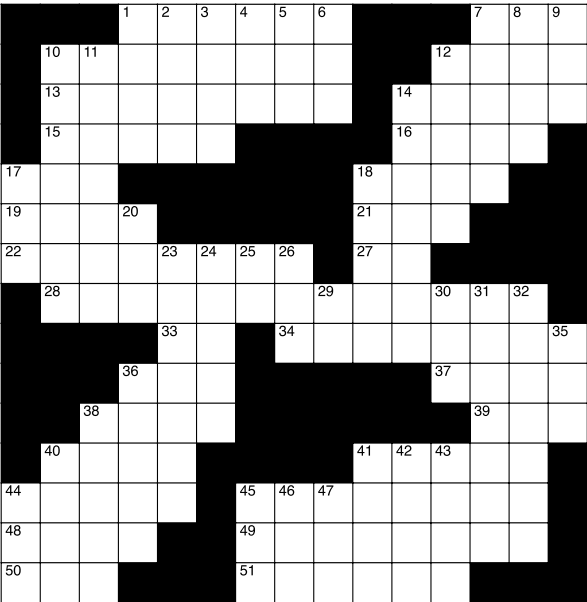
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3  
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Wear away by friction
- 7. Insecticide
- 10. Elicited a secret vote
- 12. Beef
- 13. Disagreement
- 14. \_\_ Crawford, supermodel
- 15. Jeweled headdress
- 16.. Digits
- 17. Trillion hertz
- 18. Snap up
- 19. Classical portico
- 21. Residue after burning
- 22. Large integers
- 27. Free agent
- 28. Where ballplayers work
- 33. Blood type
- 34. Scottish city
- 36. Google certification (abbr.)
- 37. Serbian monetary unit
- 38. Make a sudden surprise attack on
- 39. Wood or metal bolt
- 40. Relaxing attire
- 41. Famed neurologist
- 44. Dullish brown fabrics
- 45. Member of ancient Jewish sect
- 48. Griffith, Rooney
- 49. Lawmakers
- 50. Government lawyers
- 51. The arch of the foot

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Nonflowering aquatic plant
- 2. Britpop rockers
- 3. National capital
- 4. Consumed
- 5. The habitat of wild animals
- 6. Sun up in New York
- 7. Cygnus star
- 8. Male parents
- 9. Talk to you (abbr.)
- 10. A place to clean oneself
- 11. Southwestern US state
- 12. South Korean idol singer
- 14. Pirate
- 17. Pituitary hormone (abbr.)
- 18. Mistake
- 20. Promotions
- 23. Prepares
- 24. Partner to flowed
- 25. State lawyer
- 26. Patti Hearst's captors
- 29. Pound
- 30. Electronic data processing
- 31. Sports player
- 32. Treats with contempt
- 35. Apprehend
- 36. Excessively talkative
- 38. Highways
- 40. Ribosomal ribonucleic acid
- 41. College organization for males
- 42. Any customary observance or practice
- 43. Employee stock ownership plan
- 44. Male parent
- 45. The 23rd letter of the Greek alphabet
- 46. Female bird
- 47. Autonomic nervous system

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

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

WORDS

- ALL-THE-WAY
- BLOWOUT
- BLUE
- BUTTER BURGER
- COMBO
- DOUBLE MEAT
- EAST COAST
- FACIAL
- HAMMERED
- LTO
- MID-RARE
- MINIBURGER
- NO FUN
- ON WHEELS
- PATTY
- PLAIN JANE
- RABBIT FOOD
- RATIO
- SALLY
- SEAR
- SLIDER
- SLUG
- SMASH BURGER
- SPECIAL SAUCE



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

A. 24 19 6 6 14 9 17 21

Clue: Lettuce and tomato are two

B. 17 18 14 5 5

Clue: Cooking device

C. 15 13 24

Clue: Oily or greasy matter

D. 3 16 9 21

Clue: Burger breads

Sea turtle nesting season begins May 1

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

The beaches of St. Johns County are home to several species of endangered or threatened sea turtles. Sea turtle nesting season begins May 1, and St. Johns County officials are asking residents, visitors, and businesses to help protect natural habitat by observing all nesting season laws and regulations.

Beginning on May 1, St. Johns County staff will close gates at 7:30 p.m. and reopen at 8 a.m. to allow nesting sea turtles to have a safe beach throughout the night.

Beach visitors can have a positive impact on nesting sea turtles by taking the following actions while enjoying the beach:

- Refrain from using fireworks and open fires.
- Remove ruts and sand castles at the end of your beach day.
- Do not leave beach chairs or canopies on the beach overnight.
- Flashlights are strongly discouraged as they can harm sea turtles.
- Avoid entering dunes and conservation zones (15 feet seaward of the dune line).

• Refrain from releasing balloons, which can fall into the ocean and harm marine life.

• Never approach sea turtles emerging from or returning to the sea. Nesting sea turtles are vulnerable, timid, and can be easily frightened away.

Never push an injured animal back into the ocean. If you encounter an injured, sick, or deceased sea turtle, call the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office non-emergency dispatch line at (904) 824-8304. Leave only

your footprints, providing the turtles with a safe and clean habitat to nest and hatch.

St. Johns County is grateful to volunteers, residents, visitors, and businesses for supporting habitat conservation efforts and keeping our beaches beautiful. For more information, call St. Johns County Habitat Conservation and Beach Management at (904) 209-3740, or visit [www.sjcfcl.us/hcp](http://www.sjcfcl.us/hcp).

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Eagle Scouts cont. from pg. 1

Scouts; however, consider that Troop 288 is a scout-led troop that camps monthly and devotes countless service hours to the community. Though attaining the rank of Eagle is only one part of the scouting experience, it is easier to achieve when the rest of one's scouting experience is so fun, challenging and rewarding.

On the journey to Eagle rank, each boy scout earned 21 merit badges, served in a leadership position for 16 months, and spent numerous hours on service projects including their Eagle Scout service project totaling more than 150 hours of service.

Landon McIntosh's Eagle project was a wall-hung, double book library for

the Lord of Life Lutheran Church.

Cody Langley built book libraries for the Dolphin Cove Community Park.

CJ Joyner built a display shelf for trophies and storage shelving for instruments for the Ocean of Sound, the Ponte Vedra High School marching band.

Jack Hilbert's Eagle Scout project was building a storage shed for Peace of Heart Community, which provides a group home for persons with autism.

J.T. Taylor's Eagle Project was replacing parking boundary fencing at Princess Place Preserve.

Troop 288 meets at Ponte Vedra High School on Tuesday nights from 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

new passport, consider visiting our recording department in the St. Johns County courthouse or making an appointment at our annex locations in Julington Creek or Ponte Vedra Beach. To schedule an appointment, call (904) 819-3632. F

Q. What is the best way for residents to contact 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.

Sisters-in-Arms cont. from pg. 1

cally. She also credited the Our Lady Star of the Sea parish, community members such as Dwight Hibbard and her board of directors with giving her support.

Saenz said Sisters-in-Arms will serve women between the ages of 18 and 24 — a critical time for many young people coming out of foster care.

Statistics show that over 27,000 children in the United States age out of the foster care system each year, with 20 percent becoming homeless the day they age out. Seven out of 10 girls who age out of the foster care system will become pregnant before the age of 21, and kids aging out of foster care have less than a 3 percent chance of earning a college degree.

Saenz, who has a background in research and development, said she is determined to change those statistics. Saenz has held two fundraisers so far, one a golf tournament that raised \$22,000 last year and a "Pickleball with a Purpose" competition in March. More events are planned, she said, with the goal of building a house for the young women as a transitional and safe space.

Sisters-in-Arms board vice-chair Steph McFee said the organization is focused on starting the pilot program with two or three local organizations. Funding, she said, is needed to support the full six-week program where young women will meet weekly, have a mentor, and learn how to get the job they want

to get started on their life journey.

"We will also look for businesses to offer internships, first jobs and more to help these girls get stable and on their feet," said McFee, adding that mentors are also needed. "We have to realize many do not have a place to go, so how do we make that transition into adulthood smoother."

Saenz said she has enjoyed working with other non-profits in the area, sharing ideas and supporting one another.

"The really neat thing since I've been in the nonprofit sector is how everyone helps each other out," she said. "They show up to my events for moral support and vice versa."

Seamark Ranch Chief Executive Officer Greg Voss said that he looks forward to working with Saenz. Seamark Ranch, established 15 years ago, is a Christian home and family system that helps children from families who are in crisis. It is located in Green Cove Springs.

"Seamark is consistently seeking out partners who can assist our young people as they transition into adulthood and the responsibility that goes along with that. Under Mary's leadership, Sisters-in-Arms provides the support that gives them the tools and the opportunities they need to help them grow and thrive," he said.

[Author's Note: For more information about Sisters-in-arms, visit [sisters-in-arms.org](http://sisters-in-arms.org).]

St. Johns County Clerk cont. from pg. 5

be fraudulent.

Q. With summer travel around the corner, do you have any updates on the timelines to apply for and receive a passport?

A. Yes, at this time, the U.S. Department of State has stopped accepting expedited applications for passports. If you are traveling in less than nine weeks, you must call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778 in order to make an appointment for passport services at a U.S. Department of State Passport Agency. If you are planning to travel in more than nine weeks and need a



# Ponte Vedra High School Winter Guard and Indoor Percussion complete successful season

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Ponte Vedra High School Winter Guard completed the 2023 season with a stunning performance of its show “One Final Letter” at the Daytona Ocean Center on March 24. After coming off a tumultuous season in 2022 placing second overall in the AAA class at the Florida Federation Color Guard Circuit Championships, the team continued its momentum in 2023 by getting promoted to the AA class mid-way through the season. This promotion meant that the team exceeded the expectations of the previous classification and were ready to be promoted to the next highest classification. While this was unprecedented territory for many of the performers on the team, they stepped up to the challenge of a new class and had a successful championship run. The team finished fourth overall in the AA

class and has put the winter guard program on the map in the state of Florida. The team is looking to compete on a international level next season by going to its first Winter Guard International regional.

Additionally, in a thrilling conclusion to the 2023 season, Ponte Vedra High School Percussion gave an awe-inspiring performance of its show “The Puppeteer” at the Daytona Ocean Center on March 25. Despite facing stiff competition, the dedicated team emerged victorious, securing an impressive second place in A class. This achievement has firmly established Ponte Vedra High School Percussion as one of the leading high school ensembles in Florida. Eager to take on new challenges, the team is already gearing up for next year’s competitions, striving to reach even greater heights in 2024.



Photo courtesy Danielle Wright  
Ponte Vedra High School Winter Guard performs its show “One Final Letter.”



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# Volunteers from Ocean Palms and Landrum win district awards

By Lisa Farese  
mail@floridanewslines.com

St. Johns County School District recognized outstanding school volunteers at the district level on March 30 in the categories of youth, adult and senior volunteers. After the votes were tallied from the more than 40 schools in the district, Ocean Palm Elementary’s senior volunteer, Sharon Kehoe, took home the district’s Outstanding Senior Volunteer of the Year award. Additionally, PTO presidents Jennifer Werba of Ocean Palms and Kristin Glunt of Landrum tied for second place in the Outstanding Adult Volunteer of the Year category. Finally, Evie Smith, Landrum student and Ocean Palm’s youth volunteer, was recognized at the event — a true testament to the dedicated volunteers in our community.

For the past 13 years, Kehoe has worked to fight childhood hunger as the coordinator of the local Blessings in a Backpack program. Here she plans meals, organizes volunteer teams and work locations, fundraises for purchases, and delivers food backpacks to 195 students in need in local schools. Believing that, “Kids don’t choose to be hungry,” she is an inspiration to volunteers everywhere.

Werba, Ocean Palms’ PTO president, has tirelessly led the initiative to secure funding and installation to not one, but two phases of playground renovations. Additionally, she has helped secure new technology for the school such as computers and printers. She has also worked to ensure the teachers and staff are regularly recognized



Photo courtesy Lisa Farese  
Jennifer Werba, OPE PTO president and runner up; Evie Smith, youth volunteer from OPE; Sharon Kehoe, Senior Volunteer of the Year award winner; Tiffany Cantwell, OPE principal; Kristin Glunt, Landrum PTO president and runner up at the St. Johns County School District awards event.

and appreciated for their dedication to education with teacher appreciation lunches and gifts.

Glunt, Landrum PTO president, has worked to ensure the teachers feel appreciated at Landrum — something that often goes by the wayside at the middle school level. From a complete remodel of the staff lounge, to regular giveaways and gift cards, to surprise theme decorating of the staff lounge, to lunches and cookouts, the staff feel honored and recognized on a regular basis.

As a familiar face at Ocean Palms, Smith volunteers to help the kindergarten teachers read with students, organize supplies, set up class lessons, and assist children with classroom learning in various ways. She has enhanced the lives of seven teachers and more than 150 students in her endeavors.

# Nease welcomes new athletic director

By Susan Rieger  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Chris Gallagher has joined Nease High School as the school’s new athletic director, bringing a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the athletic department. He has 20 years of experience in sports management, including serving as the athletic director at Viera High School and most recently Ridgeview High School. His background includes working with various sports programs, overseeing coaching staff, coordinating athletic events, and managing budgets. Gallagher also holds certifications in athletic administration, which further highlight his commitment to excellence.

In addition to his professional experience, Gallagher has a genuine love for sports as a former basketball and baseball athlete himself. He understands the important role that athletics play in a student’s overall education. He believes that participation in sports can provide valuable life skills such as teamwork, leadership, discipline, and perseverance. He is dedicated to fostering a positive and inclusive athletic culture at Nease, where all students have the opportunity to thrive and succeed.



Photo courtesy Susan Rieger  
New Nease Athletic Director Chris Gallagher.

One of Gallagher’s main priorities as athletic director will be to build strong relationships with coaches, student-athletes, parents, and the community. He will work closely with the coaching staff to provide support, resources, and professional development opportunities. Another focus will be on promoting sportsmanship, character development, and safety in the athletic programs. He will uphold the values of fair play, respect, and integrity, and will work to instill these principles in our student-athletes and prioritize the safety and well-being of our athletes, making sure that all necessary precautions are taken to prevent injuries and protect their health.



**Briefs** cont. from pg. 8  
resources.

**Grant funding available for Northeast Florida nonprofits**

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida has opened its spring competitive grantmaking process and invites nonprofit organizations working in the six-county Northeast Florida region to apply for funding in areas detailed below. Last year, The Community Foundation awarded more than \$2 million in grants through its Foundation-directed grantmaking, supporting organizations large and small across a breadth of issue areas, including young children, aging adults, individual artists, and more. A complete list of competitive grants made last year is available at [www.jaxcf.org](http://www.jaxcf.org).

**Program Support Grants (Now open)**

- Purpose: Support for launching, expanding or improving services that support vulnerable populations and address unmet community needs.
- Amount: Up to \$25,000
- Location: Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, St. Johns and Putnam counties.

**Capacity Building Grants (Now open)**

- Purpose: Help organizations better achieve their missions,

promote continuous improvement and increase effectiveness.

- Amount: Up to \$10,000

- Location: Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns counties

**Individual Artist Grants (Opening May 1)**

- Purpose: Individual Artist Grants are designed to help Northeast Florida artists emerge to the next level of their artistic careers.

- Amount: Up to \$5,000

- Location: Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, Putnam or St. Johns County

**LGBTQ Community Fund Grants (Opening May 1)**

- Purpose: The LGBTQ Community Fund makes grants to nonprofit organizations in Northeast Florida that build greater togetherness within LGBTQ communities and support Northeast Florida welcoming and celebrating its LGBTQ population.
- Location: Duval, Nassau, Baker, Clay and St. Johns counties
- Amount: Up to \$25,000

Small organization grants and Beaches Community Fund grants have already closed for the year. Visit [www.jaxcf.org](http://www.jaxcf.org) for more information about the above grant opportunities.

# Nutrition Check

# Eliminating diet culture

By Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RD and Rayonna Hills BS  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto:mail@floridanewslines.com)

Have you ever heard of diet culture? The term diet culture is a social exception that tells us how we are expected to eat, look, and that only when our bodies look a certain way, we are accepted. It is a system of beliefs and rules that promote weight-loss at any cost to achieve the “desired” appearance, which can impact all genders and all aged individuals from adolescents to older adults. During this month, May 6 is recognized as “National No Diet Day.”

**Examples of diet culture are:**

- Categorizing calories and labeling foods as “good or bad”
- Commenting on/criticizing another persons’ weight (children and adults)
- Diets that cut out food groups (e.g., fruits, whole grains)
- Influencers who glorify “health” by adopting unhealthy eating behaviors

Diet culture can be very dangerous, not only emotionally, but also physically. It often fuels guilt and shame around eating, encourages body discrimination, and can lead to disordered eating habits and in some cases, eating disorders such as bulimia, binge eating, anorexia, or many others.

**In order to avoid diet culture, we can:**

- Removing labels such as “good or bad” when it comes to foods. All foods can be

good and enjoyed in moderation; let’s focus on food positivity over food negativity.

- Focusing on your overall diet and acknowledging foods that make you feel good, recognizing that all foods provide value and benefit to our bodies, some more than others.
- Try to avoid being exposed to diet culture (this is really hard!), such as unfollowing those on social media who promote strict diets/restrictions/eliminations or ending a conversation with someone who may be talking about it
- Be mindful of how you speak about foods and others in terms of their looks; be kind and seek to be a supportive friend or family member to those who feel diet pressures.
- Think more about intuitive eating. Visit [www.intuitiveeating.org/10-principles-of-intuitive-eating/](http://www.intuitiveeating.org/10-principles-of-intuitive-eating/) to learn more.

If you are ever questioning food choices or interested in changing your diet, consult a registered dietitian and they will be able to work through this with you. You can find a nutrition expert by visiting [www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert](http://www.eatright.org/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.*

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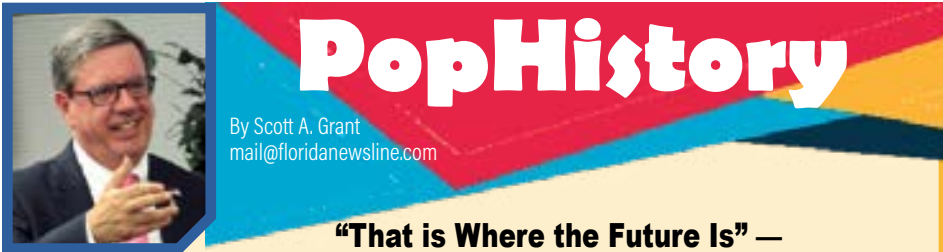
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By Scott A. Grant  
mail@floridanewsline.com

**“That is Where the Future Is” —  
The story of Bud and Temple Abernathy**

In the summer of 1911, two young men set out to ride from Oklahoma to New York City on horseback. That sounds like a harrowing journey for even the most experienced cowboys. What made their journey so amazing was that they were just kids. The two brothers, Bud and Temple Abernathy, were 10 and six years old. Temple was so small that he needed to stand on a stump to get onto his pony.

Despite the obvious obstacles, the two kids rode more than 2,500 miles in a little over a month to meet Teddy Roosevelt in New York City. They wrote checks along the way to pay for their provisions. Their father and Teddy were friends. Roosevelt had first met Jack Abernathy hunting wolves together and later appointed the dad to be US Marshall for the Western District of Oklahoma. Abernathy was famed for capturing wolves alive. He would stick his hand in their jaw to immobilize them and then wire their muzzles shut. Teddy Roosevelt thought it was one of the most amazing things he had ever seen.

The two boys set out on a small horse named Sam Bass and a pony named Geronimo. Geronimo came up lame and had to be replaced by a red and white pinto named Wylie Haynes. Along the way, they were treated as celebrities. They drove a train, slept in a fire station, and were the guests of honor at a Halley’s Comet watch party. When they got to Washington they met with President Taft. They liked him, but thought he was not as impressive as their hero, Teddy Roosevelt. Congress shut down so that they could listen to the two boys tell their story.

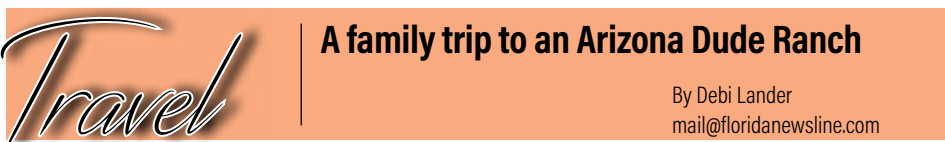
In New York City, they were greeted as heroes. The brothers met Orville

Wright, who offered to take them up in his airplane. They rode in a ticker-tape parade with Roosevelt and the Rough Riders down Fifth Avenue. At the end of the parade, Teddy gave six-year-old Temple a huge teddy bear. They decided to ship their horses home via train and bought a small Brush automobile for \$485 and then drove themselves home.

The boys became so famous that they played themselves in a motion picture titled “Abernathy Kids to the Rescue.” A year after their famous ride to New York City, the boys accepted a challenge to ride cross country from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean in 60 days or less, never sleeping or eating indoors. If they succeeded, they would win a prize of \$10,000. In the end, it took them 62 days and they did not claim the prize. They would have made it, but they lost their horses in the Great Salt Lake Desert and spent three days trying to find them, nearly dying of dehydration in the process.

The boys final adventure had them riding an Indian Motorcycle from Oklahoma to New York as a paid publicity stunt. They were nine and 13. Bud went into the oil and gas business. Temple went to law school and eventually became a judge. Late in life, he would say, “We’d been royally entertained by some folks, and coldly turned away by others, and we’d always faced the question of whether it was worthwhile to go on. I’m glad we always pressed ahead. That is where the future is.”

Scott A. Grant is a local historian and author. By day he manages investment portfolios at Standfast Asset Management. He welcomes your comments at [scottg@standfastic.com](mailto:scottg@standfastic.com)



By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewsline.com



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Trail ride.

While spring break brings thousands of visitors to Florida beaches each year, thousands of Floridians pack up and travel west. They often leave the state to go skiing or explore the desert surroundings.

I recently flew to Tucson, Arizona, where I met my son, his wife, and their four children. We were all headed to the White Stallion Dude Ranch, a three-generation family-owned and operated guest ranch. The facility follows a legacy of the founders: to preserve the Western way of life and provide guests with an authentic Western experience. I can tell you they succeed.

Less than an hour after we arrived, all seven of us were in the saddles and taking a trail ride across the prickly pear and giant saguaro cactus landscape. The view became a pinch-me moment. I was riding horses with my family in Arizona! The Sonoran Desert and Rincon Mountains ahead of us made an extraordinary backdrop, so much so that the location has appeared in many Hollywood movies.

While at White Stallion, we did much more than ride horses; we shot arrows at targets on the archery range and went rock climbing. The two older girls rode E-bikes (electric) while others hit the heated pool. I shot a 22-caliber rifle and pistol (at targets) for the first time.

And one morning, I rode up and down Suicide Pass as my horse carefully placed his hooves on the rocky terrain. It was a bit scary but rewarding, too.

We were busy and having fun from sunup to sun down, and the kids never missed television (they are not in the guest rooms). Instead, they met others and played chess, air hockey, and basketball; we sat around a campfire, listened to a country western singer, and tried line dancing another night.

The strange thing was while we were active, we were relaxed. No need to cook or clean up, no need to carry a wallet, adults can help themselves to cocktails at the honor system bar, and everyone lays back and basks in the starry night sky. I now understand how a family dude ranch vacation may be one of the best getaways ever. It certainly ranks high in my memories (and I have experienced many exotic trips).

What made our days notable were the welcoming and helpful staff at the White Stallion. The wranglers know how to pick an appropriate horse for every rider. They match your weight and equestrian experience (or lack thereof) with the correct steed. I rode Custer, a Norwegian Fjord horse that was slow but steady. My granddaughter Kate qualified for and took her horse, Comanche, on a fast trail ride.

The grounds are immaculate since gardeners tend to the plants every morning. The dining room features indoor and outdoor tables, buffet meals, or custom orders for breakfast. Steaks were pre-ordered at lunch and grilled rare, medium, or well done at dinner. The cooks made and presented my son with a surprise birthday cake.

On our last morning, we took a breakfast trail ride, dismounting our horses at a picturesque area with red and white plaid tablecloths draped over picnic tables. The staff, including the ranch owners, cooked blueberry pancakes, eggs, bacon, and sausage on the outdoor grills and served coffee in blue tin cups. I didn’t become a cowboy in such a short time, but I sure felt the allure of the Western ways.

For more information: White Stallion Dude Ranch: [whitestallion.com](http://whitestallion.com).

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



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# Summer Camp and Activities Guide!



## Summer camp by the numbers

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Summer camp is a rite of passage for many children. Each year, campers of all ages head off to nearby recreation centers or travel to rural areas to claim their cabins and bunks. Here's a deep look at some of the statistics surrounding summer camps.

**1,467:** The number of day camps in the United States run by the YMCA. (YMCA)

**\$3.91 billion:** The peak market size of the summer camp sector in the United States in 2019, before stay-at-home-restrictions affected statistics in subsequent years. (Statista)

**14 million:** The average number of American summer camp registrants each year. (American Camp Association)

**1 week:** The most popular session length for summer camp, although the majority of independent camp operators

offer four-, six- and eight-week sessions. (American Camp Association)

**50:** The percentage of respondents whose camps charge \$1,000 or more per session, with most programs costing between \$1,000 and \$1,500. (Camp-Minder)

**58 to 63:** The percentage of female staff members at overnight and day camps, respectively. (American Camp Association)

**200 to 300:** The average number of campers served each session. (Camp-Minder)

**7 in 10:** The number of camps that run 10 or more different programs. (Camp-Minder)

**79:** The percentage of camps that maintain a screen-free environment. (Camp-Minder)

**22:** Number of YMCA camps across Canada. (YMCA)

## Fun ways to keep kids occupied over summer break

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Kids look forward to summer vacation every year. The last day of school gives way to less structured days when kids can spend more time outdoors and less time cracking the books. Summer vacation can be a dilemma for parents, especially in households where both parents work full-time. A pandemic-related increase in remote working has made that problem somewhat more manageable, but even parents working from home must find a fun way for kids to stay occupied until the new school year begins. No two kids are the same, so parents may need to try various activities on for size until they find something their children enjoy doing during the lazy days of summer.

- **Day camp:** Day camps provide much of the structure of school without all the homework or time spent indoors. Many parks and recreation departments run summer day camps for kids. Camps can be generalized or specialized. For example, some may offer an array of activities, including sports and nature walks, while others may focus on a single activity, like musical lessons or science-based programs. Camps run by local parks and rec departments do not typically last all summer long, which parents should keep in mind when enrolling youngsters.

- **Reading:** Parents may be surprised by how much their children enjoy a good book. A recent poll from the National

Education Association found that 70 percent of middle school students read more than 10 books a year. The National Literacy Trust reports that roughly 45 percent of children between the ages of eight and 11 enjoy reading "very much." When suggesting to children that they read more this summer, parents can note the many ways that reading for pleasure differs from reading for school. Point out that kids won't have to submit book reports and emphasize that they can choose their own books.

- **Play dates:** Play dates are a great way to make kids happy and take a little off of parents' daily plates. Arrange routine summer play dates with children's school friends, neighbors and/or cousins. Parents can alternate hosting responsibilities so they can get work done at home and enjoy a break when it's not their turn to host.

- **Find something free:** Perhaps in recognition of the need for affordable, family-friendly fare, many communities now host free events for kids and their parents each week. Weekly movie nights under the stars and concerts in community squares are popular in many communities, but those same towns also may host events specifically for kids during the daytime. A simple internet search of "free events near me" may unveil a host of activities that can keep kids happy and occupied on summer days when their schedules are open. Local libraries can be great resources for free events as well.



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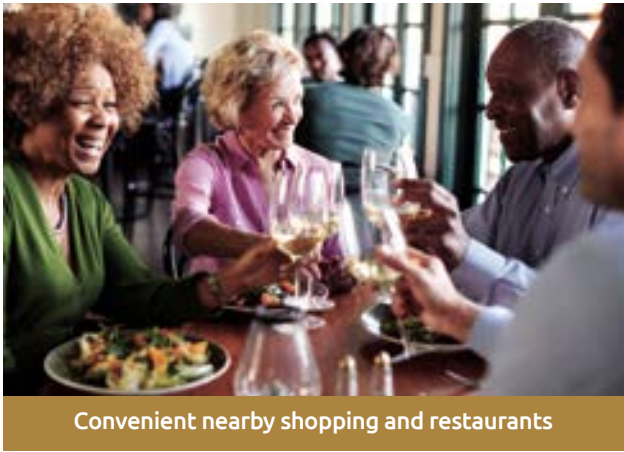




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