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450 State Road 13 North  
Suite 106 PMB 101  
St. Johns, FL 32259  
(904) 886-4919  
www.FloridaNewsLine.com

**Publisher**

Mark Pettus

Publisher@FloridaNewsLine.com

**Editor**

Martie Thompson

Editor@FloridaNewsLine.com

**Bookkeeper**

Emily Whitehead

Accounting@FloridaNewsLine.com

**Social Media**

SocialMedia@FloridaNewsLine.com

**Advertising Sales**

Linda Gay

Linda@FloridaNewsLine.com

(904) 607-5062 cell

Ponte Vedra NewsLine Community Newspaper is a free monthly publication distributed via bulk mail to all addresses in Zip Codes 32081 and 32082. Submission of articles and photographs are received by mail or email, although email to editor@FloridaNewsLine.com is preferred. The writers' opinions do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Florida NewsLine. Advertising Rates are available by request. Florida NewsLine is not responsible for advertisement content or accuracy of information provided by its advertisers. Nor does Florida NewsLine endorse any of the products or services included in this publication. Florida NewsLine reserves the right to refuse advertisement or copy from any advertiser. All rights are reserved and no portion of this publication may be copied without the express written consent of the publisher. ©2023.



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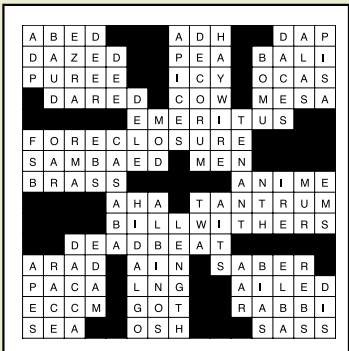
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## MYSTERY PHOTO

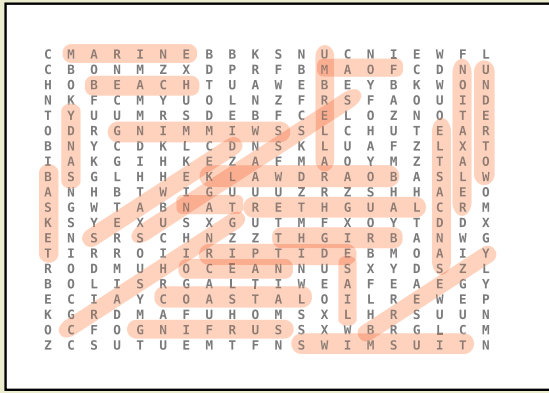


Can you guess where this is?  
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Last month's Mystery Photo was the "Hello" sign at Nocatee.



A. sunshine B. shore C. boating D. waves

Answers  
Puzzles  
PG 10



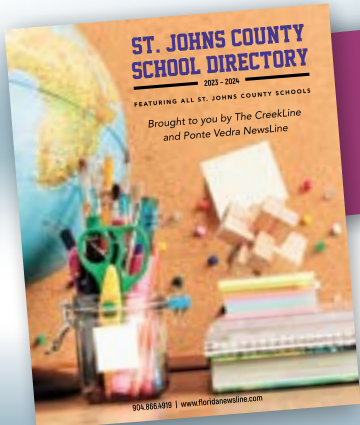
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June

# 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](mailto:pbrunell@Stjohnscoa.com) or call (904) 819-3234. Tuesday clubs include: Caregiver Support Group, 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.; and Widows and Widowers social group, second and fourth Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Wednesday groups include: Mah Jongg Meet-up, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.; and Genealogy Group, 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

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

**2nd: The GTM Research Reserve** will hold a new volunteer orientation on June 2 from 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Learn about volunteer rules and responsibility as well next steps to volunteering. Complete the volunteer application online ([www.gtmnerr.org](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.

**3rd: The Ponte Vedra Writers Group** will meet on Saturday, June 3 at 2 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. The speaker will be Jennifer Wolfe, founder and director of Women Writing for (a) Change, Jacksonville. She will lead a writing circle based on the theme, "And Justice for All." The meeting is free and open to members and non-members alike. Visit [www.floridawriters.org](http://www.floridawriters.org) for

more information.

**4th: Singers by the Sea** will present its yearly spring concert, "The Joy of Singing" at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 4, at Palms Presbyterian Church, 3410 3rd Street South in Jacksonville Beach. This volunteer community choir, co-directed by Becky Schumann and Teresa Mowbray, is a group of 40 singers that performs throughout the year at senior centers, retirement communities, and churches. Among the songs in this year's spring program are "The Cloths of Heaven," "Fly Away Medley," "Lean On Me," "Do Wah Diddy Diddy," and "Goin' to the Chapel." The concert is free, and all are welcome. Visit [www.singersby-thesea.org](http://www.singersby-thesea.org) for more information.

**6th: Vicar's Landing March Boutique Sale** will be held on Tuesday, June 6 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. Note: Tuesday, July 4 is a national holiday and there will not be a July Boutique sale. The next sale will be Tuesday, August 1 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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

**6th: Essential Tremor – Meet, Greet & Educate** will be held on

Tuesday, June 6 at 11 a.m. at Baptist Health-Place at Nocatee, 400 Colonnade Drive, Suite 130. In addition to tips and tricks from attendees, the featured speaker is Moses Taylor from Cala Trio, a non-invasive wristwatch-type device to treat ET. RSVP to Jan Kary at [jkary@verizon.net](mailto:jkary@verizon.net) or (202) 438-6750.

**7th: Coastal Friends** will host its monthly luncheon on June 7 at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. in Ponte Vedra Beach from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Guest speaker will be Susan Phillips, president and CEO of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau. The cost of the luncheon is \$25 and reservations must be made in advance by contacting [bartshar@comcast.net](mailto:bartshar@comcast.net) as soon as possible. Visit <https://coastalfriends.wildapricot.org> for more information.

**8th: Free Tech Help** with David will be held on Thursday, June 8 from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Drop in for tech assistance with your Android, Apple, and Reader devices; no RSVPs required. Visit <https://sjcpls.org/branches/ponte-vedra-beach-branch/> for more information.

**9th: Food Truck Friday** will be held on June 9 and June 30 from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. This event is open to the public.

**12th: The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable** will meet on Monday, June 12 at 12 p.m. at St. Augustine Waterworks building, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. The topic will be "What happened in Tallahassee during the Legislative Session." 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.

[sjcroundtable.org](http://sjcroundtable.org) for more information.

**14th: SHINE representative available** to answer Medicare enrollment questions on June 14 at COA Center at Flagler Health+ Village at Nocatee, at 351 Town Plaza Avenue, Suite 205. Individual morning appointments are available; call (904) 814-9407 to schedule.

**17th: The Nocatee Farmers Market:** Kickoff to Summer will be held on Saturday, June 17 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. The Farmers Market is open to the public.

**19th: Ponte Vedra Democratic Club** will meet on Monday, June 19 at 5:30 p.m. for Chat & Chew before the 6 p.m. meeting at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Road. Featured speaker Dr. Elizabeth Brown, Professor at UNF will speak on the challenges facing higher education. Email [ed.warren152@gmail.com](mailto:ed.warren152@gmail.com) for more information.

**22nd: The Red Cross** will host a free presentation on hurricane preparedness on Thursday, June 22 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.

**29th: Monthly Birthday Bash** at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach. Enjoy birthday cake and the music of James Cargill as June birthdays are celebrated on Thursday, June 29 from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.

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with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

**Q: Can you shed some light on the background of the new state law regulating golf cart use?**

A: We recognize that golf cart communities are popular in St. Johns County and we are in support of them, but our office has noticed an increase in younger drivers of the golf carts that just was not safe. The previous statute allowed drivers as young as 14 to operate golf carts on public roadways where the speed limit is 25 mph or less. Once we identified that youth with no driving experience were getting hurt driving golf carts, we approached Rep. Cyndi Stevenson and House Bill 949 was drafted. Sen. Erin Grall was our senate bill sponsor. Our team spent a lot of time educating them on the issues, including that we were not interested in regulating low speed vehicles, only golf carts.

It's interesting that this new law actually takes us back to a state law that was in place until the early 2000s, before it was changed to allow golf cart drivers as young as 14. We are basically returning to a previous law.

**Q: What does the new law require?**

A: The new law, which went through multiple committees in the House and Senate before being unanimously approved on the floor of both houses and signed into law on May 11 by Gov. Ron DeSantis, will be effective on July 1 of this year.

It requires golf cart drivers to be at

least the age of 15 and with a learner's permit. The reason why is that all the legislators agreed that at least with a learner's permit, there has been some training on rules of the road.

Failure to abide by this law may result in a non-criminal, moving traffic violation citation, punishable with a fine and points assessed on the driver's license. (A moving violation standard fine is \$166 and three points on a license.)

**Q: How does your office intend to enforce this new law?**

A: The first thing we are doing is a big educational push. Once the kids are out of school, we will work through our community partnerships to educate them about it. This is also where we need the assistance of parents; they need to take a mentorship role.

We're not planning on writing tickets immediately and this law is not intended to be a punishment. It's the right thing to do to keep everyone safe. We know this will save lives.

**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.



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

**Q: As the school year winds down, what do you have to share?**

A: I am super excited about the Class of 2023 finishing strong. It is always fun to celebrate our graduates. This is also the time of year that we have leadership changes and as we continue to grow we will always have these changes. This year in District 4, we say goodbye to Dr. Joy Reichenberg, who is

moving from Palm Valley Academy to Julington Creek Elementary. Zachary Strom will serve as Palm Valley Academy's new principal after having served as assistant principal there since the opening of the school. We look forward to his leadership.

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

Q&A with Kelly Barrera cont. on pg. 6



Photo courtesy St. Johns County School District  
K - 8 school "NN" in Shearwater, under construction as of April 17, 2023.



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## with St. Johns County Commissioner Krista Joseph District 4

### Q: What's the latest on the Pine Island Road/US 1 intersection that has proven to be so dangerous?

A: This back road from Nocatee that also has Pine Island Academy on it has become very heavily traveled and it has become dangerous to make a left onto US 1 (across four lanes of traffic) as well as a right turn (because there is no merge lane on US 1). Our Transportation Summit in March with our Tallahassee legislative delegation allowed us to show them how important this project is. The project was fast tracked and we were able to secure the funds this legislative session to put in a light at this intersection sooner rather than later. It usually takes about three or four years to get a traffic signal installed, but I'm told this one should be done within two years. The county's transfer station and pet center on Stratton Road (on the west side of US 1) share this intersection and will also benefit from a traffic light. This will definitely save lives.

### Q: Can you share your thoughts on workforce housing?

A: I'm all for teachers, nurses, and firemen obtaining housing. I'm trying to be on the side of the person who needs the home. I'm not in favor of higher density housing to accomplish this. I'd rather see developers who desire to have, for instance, a sheriff's deputy with a car in the driveway in their neighborhood, perhaps offer incentives like lower interest rates or pricing. I think workforce housing should require a minimum amount of time that the home must be owned and a 30-year mortgage. Builders are proposing to offer homes for \$270,000 and as a small percent-

age of their proposed community in order to get approval for their project. I called a bank and found that the minimum required income would be \$60,000 – \$80,000 for this price of home; police officers and teachers don't generally make that much. I think the way this is being marketed needs more details.

### Q: Can you comment on the transmittal approval of The Landings at St. Johns in the May 16 Board of County Commissioners meeting?

A: This is the first time since I've been on the board that we've sent a transmittal to the state for such a large project. I voted against it due to the concerns of neighbors as well as increased traffic and impact on the schools.

### Q: What's the latest on the potential land development change to protect trees?

A: The other commissioners agree to hear information from staff on this issue and I believe the presentation will be at an upcoming board meeting, possibly June 20. I would recommend anyone interested in attending to check the meeting agenda when it comes out to make sure. I think this presentation will just be informational. I plan to talk about why I'd like to keep Florida beautiful and not like a moonscape. Trees sell homes and make real estate more valuable. They really make developments look so much nicer.

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

A: Readers can email me at [bcc4k-joseph@sjcfl.us](mailto:bcc4k-joseph@sjcfl.us) or call me at (904) 679-2620.

### Q&A with Kelly Barrera cont. from pg. 5

A: On April 25, we celebrated our American Youth Character Awards students. Representing District 4 were:

Nease seniors: Gavin Bickerstaff, Francesco Caruso, Kalani Laughlin, Lauren Pease and John Alves.

Nease juniors: McKenzie Cherry, Amber Fields, Thavy Lanh, Rylie Larkin, Gabriel Mitchell, Thanh Pham, Hailey Pitches and Shay Stacey.

Ponte Vedra seniors: Ava Heinz, Maddox Johnson, Ella McCarthy, Zeta Washington, and Brett Reed.

Ponte Vedra juniors: Benjamin Black, Cooper Bradshaw, Sasha Crowe, Kalidora "Kali" Jackson, Sofia McIntosh, Maya Richards, Nastasia Solomou and Peyton Wright.

Also, we celebrated our Take Stock in Children program participants and scholarship recipients. Nease scholarship recipients Joseph Lepera and Celine Taylor were mentored by Danny Gurr and Diane Farmer.

### Q: What else do you have to share with District 4?

A: This summer, schools as well as the district office will be going to a 10 hour a day/four day work week, like many colleges and other school districts. The four days that schools and the district offices will be open are Monday through Thursday.

The district just went through our five-year accreditation process and we are pleased to have exceeded what we expected. We received many commendations from the accreditation committee, but still have some areas we want to work on and start moving towards with our strategic plan process in the coming months.

Finally, we are still recruiting teachers in all certification areas. The district will host a Teacher Recruitment Fair on Monday, June 26 from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Nease High School. Interested applicants can find more information and register online at [www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/recruitment/jobfairs/](http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/recruitment/jobfairs/)

### 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.



# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## Business Briefs

### Higher mortgage rates impact summer selling season

Mortgage increases appear to be having a big impact as the Northeast Florida housing market heads into the busy summer selling season. Closed sales, pending sales, and new listings dropped in April, indicating that many homeowners who hold mortgages with low interest rates have decided to stay put, wait, and see what the future holds as far as mortgage rates go. Meanwhile buyers have been dismayed to discover that, although they may have a better selection of single-family homes on the market due to increased inventory, prices were also slightly higher in April.

“Just like the seasons, the market has changed,” said 2023 Northeast Florida Association of Realtors President Diana Galavis. “The fluctuating interest rate has put some buyers and sellers on pause; however, there are still buyers who are choosing homeownership. This is reflected in a low month’s supply of inventory, which has contributed to moving the median sales price up.”

For Northeast Florida’s six counties, the median price of single-family residences inched up 2.8 percent to \$370,000 with the price per square foot rising by \$4 to \$202 from March to April. Meanwhile, closed sales plummeted 19.2 percent to 1,757; pending sales fell 3.6 percent to 2,097, and new listings decreased 1 percent to 2,950. Active inventory rose 5.5 percent to 4,667 and the median days on the market quickened by 10 percent to 36 days.

In April, single-family homes became slightly less affordable with the Home Affordability Index dropping from 76 the month before to 74. The Housing Affordability Index measures housing affordability for the region, as it measures whether a typical family earns enough to qualify for a mortgage on a typical home, based on current interest rates, median income, and median home prices. A higher number means greater affordability. An index value of 100 means that the average family has exactly enough income to qualify for a mortgage.

“Factors such as inflation, rising interest rates, and the cost of goods and services play a role in home affordability,” Galavis said.

In St. Johns County, April 2023 median prices pretty much remained stable at \$555,000 for single-family homes. The median days on the market were 38, a 5.6 percent increase from the month before. Month-to-month, closed sales fell 8.6 percent to 426, pending sales dropped 2.3 percent to 520, and new listings decreased 4.7 percent to 751. Active inventory rose to 1,346 homes, an increase of 8.5 percent from March 2023, and 3.2-month supply. The affordability index remained the same at 49, demonstrating that St. Johns County continues to be the most expensive area to live in the region.

### Small Business Week winners announced

The 31st annual Small Business Week Celebration took place this month at the University of North Florida on May 5. During this event, attendees heard keynote speaker Ron Hetrick, senior labor economist at Lightcast, speak about how the demographic drought will reshape business with the unprecedented labor shortage. Following the keynote, the U.S. SBA presented its Small Business Week awards, which spotlight outstanding contributions of North Florida business leaders, lenders and champions.

North Florida District Small Business Advocate of the Year: Ken Middleton, Chief Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and

Belonging Officer, Jacksonville Transportation Authority

North Florida District Rural Business Owner of the Year: Ashley Wood, owner, Simmons and Co. DBA Callie Kay’s General Store

North Florida District, State of Florida and Region IV Overall Women’s Business Center of the Year: Jacksonville Women’s Business Center. Accepted by Jackie Perrault, Director North Florida District Small Business Person of the Year: Tomas Santos-Alejandro, owner and CEO, Advent Services LLC

Top 7(a) Lender by Dollar Amount: Live Oak Banking Company

Top 7(a) Lender by Number of Loans: TD Bank

Top Certified Development Company by Dollar Amount and Number of Loans: Florida First Capital Finance Corporation, Inc.

Top First Mortgage Lender: Ameris Bank

Top Community Lender by Dollar Amount and Number of Loans: Cogent Bank

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904.380.2290  
4601 Touchton Road, Ste 3120  
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[chris.thompson@ampf.com](mailto:chris.thompson@ampf.com)  
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## Guest Column

### Tax roll, budgets, and TRIM notices

By St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer  
On June 1, my office will submit the 2023 St. Johns County Tax Roll to the Florida Department of Revenue for approval. We will also submit the Tax Roll to each of the local taxing authorities so that they may begin preparation of their 2023 – 2024 annual budgets.

At the same time we will submit our office’s budget to the Florida Department of Revenue for approval. I am very pleased to report that our budget for fiscal year 2023 – 2024 has been reduced by 13.19 percent. The Property Appraiser’s budget has increased by less than 2.5 percent per year during my tenure as Property Appraiser. Our approved budget and our monthly financial statements are

available on our website.

The Just Market Value of properties for this year’s Tax Roll is \$83.5 billion. That is a 30 percent increase over last year. The Taxable Value of properties is \$46.8 billion, a 19 percent increase over last year. Taxable Value in our county has more than doubled over the past seven years. We assess 163,636 parcels, an increase of almost 20 percent over the past seven years. The Property Appraiser assesses parcels under the oversight and guidance of the Florida Department of Revenue and in accordance with the Florida Constitution and Florida law. When property values increase, especially as rapidly as they have in St. Johns County, without action by the taxing authorities (who set the tax rates), your taxes increase.

After approval and advancement of the Tax Roll by the Florida Department of Revenue, we will again submit the Tax Roll to the taxing authorities on July 1. At that time the taxing authorities will finalize their proposed budgets and tax rates and our office will prepare Truth in Millage (TRIM) notices for mailing Aug. 18. The TRIM notice will be available at [www.sjcpa.gov](https://www.sjcpa.gov) on the same day. The TRIM will show each property owner what their taxes were last year, what they are proposed to be this year, and what they would be if the taxing authorities rolled back rates. “Roll Back” indicates the tax rate the taxing authority would set to collect the same amount of money from the taxpayers as in the previous tax year. It should be a guide to assist taxing authorities in controlling budgets and

keeping spending in line with measures such as inflation. The TRIM also contains the dates and times of public hearings held by each taxing authority to discuss their budgets.

I encourage property owners to carefully review their TRIM notices, contact our office or me personally at (904) 827-5520 or [eddie@sjcpa.gov](mailto:eddie@sjcpa.gov), to ask questions or discuss the information.

And please attend the budget meetings held by the taxing authorities. The taxing authorities and our elected officials need to hear from you. St. Johns County is a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family. We can assure it remains that way when each of us become involved in the process.







# Life

travel • pantry raiders • gardening  
fishing • entertainment • puzzles

## Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
mail@floridanewsline.com

### Jane Cottrell

Jane Cottrell always wanted to be a dog owner, specifically a pug owner, but her work as a nanny prevented her from getting one. Originally from England, Cottrell, 65, came to the United States when she was 29 years old to work as a nanny for California Senator John V. Tunney in Los Angeles. She spent 10 years in that position and found that it was quite a fun adventure, taking summer trips to the Kennedy compound with the family. Jane also graduated from UCLA in 1998, summa cum laude with a bachelor's in anthropology. She later attended what was then the Culinary Institute of California and earned her Pro Chef 1 certificate in hopes of using her newfound cooking skills in her job. She did. Next Cottrell moved to New York City and took another nanny position for two lawyers, who ultimately divorced. Cottrell promised the eight-year-old boy she nannied that she would stay until he graduated high school. She did. Meanwhile, Cottrell had met her future husband, photographer Chris Cottrell, in New York City after a friend suggested that they meet. Cottrell, who lived in Ponte Vedra Beach, was in the city for work, and the two instantly hit it off. Ironically, Chris is also from England, and the two shared a love of running. A month after the high school



Photo courtesy Chris Cottrell  
Jane Cottrell

graduation of the boy she nannied, the Cottrells got married, and the boy was in the wedding party. The Cottrells then settled in Ponte Vedra Beach. Enter Bodie, the couple's first pug rescue, a three-year-old from Pug Rescue of Florida/Georgia. Three years later, the couple rescued Spanky, who was 10 years old and blind. Little did they know that Spanky would inspire so much more. While they were told that Spanky did not play much or run around because of his blindness, they found that once they got him comfortable in their home, he acted as though he could see, running through the house and later along the beach. Jane's business, "Blind But Not," was created in 2015 as a way to thank and support pug rescues. Jane got the idea to knit items to

sell and donate the funds to various rescues. There was just one problem: she needed to learn how to knit. So, she did. Jane started with dog scarves and then added dog blankets, stuffed "BoBo" bones, place mats and iPad covers as well as custom orders. She has raised \$62,000 for pug rescues all around the country so far with a goal of reaching \$100,000.

#### Q: How did you learn how to knit?

A: I taught myself how to knit from a YouTube video. I started with dog scarves for a long time. Then, I decided to start a little business on Etsy and added dog blankets which were a huge hit. All the money from the scarves goes to various pug rescue

organizations. I give a percentage of everything else that I sell on Etsy to the rescues.

#### Q: What attracted you to pugs?

A: Pugs are one of the oldest breeds and were bred specifically to be companions. As a result, they are remarkably sweet, but full of personality at the same time. I always loved pugs. I find them to be so cute to look at.

#### Q: What's the story behind Banksy's name, the pug you got after Bodie and Spanky passed away?

A: Banksy was six when we adopted him. His name is a combination of Bodie and Spanky's names, and Banksy, the famous artist, is from Bristol, the same town where Chris was born in the UK.

#### Q: Tell us about your family.

A: I have two stepchildren, Ellie, 33, who lives in England and works in recruiting and Chappy, 30, who is in the wine business in California. My husband, Chris, is a photographer and takes all the photos that you see on my website.

#### Q: What do you like to do in your free time?

A: We like to go hiking. Our big hobby now is Banksy and agility training. It is somewhat unusual for a pug, but he has a lot of energy. It is like an obstacle course, and we work with a trainer. Banksy is really getting the hang of it, and he is such a superstar.

[Author's note: Visit [blindbutnot.com](http://blindbutnot.com) to learn more about Blind But Not.]

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Briefs cont. from pg. 8

continue during the summer months. New members are welcome throughout the year. Contact [brookemeister@msn.com](mailto:brookemeister@msn.com) for more information on how to join.

**Program to offer daily mental health support through text-based service**

Flagler Health+'s BRAVE program will gift 800 subscriptions of Cope Notes to middle and high school students in northeast Florida. Cope Notes is an added resource BRAVE makes available to teenagers to improve their mental health, along with the BRAVE text line and an extensive list of qualified counselors. Flagler Health+ has purchased the yearly subscriptions to Cope Notes, which will be made available, free of charge. The text-based service, which is 100 percent anonymous and confidential, helps youth train their brains to combat stress, anxiety, loneliness, depression, and more. Reports show that 86 percent of users experience improved mental health within 30 days.

"Cope Notes is an invaluable resource for teenagers to combat the mental health issues they face daily," said Paige Stanton, executive director of Care Connect+, which administers BRAVE. "We are excited to be able to offer Cope Notes subscriptions to continue the great progress that is being made in making teens aware of the tools available to help improve their mental health."

BRAVE, which stands for Be Resilient and Voice Emotions, is designed to reduce stigma and create conversations around mental health. Initially launched in partnership with the St. Johns County School District, the program has already made a significant impact. Before BRAVE's implementation in St. Johns County Schools, only 35 percent of students referred to mental health providers were seen by a medical professional. With the BRAVE program, that rate has increased to 90 percent. Since its founding five years ago, and despite the pandemic, BRAVE has expanded into more school districts, including Clay, Nassau, Putnam, Flagler, and Volusia, with the ability to assist more than 167,000 students.

With a Cope Notes subscription, youth receive a text message each day that offers peer support, positive psychology, brain training, and digital journaling with no appointments, wait lists, or diagnoses necessary. The program works to train a user's brain to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy habits through repetition, disruption, and adaptation.

Flagler Health+ has already begun to distribute the subscriptions through BRAVE clients to middle and high school students in the five northeast Florida school districts it serves. Students can also obtain subscriptions directly through their respective schools.



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

**Q. The County observed May as National Historic Preservation Month. How does this relate to the Clerk's Office?**

A. The St. Johns County Clerk of Court has a rich history that dates back to 1821. The first Clerk's Office location in St. Johns County was at the Governor's House. This was established shortly after East Florida was transferred from Spain to the United States. The first deed recorded in the new U.S. Florida Territory was on Sept. 13, 1821. Even in the early 1800s, the clerk's responsibilities included recording official records relating to property transactions.

Historic Preservation Month was an opportunity for the Clerk's Office to showcase some of the records we've preserved since the establishment of St. Johns County. Many records remain available for viewing in our office and some are on display at the St. Augustine Historical Society.

**Q. Does the Clerk's Office provide any opportunities for students to gain valuable professional experience while on summer break?**

A. Our Internship Program is designed to expose college students and high

school juniors and seniors, ages 16 and up, to a career in local government. This program will allow students to learn the vital roles the Clerk's Office provides to residents by maintaining official records, collecting and distributing county funds, and many other important functions. All duties performed to assist the judiciary in court proceedings. There are paid and volunteer internship opportunities available. To apply, please email [COCHumanResources@stjohnsclerk.com](mailto:COCHumanResources@stjohnsclerk.com).

**Q. Are there any opportunities for other members in the community to volunteer at the Clerk's Office?**

A. The Clerk's Office recently launched the Clerk Ambassador Program which allows community volunteers to assist the office by greeting those seeking clerk services, assisting with wayfinding throughout the judicial complex, and support during jury selection. To apply, please visit our website.

**Q. How can St. Johns County residents stay up to date on the latest developments with the local Clerk of Court and Comptroller's office?**

A. The Clerk's Office publishes a monthly email newsletter to share ser-

**Q&A with Brandon Patty** cont. on pg. 14



# The Pantry Raiders

## This refreshing salad makes a meal

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Salads are best during the midsummer when they can be comprised of fresh and ripe ingredients plucked right from the garden. This recipe for “Authentic Greek Salad” from “Clueless in the Kitchen: Cooking for Beginners” (Firefly Books) by Evelyn Raab is ideal.

### Authentic Greek Salad

Serves 4 to 6

4 medium tomatoes, cut into ½ -inch chunks

1 seedless English cucumber, cut into ½ -inch chunks

1 small red onion, diced

⅓ cup Zorba the Greek Dressing (see below)

4 oz. feta cheese, crumbled (about 1 cup)

½ cup black olives (kalamata or other brine-cured ones are best)

Salt and black pepper, to taste

In a large bowl, toss together the tomatoes, cucumber and onion. Add the dressing and toss to mix. Sprinkle in the feta cheese and olives, and toss gently. Taste the salad, adjust the seasoning

with additional salt and pepper if you think it needs it and serve immediately.

### Zorba the Greek Dressing

½ cup olive oil

3 tbsp. lemon juice

1 tsp. crumbled dried oregano

½ tsp. Salt

¼ tsp. black pepper

In a small bowl, whisk together all the ingredients until combined. You can keep any leftover dressing in the fridge for about a week.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative  
Authentic Greek Salad.

### Earth Kinship cont. from pg. 1

and on a kinship level. It is a symbiosis relationship. I am trying to bring others to it.”

Crider, who owns an educational media company called “The Giving Cypress,” feels the same way.

“The essence of forest bathing is sensory immersion in the ambience of the forest. We walk slowly and notice things. We feel the touch of the breeze on our skin; we notice the intricate details of a flower or a beetle, take in the sounds of the creek or ocean and the movement of trees in the wind,” said Crider, who is deaf. “Out in nature, if we really pay attention and slow down to its pace, we will find that it recalibrates our soul and helps calm us, opening up awareness about our bodies, mind and heart.”

Back on the water with Halusky, there is a point on a kayak tour when he will encourage a “quiet sit.” No phones. No talking. Just take a breather to sit in observance of the environment. It is a pause that isn’t easy for everyone.

“People usually take the first five to six minutes to stop running through things in their mind. The next seven to eight minutes they start to notice the wind, the colors and the sounds,” said Halusky.

At the end of the kayak trip, Halusky will ask how customers felt before and after the expedition.

“Most will say ‘More aware’ or ‘I feel calm’,” he said.

Mission accomplished.

[Author’s note: Visit [www.earthkinship.us](http://www.earthkinship.us) for more information.]



AyoLane Hulusky encourages kayakers to take a “quiet sit”



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Newcomers of the Beaches celebrates birthday



Photo courtesy Bonnie Evans

Newcomers of the Beaches’ 45th birthday luncheon at the St Johns Golf and Country Club was the best of times for fun and laughter. Members and guests were entertained by playing seven funny competitive games. Those who are new to the Beaches area or had a lifestyle change would enjoy the club’s many activities and are welcome to come as a guest at the next luncheon on June 14. Visit [www.newcomersofthebeaches.com](http://www.newcomersofthebeaches.com) to register for the luncheon or apply for membership.

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# PopHistory

By Scott A. Grant  
[mail@floridanewslines.com](mailto:mail@floridanewslines.com)

The Redemption of US Grant

In the spring of 1884, Mark Twain was in trouble. Despite being one of the most prolific and popular writers in American history, he was teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. Twain was a life-long victim of his own bad investments.

Despite his famous adage that “There are two times in a man’s life when he should not speculate: when he can’t afford it, and when he can,” Twain had an overwhelming need to speculate. Later in life, he famously turned down an opportunity to invest in Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone company and instead sank most of his life savings into the Paige Typesetter.

The Paige Typesetter sought to automate the job of setting type — a laborious task largely unchanged since Gutenberg invented moveable type in 1450. When the new device, which weighed four tons, worked it was a marvel. It rarely worked. Twain had the misfortune to see the automatic typesetting machine on a day that it worked.

That was in the future. Twain’s current financial distress was caused by other investment mistakes including the collapse of the Fredonia watch company. In an attempt to recover his fortune, Twain started a publishing company and cast his eyes about for something to publish.

Meanwhile, Ulysses S. Grant was in even more desperate straits. The hero of the Civil War is noted for being one the best generals and worst presidents this nation has ever produced. After serving eight years in the White House, Grant went on a tour around the world. When he came home, he founded an investment company at the behest of his son called Grant & Ward. Ferdinand Ward, a friend of

Ulysses Jr., was considered a financial wizard. Grant invested all of his savings in the firm. This was a mistake. It turned out that Ward was running a giant Ponzi scheme.

US Grant found himself destitute and dying of throat cancer. To provide for his family, Grant decided to write his memoirs. He negotiated, but did not sign, a contract with a publisher. Then Twain showed up. He wanted the book, which he was certain would be a bestseller. He convinced the president that he would make more money going with Twain.

Over the next 11 months, Grant huddled on the porch of a cabin near Saratoga Springs wrapped in a blanket and a stocking cap, writing feverishly. “I pray God,” he wrote his wife, “that [I] may be spared to complete the necessary work upon my book.” Finally, on July 20, 1885, Grant finished his 291,000-word, two-volume, work. Three days later, he died.

As Twain predicted, the book was a huge success. More than 350,000 copies were sold prior to publication, thanks to a unique sales campaign that saw Twain send Union veterans door-to-door selling advance copies of the book by subscription. Twain’s new publishing venture had two successes that first year: “The Personal Memoirs of US Grant” and “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.” Grant outsold Huckleberry by a large margin and Twain was able to pay Grant’s widow more than \$450,000 in royalties. Unfortunately for Twain, he did not have many more publishing successes and the company went bankrupt in 1894.

*Scott A. Grant is a local writer and Investment Advisor. He welcomes your comments at [scottg@standfastic.com](mailto:scottg@standfastic.com).*

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**Relay for Life** cont. from pg. 1

“We had about 250 people attend First Coast Relay, but we’re working diligently to get attendance up in 2024 by partnering with more of the schools and other community groups,” Rodriguez said.

The fundraising total for Relay for Life of the First Coast as of mid-May was \$92,066, well above the goal of \$80,000. The top fundraising team was the Chemours Company, which was still sending in donations as of press date.

World's Greatest Heating and Air of No-catee participated in the event by giving away free cotton candy and snow cones to attendees from their purple truck. After the event, Rodriguez said they followed up with a generous \$1,000 donation.

Relay for Life of the First Coast featured traditional Relay activities like the Luminaia Ceremony to honor those lost to cancer and the Survivors' Lap to celebrate those still fighting. Rodriguez said silly games like Cheeto Head and a frozen shirt race also entertained attendees. The Road to Recovery lap focused on the American Cancer Society's mission and programs; teams made a personalized vehicle to go around the track and earned spirit points

as a way to keep the crowd engaged.

Rodriguez said donations raised help fund signature programs like Hope Lodge near Mayo Clinic, where patients receive free lodging during cancer treatment. The American Cancer Society Road To Recovery program provides free rides to medical appointments and treatment for people with cancer.

“This was a building year for us, post pandemic, as we came back to schools for Relay locations,” Rodriguez said. “I can’t stress enough how much our partnerships mean to us, especially Nease High School which hosted us.”

Rodriguez said organizers are working already to get more schools and more community members involved for next year's Relay, which will again be held at Nease High School (date is to be announced.)

Visit [RelayForLife.org/FirstCoastFL](http://RelayForLife.org/FirstCoastFL) and [www.facebook.com/groups/firstcoastrelay](https://www.facebook.com/groups/firstcoastrelay) for more information about Relay for Life of the First Coast. Visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org) for more information about the American Cancer Society and the programs it offers.

**Q&A with Brandon Patty** cont. from pg. 11

vices, programs, and news with residents. To subscribe to the newsletter, residents can visit our website. Information about ongoing scams, jury summons information, and office updates are available on social media. Our office currently uses Facebook, Instagram, and Nextdoor to reach residents.

**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. 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.

## Ponte Vedra Womens Club announces summer events



The Ponte Vedra Womans Club has summer fun planned for its members and women interested in getting to know the Ponte Vedra Womans Club. Summer socials are June 20, from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. at Nona Blue Modern Tavern, located at Sawgrass Village Shopping Center, 325 Front Street, and July 18, from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. at Refinery Jax Beach, located at 831 1st St North, in Jacksonville Beach. A New Member meeting will be held on Aug. 3, from 6 – 8 p.m. at the home of a Ponte Vedra Womans Club member. Visit [www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/default.php](http://www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/default.php) for registration for all three of these events.

## Eagle Scout project revives church narthex with new dining tables



Eagle Scout Jake Hilley with helpers and the finished tables.

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Boy Scout Jake Hilley of Troop 277 came to the rescue of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Ponte Vedra Beach when inquired about any project he could take on to reach his Eagle Scout rank. The answer: tables.

The little church that was once a stable has been using picnic tables in its narthex that were also created by Boy Scouts more than a decade ago. They were functional and had multiple uses during the church's Pumpkin Patch, but many were falling apart.

On two recent weekends, Hilley and a handful of Boy Scouts, Troop leaders led by Jamie Kranking, and parents came out to build five sturdy, farmhouse style tables using pressure-treated wood with notched bases, side stretchers, boxed aprons and window-pane finishes on the durable composite tops.

“These tables could be sold at an out-

door furniture store, they are so well made and beautifully designed,” said Sheila Kolesaire, the church council president. “We are delighted to have tables that are easy for aging congregation members to sit down at as well as women in dresses or skirts. It was a bit of a challenge with aging picnic tables that had attached benches.”

This is the fourth Eagle Scout project at Lord of Life in the last year. A prayer garden, Little Lending Library, walkway and now dining tables have been built.

Only 4 percent of Boy Scouts achieve Eagle Rank, the highest level in Scouts. It requires a project with significant scope, planning, fundraising, and leadership.

“I was happy to do this project and learned a lot about woodworking, design, cutting, precise measurements, and assembly,” said Hilley. “It was great to see the finished tables, and know they’ll be used every week.”



# Travel

## Launch a visit to Huntsville

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Huntsville, Alabama, utilizes the tagline, “Huntsville has Space,” a play on words since Huntsville is home to the US Rocket and Space Center. The facility catches your attention along Interstate-65 with its soaring rocket garden. The garden’s model Saturn V rises 363 feet, beckoning travelers to stop. And many do, making the space museum the most visited attraction in the state.

Anyone who recalls manned space flights will enjoy a trip back in time when exploring the museum’s memorabilia and interactive displays. Visitors can squeeze themselves into a Mercury capsule as I did. The little Mercury pod housed the first round of our heroic astronauts flung into space. Bring kids too young to remember the space race; they will get excited about future space probes.

One of only three remaining Saturn V moon rockets, the missiles that launched the lunar landings, hangs overhead, grabbing everyone’s attention. The enormity of the National Historic Landmark makes it the Smithsonian’s largest artifact. It’s hard to imagine the “right” few who agreed to climb aboard and flew in

outer space. If you or your children want to experience an out-of-this-world adventure, sign up for Space Camp on the Huntsville campus. Waiting lists fill quickly, so inquire early. Space Camp guarantees a blast of fun, education, and life-long memories. Huntsville isn’t all space-related; the city packs surprises. When I arrived, what immediately struck me was the cleanliness of the downtown. I saw no trash on the streets or greenways, just folks on a Sunday afternoon stroll along the water trail. Some crossed the photo-worthy red Japanese bridge, and others pushed strollers or lingered near the spraying fountains.

The water comes from where the city was founded — at the Big Spring. And that spring produces seven to 20 million gallons of fresh water daily. A canal connects the waterway to the Tennessee River, 10 miles away. In the Twickenham Historic District, visit the Weeden House. I had no idea I would discover an extraordinary artist’s work in her former home. Maria



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
The author in a Mercury capsule.



Water Trail.

Howard Weeden was legally blind, yet painted watercolor portraits mainly of freedmen and women. Her works include such incredibly intricate detail you’ll think they are photographs. After the Civil War, Weeden began to sell her paintings but signed them as Howard Weeden. (At the time, women artists were rare.) She captured her subjects so well that the costumers of “Gone with the Wind” used her artworks as the basis for creating the actor’s wardrobes. Take the house tour, but go to see her fantastic works.

Head up to the Burritt Mansion on Round Top Road for sweeping city views, especially for sunset. Adults also enjoy a tour of the unusual X-shaped mansion house, and children love the 1800s farm buildings with animals and interpreters in period clothing.

Music lovers will find Huntsville’s new state-of-the-art Orion Amphitheater an excellent venue for big-name concerts. The facility holds 8,000, all with

unobstructed views of the stage. Many vendors sell food and drink before, during, and after the shows.

USA Today readers named the 118-acre Huntsville Botanical Gardens the fourth best in North America. The peaceful venue incorporates multiple indoor spaces, including a butterfly house and various outdoor buildings. The family-friendly landscaped paths even include a children’s garden.

The Lowe Mill, an old cotton warehouse, unleashes creative spirits. Today it houses 158 artists’ studios and workshops. Visitors can watch them in action and purchase original artwork such as pottery, paintings, cigar box guitars, and other musical instruments.

If your vacation plans have space, head to Rocket City for a surprising getaway.

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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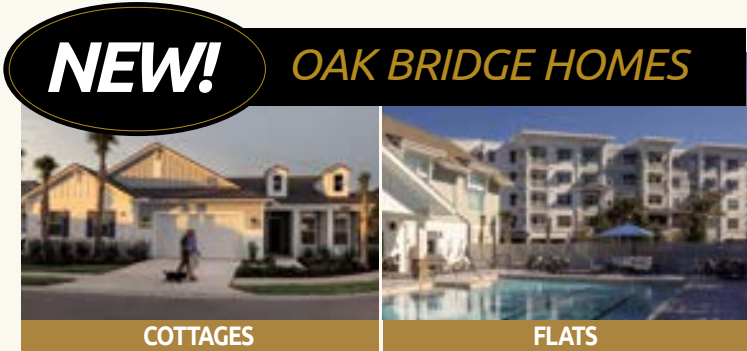
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