

## Creeks Crushers 8u are back-to-back World Series champions

By Luis Cordero and Nikki Riley  
mail@floridanewsline.com

On Aug. 3, Creeks Crushers 8u Elite softball team completed its season by winning its second straight Babe Ruth World Series. The tournament was comprised of state and regional champions from the United States along with Puerto Rico. It was a stacked field and was truly showcasing the best talent within the Babe Ruth League.

The week began with Creeks Crushers Elite beating Puerto Rico by a score of 11 – 1 in their first pool play game. From there, the Crushers went on to beat the Virginia State Champion, Rockville (6 – 4), Northeast Regional Champion, New Hampshire (14 – 2) and Northeast Regional Runner up, Connecticut (21 – 0) in their remaining pool play games. The Crushers were undefeated coming out of pool play and secured the first place seed for Bracket-Play by allowing the least amount of runs (seven), scoring the most runs (52), and having the best run differential in the tournament (52 – 7).

In the first round of Bracket-Play, the Crushers found themselves rematched against the Virginia State Champions who were expected to be

**Creeks Crushers** cont. on pg. 2

# St. Johns County students return to school



Photo courtesy Lauren O'Shell

A Freedom Crossing Academy fifth grade student on the first day of school.

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewsline.com

Students across St. Johns County returned to school on Thursday, Aug. 10. According to District 1 School Board Member Beverly Slough, the district welcomed back more than 50,000 students this year.

"I visited all 10 schools in District 1 on the first day of school," Slough said. "In every case, it looked like the 50th day of school rather than the first day — things were running so smoothly. Everyone looked cheerful and there was great learning taking place, even on the first day."

Slough pointed out that this year, unlike many years, the district is not opening a brand new school.

"We're grateful for the break," she said, "but we will be doubling up and opening two new schools next year."

There are two new principals in District 1 schools this year: Dr. Joy Reichenberg, an experienced principal, will lead Julington Creek Elementary and Drew Chiodo, a first year principal, will lead Patriot Oaks Academy.

At Freedom Crossing Academy, home

to 1,960 students this year, Principal Gina Fonesca was pleased with the first day at her school.

"It is so much fun to feel the excitement and anticipation of a new school year," Fonseca said. "The teachers at Freedom Crossing have worked so hard over the last few weeks to prepare for our students' arrival. Our goal is to make school a fun place to learn and grow."

Freedom Crossing Academy is a "Capturing Kids Heart School," which means they welcome their students, share Good News and build



Photo courtesy Heidi Karl  
Julington Creek Elementary students are ready for school.

classroom Social Contracts. New this year is a revised Master Schedule, which has middle school students eating at the end of the day. Also, during a 30-minute block on Wednesdays, students meet with their House Teams to focus on Character Counts.

Julington Creek Elementary's mascot, Jazzy, welcomed students back to school. The school has new additions to its administrative team, including new principal, Dr. Joy Reichenberg and new assistant principal, Jennifer Frank. They join Melissa Hatcher, an assistant principal who joined the school last fall.



Photo courtesy Kelli Gallant


Kelli Gallant's second grade class on the first day of school at Timberlin Creek Elementary.

**SJC students** cont. on pg. 12

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**Creeks Crushers** cont. from pg. 1

their stiffest competition. The Crushers soundly won the game by collecting 22 hits in two innings and winning 18 – 1 in a three-inning mercy rule finish. Next, Creeks faced off against Ohio Valley Regional Champion, Fern Creek, Kentucky. Creeks Elite was able to hold on for a 5 – 3 victory and punched their ticket to the World Series Championship Game.

Creeks Crushers Elite came into the Championship Game undefeated as they had done numerous times this All-Star Season; however, on this occasion, they were matched up against another undefeated team, the North Carolina State Champion, Jamesville, NC. Creeks came out early with a six-run lead and did not allow a run until the fifth inning. The Crushers ultimately sealed the victory with a final score of 8 – 3. Once again, the Creeks Crushers 8u Elite clinched the World Series title.

As they had done all summer, the Creeks Crushers 8u Elite dominated their tournament competition, posting a 7 – 0 record and outscoring their opponents 83 – 14. They led the field with a team batting average of .505, scored an average of almost 12 runs per game, and held teams to an average of two runs per game.

In addition to team accolades, multiple players brought home individual awards for their efforts. Ivy Griffin, Jordan Williams, Georgia Griffin, Jadah Stubbs, Honor Ellison, Claire Riley, and Grace Cordero received Player of the Game Awards. Jadah Stubbs received All World Series Team Honors as she had 12 hits, 13 RBIs, and had a .600 average for the tourney. Grace Cordero also received All World Series Team Honors and was named World Series MVP as she led the team with 14 hits and posted a .736 batting average for the tournament.



Photo courtesy Crystal Cordero





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# BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

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Shih Tzu/Japanese Chin mix

**Favorite Activity:**

Fetching his ball

**Favorite Treat:**

Carrots

**Favorite Friend:**

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**Back to School Guide in this issue! Pages 10 - 12**

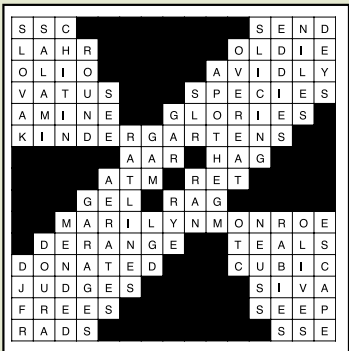
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## MYSTERY PHOTO



Can you guess where this is?  
Submit your answer to: mail@floridanewslines.com  
Last month's Mystery Photo was the entrance to St. Johns Golf and Country Club.



Answers to our Puzzles  
PG 14



A. trees B. outdoors C. hiking D. nature



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# September

## Community Calendar

### What's Happening in St. Johns

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

**Playing H00Kie**, a group for those who enjoy knitting, crocheting and looming (with all items donated to charity) meets every Wednesday from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Maple Street Biscuit Company, 1627 Race Track Road in St. Johns. Visit the group's Facebook page (Playing H00Kie) or email [playinghookie2022@gmail.com](mailto:playinghookie2022@gmail.com) for more information.

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

**2nd: The Northeast Florida Chapter** of Sisters in Crime will meet on Sept. 2 at 10 a.m. in the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. (FOL Room). Lana McAra, an award-winning, international best-selling author and ghostwriter of 43 titles through traditional publishing with a million books sold will address "Create Compelling Fiction from Your Own Real-Life Experiences." Bring your coffee and bring a friend. Visit [www.nefloridasistersin-crime.org](http://www.nefloridasistersin-crime.org) or email [floridasistersincrime@gmail.com](mailto:floridasistersincrime@gmail.com) for more information.

**5th: Honeybee Quilters Guild** will meet on Tuesday, Sept. 5 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church in the Loft on the County Dock Road side of the church at 2501 Loretto Road. The program includes finalizing QuiltFest preparations and a scavenger hunt. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit [honeybeequilters.org](http://honeybeequilters.org) for more information.

**6th: Prosperity Plus Harnessing** Your Invisible Power is a 10-week class on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. beginning Sept. 6 at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road in St. Johns. This transformational curriculum is designed to take your life to greater heights and ignite your potential to live your best life now. Visit [www.unityinjax.com](http://www.unityinjax.com) or call (904) 287-1505

for more information.

**6th: Widow to Widow**, support group for widows by widows is held at Council on Aging (COA) River House, 179 Marine Street in St. Augustine on Wednesdays beginning Sept. 6 from 11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday – Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**7th: Open Card Play at Council** on Aging (COA) River House, 179 Marine Street in St. Augustine. Bring your deck of cards and socialize over a friendly card game of your choosing every Thursday beginning Sept. 7 from 12:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday – Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**9th: The Bartram Trail** Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, Sept. 9) from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. The topic is "How to handle DNA results in your tree?" Email [ginglish@comcast.net](mailto:ginglish@comcast.net) for more information. Visit [www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClubGroup](http://www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClubGroup) to send a request to join the club.

**9th: The Friends of Alpine Park** meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, Sept. 9) at 11 a.m. at the Harris-Bennett Farmhouse in Alpine Groves Park, 2060 State Road 13. Docents will conduct tours of the historic farmhouse from 12 p.m. – 2 p.m. As always, the public is invited. Email [friendsofalpinepark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofalpinepark@gmail.com) for more information.

**11th:ESOL Learn to Read**, with partners at Learn to Read St. Johns, will be held on Monday, Sept. 11. The beginner class is from 3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. and the intermediate and/or conversation class is from 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Register at [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org). Walkins will be welcome as space allows. Call 904-827-6960 or email Donna at [dbaasch@sjcfl.us](mailto:dbaasch@sjcfl.us) for more information.

**11th:The Northwest St. Johns** County United for Progress Club will meet on Monday, Sept. 11 at 6:30 p.m. Guest speaker, Suzanne Sapp, will speak on the importance of voting. Visit [www.nwst-johnsup.com](http://www.nwst-johnsup.com) or email [nwsjcp@gmail.com](mailto:nwsjcp@gmail.com) for more information.

**12th:Bartram Trail Newcomers'** and Women's Club will host its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, Sept. 12 at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. The featured speaker will be Sam Kouvaris. Checks for \$32 should be made payable to BTNC and mailed to Brenda Jenkins, 2204 Fort Mellon Court, St. Augustine, FL 32092. Payment must be received no later Tuesday, Sept. 5; be sure to indicate your entrée choice on the check memo. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](http://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) for food choices and updated information.

**13th:AAUW St Augustine** will hold its kick off meeting, hosted by Lynn Webb at Captain's Quarters condos, 1 Dondanville Road in St. Augustine from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. on Sept. 13. The meeting will feature two speakers: Debi Redding of St. Johns County Homeless Coalition and scholarship winner Ms. Shereen. Attendees are asked to bring a canned good (pop top) for the homeless. Visit <https://staugustine-fl.aauw.net/> for more information.

**14th:The Garden Club** of Switzerland will present "Edibles as Part of Your Landscape" by Master Gardener Barbara Purple at 10 a.m. on Sept. 14 at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd. Master Gardeners may be eligible for training CEUs from this presentation. Guests are welcome to attend. Visit [www.switzerlandgc.org](http://www.switzerlandgc.org) for more information and to let the garden club know you will attend.

**15th:Adult Craft – Puzzle** piece picture frame will be held at 10 a.m. on Sept. 15 at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd. Choose some puzzle pieces and make a pretty frame for a piece of your heart. Stop by the Bartram Trail Info desk to see the example. All supplies are provided by the Bartram Trail Friends of the Library. Register at [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org) or call the library at (904) 824-6960. Space is limited.

**16th:Adult Book Club** at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will celebrate the Freedom to Read on Saturday, Sept. 16 at 11 a.m. Visit the ALA website ([www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/decade2019](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/decade2019)) and choose a challenged title. Register at [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org) or call the library at (904) 824-6960.

**18th:The All Star** Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, Sept. 18 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. Sarah Squared Quilts will present a trunk show plus host a pop up shop. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit [www.allstarquilters.org](http://www.allstarquilters.org) for more information.

**19th:St. Johns CARES** Planning Meeting will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 19 at 6:30 p.m. via RingCentral Zoom. Contact [president@stjohnscares.org](mailto:president@stjohnscares.org) for the meeting link.

**19th:Happy Hookers** crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on Sept. 19 from 5:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. The group crochets or knits blankets for cancer patients at area hospitals. All skill levels are welcome. Visit [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org) or call (904) 827-6960.

**19th:Newcomers** of North St. Johns will host a luncheon featuring pianist Carl Grant on Tuesday, Sept. 19 beginning at 11 a.m. at t. Johns Golf & Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members. All reservations must be received by Sept. 8. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information.

**29th:The St. Augustine** Film Society will present the film "Brian and Charles," a 2022 comedy drama film directed by Jim Archer about a lonely inventor named Brian in rural Wales who spends his days building quirky, unconventional contraptions that seldom work. The film will be shown at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 29 at The Waterworks, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. General admission is \$8; Film Society members and students are free. Visit <https://staugustine-filmsociety.com/> for more information.

**30th:16th annual Holiday** Craft Show will be held at San Juan del Rio Catholic Church, 1714 State Road 13, on Sept. 30 from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. In addition to more than 50 vendors with unique items, the event will feature multiple food trucks.

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

**Q: Can you clarify information about the budget and taxes assessed by the school district for next year?**

A: There seems to be some confusion about this. Per Florida Statute, the school district has published an ad informing residents that their taxes will be increasing; however, the school district millage rate has actually decreased .073 mills, from 5.483 mills last year to 5.410 mills this year. The only reason that residents' taxes are increasing is because their property values have increased — an average of 18.85 percent in St. Johns County this year. So, the taxes on the tax bill are going up because the assessed value of the homes has increased.

This has nothing to do with the possibility that we may consider asking voters for one more mill, primarily to fund teacher salaries, next year. If we decide to do this, it would go on the ballot in 2024 for people to vote on and potentially go into effect in 2025. A millage increase requires voting by residents during a general election.

**Q: What can you share about the first day of school?**

A: We have now welcomed back more than 50,000 students to our classrooms this year. We don't really know how we're being impacted by the vouchers issued by the state at this time; we know we've lost some students, but the state won't release these numbers until the October student counts. We are seeing a few new homeschooled students since they are now eligible for vouchers.

As for teacher vacancies, we are way down from this time last year and are hiring more teachers every day.

**Q: Will St. Johns County offer AP**

**Psychology this year?**

A: Yes. There has been a lot of information going around about this, but basically the AP won't give credit for this course unless it is taught in its entirety. Our state department of education has approved teaching the course in its entirety in an age appropriate manner, so our district will be offering the course this year. Superintendent Forson met with all the teachers who will be teaching this course and we're all on the same page and don't expect any problems going forward.

**Q: How is student transportation faring so far in the school year?**

A: Our buses have required a number of double runs, but we are getting things under control. Road construction is an issue, especially on Longleaf Pine Parkway and County Road 210 near Beachwalk, which affects the students at Beachside High School. As the county grows, it definitely affects our transportation.

I am very thankful to the county for the completion of the safer walk zone for St. Johns Forest students as they walk to Liberty Pines Academy. The sidewalk was successfully moved farther from the roadway prior to the start of school.

**Q: Do you have anything else to share with District 1?**

A: We are looking forward to the kick-off of fall sports and are expecting good behavior on behalf of our students and parents at the games. We call it "Victory with Honor" behavior.

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

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



with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

**Q: Can you describe the impact the SJSO DUI unit is having on traffic safety?**

A: I'd like to recognize our achievements as historic lows in traffic crashes and fatal crashes are predicted for our county this year. We are on track this year to have a 71 percent decrease in total crashes and a 55 percent decrease in fatal crashes and I believe a lot of this is due to the hard work of our DUI unit. We used to average 30 traffic-related deaths per year in the county and for the past two years, we've averaged 20 per year, despite our continually growing population.

**Q: What can you tell us about the DUI unit?**

A: We have three full time deputies (one is a corporal) and one part time. All of the deputies in this unit are also Drug Recognition Experts or DRE. This certification and standard is hard to maintain and we are third in the state,

behind only Pinellas and Hillsborough counties, in having three or more DRE within our DUI unit.

At a recent Mothers Against Drunk Driving awards event, we were nominated for Best DUI Unit in a Large Urban Area. Our DUI corporal received an award for more than 1,000 career DUIs and the corporal and one of the deputies received awards for more than 100 DUI arrests in 2022. They were both also nominated for DUI officer of the year, so they have been recognized for their expertise.

**Q: What are the duties of the DUI unit?**

A: Our DUI unit falls under the Traffic Division, so besides the day-to-day DUI enforcement duties (a deputy can call in the DUI unit anytime there is a crash or erratic driving and the deputy suspects impairment), the DUI unit is respon-



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**with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes**

**Q: Are our elections secure?**

A: Yes! As the Supervisor of Elections, I have 100 percent confidence in our voting system and processes, and you can too, because Florida uses the safest system that exists: a paper ballot. St. Johns County voters have been voting on paper ballots since 1994, and all of Florida since 2008. Additionally, only voting systems certified by the Department of State can be used to count ballots in Florida.

**Q: What kind of voting system is used in St. Johns County?**

A: We utilize ES&S DS200 digital scan tabulators for counting ballots during early voting and on Election Day. To count vote-by-mail ballots, the Elections Office uses DS850 high speed tabulators. We have been using this system since 2010.

**Q: Are our voting machines connected to the internet?**

A: No. A stand-alone server is used to program the election and tabulate the results. After polls close on election night, unofficial results are transmitted using a secured private network that has no internet access.

**Q: How do I know that my ballot was counted accurately?**

A: Our machines go through rigorous testing before each election, where thousands of ballots are run through the machines to make sure they are working correctly and counting each vote accurately. A public Logic and Accuracy test is conducted prior to each election, and the machines must be certified they are counting accurately prior to being used in an election. This test is open to the public, so you can attend to be sure our machines will count your vote correctly.

**Q: Does Florida conduct audits after an election?**

A: Yes. Audits have been conducted in every election in Florida since 2007, except in the case of a recount. Year after year and election after election, our manual audits, which consist of hand counting a percentage of ballots to compare to the machine count, have confirmed the accuracy of our machines.

**Q: Is there a new audit process coming in 2024 for our election?**

A: Yes. St. Johns County has recently purchased Clear Ballot Clear Audit, an automated independent audit system. The system provides a 100 percent audit of election results separate from our tabulation system. Beginning in 2024, a 100 percent audit of our election results will be conducted on every election.

**Q: Are elections conducted on a local level?**

A: Yes! Our poll workers do not work for a political party or candidate, they serve you, the voters of St. Johns County. Our staff and poll workers serve with integrity and transparency to ensure your vote is counted fairly and impartially. Remember, our poll workers are members of our community. They are our friends, family, and neighbors. We are public servants who serve to protect your right to vote.

**Q: How can I find out more about the security of our elections?**

A: Come take a tour of our office! We offer a behind the scenes look of our operation and present the facts about how elections are conducted in St. Johns County. Visit [www.votesjc.gov/office-tours](http://www.votesjc.gov/office-tours) to schedule a tour.

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

A: Readers can email me at [voakes@votesjc.com](mailto:voakes@votesjc.com) or call me at (904) 823-2238. Our website, [www.votesjc.com](http://www.votesjc.com) also has a wealth of information.



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

**Q: Can you share information about TRIM notices?**

A: TRIM notices have been mailed and are also available for review on our website. TRIM stands for "Truth in Millage" and is a notice of property taxes. It is basically the final notice of the year to work with the Property Appraiser on any disagreements on values or exemptions. If we can't come to an agreement, we encourage taxpayers to file a petition with the Value Adjustment Board.

**Q: What is the timing of the taxes on the TRIM notice?**

A: The property value and exemptions that a property owner sees on the TRIM notice are as of Jan. 1, 2023 and are looking back. They are based on the use, ownership and condition of the property as of Jan. 1, 2023. If you did not own your property on Jan. 1, 2023, this year's taxes and exemptions are not yours, but are rather those of the previous owner. As of Jan. 1, 2024, all of your caps and exemptions if any will go into effect.

**Q: How do you assess property values and taxes?**

A: All 67 Property Appraisers in the State of Florida assess property and create their tax roll under very strict state statutes. The oversight is by the Florida Department of Revenue, not

the local county government, so each year prior to July 1 we submit the tax roll to the Florida Department of Revenue, where it is evaluated under those standards. The Florida Department of Revenue must approve the tax roll prior to us sending out TRIM notices. Since I've been in office, St. Johns County has never not had our tax roll approved on the first round by the Florida Department of Revenue.

**Q: What should taxpayers do if there is something on their TRIM that they do not understand?**

A: If anyone has questions on TRIM, values, or exemptions, they should contact our office. If you are qualified for an exemption and even if you did not apply for it, the Property Appraiser has discretion up until 25 days after TRIM (this year, that would be Sept. 12) to apply for the exemption. So please contact our office immediately. Especially during TRIM season, we answer our phones and return all messages and emails prior to the end of each business day.

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

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

**Q&A with Sheriff Rob Hardwick** cont. from pg. 5

sible for maintaining the Intoxilyzer machine, which measures blood alcohol content. We keep our primary machines in the booking area of the jail, but we also have portable ones for the DUI unit. Our DUI deputies are also responsible for the training on impairment that all of our deputies are required to take. As DREs they provide statewide training on DUI instruction and are also qualified as expert witnesses in the courtroom.

**Q: What is the key takeaway you'd like our readers to have?**

A: The SJSO is saving lives, according to statistics, but we also strive to

educate the public about how many options there are to not drive while impaired (either with alcohol or drugs). Ridesharing is readily available and people can also call our non-emergency number and we can call a ride or a taxi for you. We want to get people home alive. There is just no reason to drink and drive.

**Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you with any questions or suggestions about this article?**

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

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4. A person who is willing to invest time, energy, and money to receive top results for both buyers and sellers.

The Randy Martin Team, consisting of Randy, Lisa Verrino and Dan Schmidt, offers all the above and more! The Randy Martin Team is successful because they care about their customers. It is not a tag line, it's what separates them from the rest. Each member enhances the team with their own prior experience and strong knowledge of the market in an extremely competitive industry. This team continues to strategize to build better processes for their customers and work hard to serve those customers daily. The team is always striving to support, encourage and motivate each other. They measure success in customer satisfaction.

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**Randy**, continually ranks in Jacksonville Top Agents both in customer satisfaction and numbers. He is dedicated to excellence! Randy has lived in Jacksonville for more than 54 years and loves this city and his occupation. He has continued to bolster the success of his team and his personal career for more than 21 years. With a career of more than 1000 successfully closed transactions, Randy's customers describe him as friendly, knowledgeable, professional, hardworking, available, honest and with high ethical standards. You can visit [www.movewithrandy.com](http://www.movewithrandy.com) for numerous customer reviews.

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**Dan**, a graduate of the University of Kansas, moved to Jacksonville in 2016 and hit the ground running with the Randy Martin Team. His previous real estate experience continued to strengthen and round out the team. Dan is friendly — but all business. He focuses on customer needs and customer service. He is there every step of the way. He takes his customers' needs personally and gauges his success on their satisfaction. He has a natural ability to discern their desires and needs to help make them become a reality.



**Lisa**, a Realtor, broker, and a paralegal, has just the right components to further enhance the team. She is knowledgeable, experienced, very caring and works tirelessly to satisfy her customers. She's a great example of the ideal Realtor — always going above and beyond. Lisa grew up in the Ponte Vedra area and has lived in and worked in the Jacksonville area for more than 55 years. Her knowledge of both the area and real estate continue to put her in high demand as a local Realtor. Be it 6 am or midnight, Lisa works the hours needed to meet her customer needs. Lisa can be described as knowledgeable, loving and caring, but has the ability to become a hard-nose negotiator when needed.



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

**Q: Do you have anything updated to share about the property on State Road 13 and Otoes Place that is owned by First Coast Energy?**

A: First Coast Energy has applied to build a Neighborhood Commercial development, which they are allowed to do. The property is properly zoned for this and the project will not come before the Board of County Commissioners.

I have heard the concerns of the community and have directed staff to talk to First Coast Energy to attempt to con-

vince them to save more of the trees. I'm on the side of the residents, but we don't have any legal standing to require this. I've also asked our staff to impress upon the applicant about the safety concerns regarding an entrance to the property from Otoes Place as there is a bus stop there. Due to basic planning principles in our own development code, though, having two points of ingress and egress to the property is desirable.

The last time I checked, staff had indeed met with residents and then relayed their concerns to the applicants.

**Q: What is the latest on the Shamrock Sports Proposal, presented to the Board of County Commissioners in July that sought to develop, in partnership, a recreational sports facility along State Road 16A?**

A: This proposal required a land swap to add 33-acres of property to the county's present site. Our staff looked at it and this 33-acre site is already being dug as a pond by the Florida Department of Transportation for use in the construction of the First Coast Expressway. Without this land swap, the potential offered by the investors for the additional soccer fields to support the professional soccer league is not possible. The county ballfields as initially planned for the original 40-acre county site will still

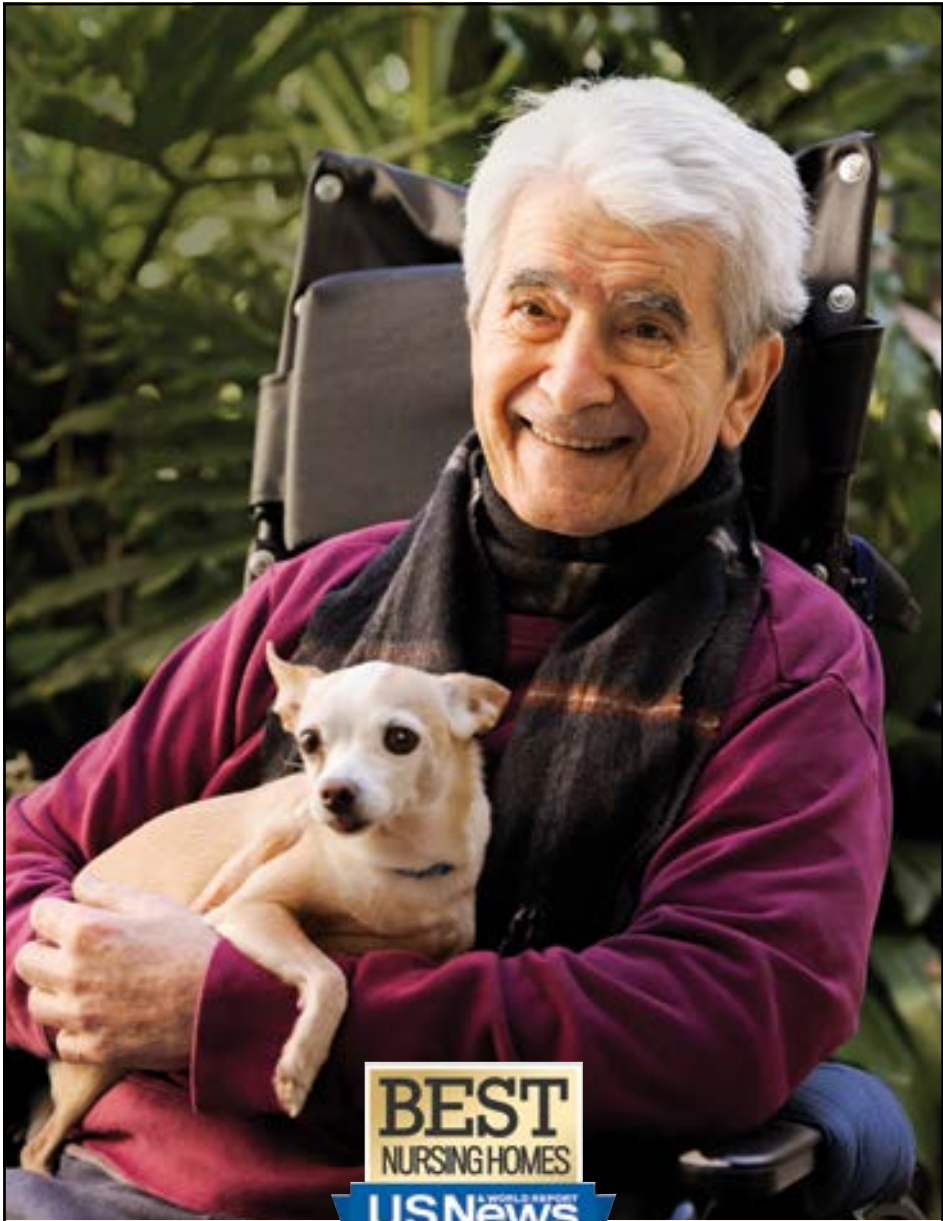
be built.

**Q: What is the status of the budget process for fiscal year 2024?**

A: The Board of County Commissioners will vote on the final budget at our regular meeting on Sept. 19. We did decide to fund 18 new firefighter positions to keep up with the growth of the county; their calls for service have increased markedly. Also, funding for LAMP (Land Acquisition and Management Program) was increased from \$500,000 to \$2 million for fiscal year 2024. We are continuing to build our war chest to buy land for conservation.

**Q: Do you have anything else to share with District 1?**

A: We are currently conducting a national search for a new county administrator. We will receive applications until Sept. 15 and our goal is to have a new administrator in place by the end of October. We have hired a consultant to help us filter through the hundreds of applications we expect and our search committee, made up of Commissioner Henry Dean; Clerk of Court Brandon Patty; St. Johns County Director of Human Resources Lilian Hutchinson; and Jerry Wilson, a community/business representative, will do interviews. The final three candidates will appear before the Board of County Commissioners.



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

**Q. What is the history behind the St. Johns County Clerk's Office?**

A. Our office's history goes all the way back to 1821 when it was established by Governor Andrew Jackson along with the County Clerk/Sheriff. The first deed was then recorded on Sept. 13, 1821, at the Governor's House, still standing in Downtown St. Augustine.

The deed names the grantor as Jose Maria Ugarte and Francisco Reyes as the grantee and details the sale of a piece of property in St. Augustine for \$600. The document even names two witnesses and a notary. Some of the same legal language used in the first recorded document from 1821 is still used in deeds today. Some of our office's recorded deeds are written in Spanish, which aligns with St. Augustine's prominent Spanish history.

**Q. What was the responsibility of the Clerk's Office back in the 1800s?**

A. Many of the clerk's responsibilities remain the same as 202 years ago, including recording court activities, property deeds, and other transactions; however, while many of the functions are the same, the county's boundaries were much larger as St. Johns County encompassed all land from the Suwannee River east and south down to Key West. We still maintain these records which showcase how residents traveled hundreds of miles to record docu-

ments. It's a remarkable testament to the importance of accurate records and their importance to our quality of life.

**Q. How is the Clerk's Office honoring its unique history?**

A. We are honoring our office's unique history with a historical marker designating the Governor's House as the original clerk's office in Florida. On Sept. 28, our office will host an unveiling and dedication ceremony to share this historical marker with the St. Johns County community and fellow clerks around the state.

**Q. How does the Clerk's Office work to maintain its history?**

A. As the official record keeper for St. Johns County, the clerk's office has a plethora of historical items. We have historical maps as well as books that all point back to our extensive history. We even have local county commission meeting minutes from April 30, 1866.

The Official Record books, court records, and maps in our office paint a picture of the growth in St. Johns County. As the county keeps growing, it's essential our office continues to protect the public's trust in record keeping by preserving these records for generations to come. Many records remain available for viewing in our office



# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## Celebrating 70 years of empowering america's small businesses

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewsline.com

On July 30, 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Small Business Act into law, creating a new agency: the U.S. Small Business Administration. Its mission: to aid, counsel, assist and protect small businesses, the backbone of America's economy. Since then, SBA has helped millions of entrepreneurs pursue their dreams of business ownership. Some of America's biggest companies — including Nike, Apple, FedEx, Ben & Jerry's, Under Armour and Chobani — got their start with help from SBA.

Here are seven important ways the SBA continues to serve small businesses:

1. Expanding access to capital. Through the 7(a), 504, microloan and other loan programs, SBA facilitates lending from partner financial institutions to entrepreneurs who may not meet conventional loan requirements. By reducing the risk for lenders, the SBA empowers small business owners to secure the financing they need to start, expand or recover from set-

backs. Over the years, these lending programs have helped small businesses access the capital they need to start and grow their businesses.

2. Providing business counseling and mentorship. Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, SCORE chapters and Veterans Business Outreach Centers offer entrepreneurs expert counseling, training, mentorships and other services for every stage of their business journey. This network continues to expand with Women's Business Centers in every state and Puerto Rico, new Veterans Business Outreach Centers and more.

3. Boosting government contracting opportunities. The U.S. government is the world's largest customer, representing a big opportunity for small business growth. The Women-Owned Small Business federal contract program, 8(a) Business Development program, HUBZone program, Veterans Certification program and other assistance programs help small businesses tap into government contracting.

4. Helping small businesses recover from disasters. In coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, state and local governments and other organizations, SBA connects business owners and homeowners in declared disaster areas with low-interest disaster loans to help communities recover. In addition,

these loans can now be increased to fund mitigation improvements to boost resiliency against future disasters.

5. Innovating to meet the needs of small businesses. The SBA adapts to

SBA celebrates 70 years cont. on pg. 13

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# Back to School Guide

## Backpack safety can prevent serious injuries

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Trips and falls on the playground may account for the majority of injuries that send school children to the nurse's office. But backpacks cause their fair share of injuries as well.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates there are more than 7,300 backpack-related injuries per year. Children routinely carry more than the recommended weight in school backpacks and, compounding the problem, also carry their bags incorrectly.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical agencies recommend that a child's backpack should weigh no more than 10 to 20 percent of the child's body weight; however, this figure

should be adjusted based on a child's fitness level and strength. That means that the average seven-year-old second grader who weighs between 55 and 60 pounds should be carrying no more than 11 to 12 pounds in his or her backpack. A backpack that is too heavy may cause red marks on the shoulders or back from the straps, tingling or numbness in the arms and back, changes in posture when wearing the backpack, and pain anywhere in the back.

To compound these problems, which also may include nerve damage resulting from pressure on nerves in the shoulders, children should lighten their loads and carry backpacks correctly. The following tips are some additional ways youngsters can prevent backpack-related

injuries.

- \* Carry only necessary items. Children should only carry what is required for that particular school day in their backpacks. If teachers routinely have students carry home many heavy books, parents can consult with the teachers to see if there are other options.
- \* Distribute weight evenly. Items in the backpack should be spread out to distribute the weight across the entire back. Heavier items should be at the bottom of the pack.
- \* Use both straps. Using only one strap shifts the backpack weight to one side, causing the back and shoulders to strain. Many orthopedists have reported treating children with back or shoulder

- pain as the result of carrying backpacks incorrectly.
- \* Choose the correct backpack size. The size of the backpack should match the scale of the child and should rest evenly in the middle of the child's back.
  - \* Lift safely. Children should lift their backpacks by bending their knees and lifting to protect their backs.
- There are some safety features parents can look for when purchasing backpacks. A padded back reduces pressure on the muscles and can be more comfortable, while compression straps make the backpack more sturdy. Additionally, reflective material on the backpack can make the child more visible to motorists.



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nament from around the country: Brock Butrimas, Tyson Jordan and Mark Thompson earned All World Series team honors, Brantlee Mullins won the Gold Glove award as first baseman, and Mark Thompson won the World Series Most Valuable Player award with a 0.635 batting average and six home runs.



Photo courtesy Chris Thompson


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# Palencia Elementary celebrates back to school with fundraiser



Photo courtesy Sara Orlando

The annual Boosterthon fundraiser at Palencia Elementary School will include a Fun Run for students on Sept. 8 at the school.



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**SJC students** cont. from pg. 1

“It was a great first day of school,” said Heidi Karl, secretary at Julington Creek Elementary. “Some adjustments were made to our schedules because of the extreme heat, but everyone has adapted amazingly well.”

Mill Creek Academy is home to 1,990 students this year. Dr. Ken Goodwin, principal, said that due to the growth in student numbers, they have added additional staff, including a fourth assistant principal and another instructional literacy coach.

“It’s exciting to have all our students back,” Goodwin said. “We have a hard time sleeping the night before the first day of school, because of the excitement of a new year. We are fortunate to have our families, students, and staff with our overall positive school community culture.”



Photo courtesy Heidi Karl  
Welcome back to school at Julington Creek Elementary.



Photo courtesy Crystal Kelley  
First grader Lennox Kelley with Mill Creek Academy Principal Dr. Ken Goodwin on the first day of school.



Photo courtesy Leisha Coward  
Students return to class at Nease High School.



Photo courtesy Adrienne Hilts  
Fruit Cove Middle School students on the first day of school.

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## Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

### Beckie Schwartz

Beckie Schwartz is owner of Noah's Agape Cafe in Fruit Cove, which will be celebrating its one year anniversary this month. The cafe, located just south of the Julington Creek Bridge on State Road 13, is a non-profit organization that seeks to offer those with intellectual differences a meaningful job. Patrons will find joyful and special employees who will serve them coffee, snacks, and sandwiches. Schwartz, who has lived in Florida since 1981, moved to NW St. Johns County six years ago with her husband, Sam, as well as the cafe's namesake, Noah, who was born visually impaired with Down syndrome and autism. Noah is the youngest of the Schwartz family's six children.

#### Q: What brought you to St. Johns County?

A: We were living in South Florida before we moved here. Our oldest daughter went to the University of North Florida, and we fell in love with this area when we visited her. She eventually married and had a baby, so we moved here six years ago to be closer to the grandchildren. We now have three grandchildren and one more on the way.

#### Q: What led you to open Noah's Agape Cafe?

#### Get to Know ...

Interested in being featured? Email Martie Thompson at [editor@FloridaNewsLine.com](mailto:editor@FloridaNewsLine.com)



Photo courtesy Beckie Schwartz  
Beckie and Sam Schwartz with Noah.

A: My parents gave me a small inheritance early and I knew, since I loved cooking and baking with my children, that I wanted to open a restaurant. I also knew I wanted to help the special needs community and be a source of meaningful jobs for them.

#### Q: How much have you learned since opening the cafe?

A: So many things! I'm the type of person who just jumps into things and then wonders what I got myself into. I do a lot of praying! When we originally found the location for the cafe, I had enough money to do the buildout and get the facility into working order. Then, with permits and licensing, we decided to take a leap of faith and put in a full kitchen so we could offer more than just "grab and go" food as originally planned. We had to take out loans to cover the costs. My thoughts at the time were: God's got this. We can make it work. Plus, now we can offer culinary skills to our employees in addition to

barista.

#### Q: What is the most fulfilling part of being the cafe's owner?

A: I like seeing the kids (I know they're actually adults, but to me they are my kids) grow. For instance, one girl didn't know she could crack eggs — but she did and she made the eggs for the egg sandwiches that day. We offer on the job training for a variety of special needs schools in the area.

Almost every day my heart is warmed; people come in for the treats, coffee, to use our Wifi, and to hug our kids. Some customers actually come in just to get hugs from our kids.

#### Q: What place would you like Noah's Agape Cafe to serve in the community?

A: I'd like it to raise awareness ... the special needs community is capable of working. They want to feel useful and have a purpose. Everybody's not the same and they have different tasks at the cafe based on their abilities. For instance, one man likes to just clean. Some like the water and want to wash dishes all day. Each one has something they can do — along with smiling at our customers.

*[Editor's Note: Noah's Agape Cafe will celebrate its first birthday with a birthday bash on Sept. 9 from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. The community is invited to attend the celebration, which will include a DJ, face painting, and a representation of other non profit organizations from the area. Visit [www.noahsagapecafe.org](http://www.noahsagapecafe.org) or the cafe's Facebook page for more information.]*

#### Q&A with St. Johns County Clerk cont. from pg. 8

and some are on display at the St. Augustine Historical Society.

#### 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 and services, such as paying traffic citation or searching records, can be used by visiting our website, [www.stjohnsclerk.com](http://www.stjohnsclerk.com).

#### SBA celebrates 70 years cont. from pg. 9

meet the needs of small businesses. Lender Match, MySBA loan portal, Paycheck Protection Program direct forgiveness loan portal and certify.sba.gov are just a few examples of how SBA is embracing digital technologies to meet small businesses anywhere and everywhere they are.

6. Supporting international trade. Nearly 96 percent of consumers live outside of the United States, and two-thirds of the world's purchasing power is in other countries. This represents a big opportunity for America's small businesses. Through efforts like the State Trade Expansion Program and other international trade programs, SBA helps small businesses increase profits, reduce market dependence and stabilize seasonal sales.

7. Serving as a catalyst for economic growth. SBA empowers small businesses to thrive, create jobs and contribute to local communities. Through programs and services, the agency provides access to capital, counseling, procurement opportunities and much more, leveling the playing field for entrepreneurs facing challenges, especially those in underserved communities.

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Briefs

**St. Johns County seeks community input on World Golf Village**

The public now has an opportunity to provide their input on the properties being vacated by the World Golf Foundation, which include the World Golf Hall of Fame, IMAX Theater, PGA Tour Productions facility, as well as various parking lots and other property amenities. Interested parties should visit [www.sjcfll.us/wgv](http://www.sjcfll.us/wgv) to learn more and to provide input on potential future uses of the properties.

There will also be community engagement meetings in September, which will take place at the St. Johns County Administration Building Auditorium, 500 San Sebastian View in St. Augustine. The meetings are scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 27 from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. and Thursday, Sept. 28, from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

"I am excited to gather community input and professional proposals on this vital piece of property located in District 2, which is pivotal to the continued quality of life in the county," District 2 Commissioner Sarah S. Arnold said. "There are so many possibilities that can be realized, and to listen and learn about what the community wants will be a part of the process the Board of County Commissioners uses to make its decisions about these assets."

The properties that are open for public input include:

- World Golf Hall of Fame: a 64,113 square-foot multi-purpose facility. WGF notified its intent to discontinue Hall of Fame operations on or about

Sept. 1, 2023. Currently, the World Golf Foundation is proposing a temporary lease extension to Dec. 31, 2023.

- World Golf Hall of Fame IMAX Theater: a 17,865 square-foot movie theater. The World Golf Foundation notified its intent to discontinue IMAX operations on or about Sept. 1, 2023. The equipment (movie screen and audio/visual components) would remain in the building.
- PGA Tour Productions: a 32,329 square-foot Class-A office building. The World Golf Foundation is relocating at the end of 2024.
- S. Legacy Trail: 36.07 acres of various parking lots, rights-of-way areas, landscaping, and lakes.

Staff will analyze public feedback to establish themes and bring back options with associated costs to the Board of County Commissioners for a comprehensive planning approach for the properties.

**St. Johns County Emergency Management Offers Public Safety Alert Service**

St. Johns County Emergency Management is using Nixle Alerts to provide another way for the public to stay updated with relevant information from the St. Johns County Emergency Operations Center. Any individual can text StJohnsEOC to 888777 to opt-in to receive notifications through SMS text messages. Nixle does not charge for this service, but carrier message and data rates may apply.

St. Johns County Emergency Man-

agement will use this service to alert residents of public safety advisories, natural and human-caused disasters, and other significant events that may impact the community.

**Newcomers of North St. Johns announce luncheon**

Newcomers of North Saint Johns will host its first luncheon of the new season on Tuesday, Sept. 19 at the St. Johns Golf & Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. The event features a delicious lunch and renowned pianist Carl Grant. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. with the meeting beginning at 11 a.m.

Luncheon choices include fire-grilled chicken breast topped with a roasted red pepper beurre blanc and accompanied by toasted orzo pasta; mustard crusted atlantic salmon topped with a basil gremolata and served with grilled asparagus and toasted orzo pasta; or a vegetarian risotto with grilled ratatouille and roasted red pepper beurre blanc. All entrées include a mixed salad to include arcadian greens, heirloom tomatoes, sundried cranberries and English cucumbers topped with an aged balsamic vinaigrette accompanied by rolls and butter. Dessert is blackberry tiramisu with seasonal fruit. Beverages include iced tea and coffee with a cash bar also available.

Cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests. All reservations must be received by Sept. 8. Visit <https://newcomersof-northstjohns.org> for more information or to join; the annual membership dues are \$30.


**Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club host "Fall Kickoff" meeting and luncheon**

The Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club will host its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, Sept. 12 at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. The featured speaker will be Sam Kouvaris, who will make a presentation on the Jacksonville Jaguars' history, highlights, and notable players. The September luncheon theme is Fall Kickoff, so attendees should wear their favorite sports team colors.

Checks for \$32 should be made payable to BTNC and mailed to Brenda Jenkins, 2204 Fort Mellon Court, St. Augustine, FL 32092. Payment must be received no later Tuesday, Sept. 5; be sure to indicate your entrée choice on the check memo. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](http://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) for food choices and updated information.

The Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club meets the second Tuesday of every month from September to May for lunch. In addition to the monthly meetings, the club has a wide variety of interest groups, including Bridge, Continental Rummy, Pennies Canasta, Mexican Chicken Train dominoes, Bunko, Mah Jongg, golf, recipe exchange, monthly special events, book club, lunch and matinee, Lunch Divas, Ladies Night Out, a nature walk group and community projects. Email to First Vice President Linda Beard at [bartramtn@gmail.com](mailto:bartramtn@gmail.com) for more information about the club. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](http://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) to see pictures of the club's meetings and download a membership form.






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

**Q:** At the July 18 Board of County Commissioners meeting, you introduced 14 points that you would like added to the county's Land Development Code tree protections. How did this come about?

A: One of the main things I hear from residents in the county, both during the election and now, is this topic. People are concerned about clear cutting of property. It's the main reason I ran for office; I have seen properties clear cut and then just sit there without development, sometimes for as much as two years. In that period, the property could have been collecting rain and providing cooling and shade. Studies have shown that having trees positively impacts mental health. Even developers have told me that trees sell homes.

I think we should keep trees as long as possible and do land clearing in stages to preserve habitat as long as possible. We all moved to St. Johns County because of the way it feels and looks and we need to preserve that.

**Q:** What can you tell us about your proposal?

A: First, it's important to note that the county's Land Development Code as it pertains to trees (we don't actually have a "tree ordinance") hasn't been updated in 25 years. The financial penalty for cutting down a specimen tree is not consequential today. You can't replace what's taken out with the amount of the fine. I came up with 14 points, but I could have had 30 points. I tried to keep it as simple as possible and find some things that developers and environmentalists could agree on.

**Q:** What are your 14 points?

A: Here are my 14 goals and recommendations of tree preservation: 1. Continue to prevent removal of trees on a lot less than an acre; 2. Provide greater tree protection on all lots that are an acre or greater and/or are coastal habitat lots; 3. Better protect our irreplaceable trees so that they're not removed by those who could afford to pay the fines; 4. Greater conservation of trees for Planned Unit Developments; 5. More strongly discourage non-permitted tree removal; 6. Keep tree payment fund payments current with inflation; 7. Prevent land clearing too far in advance of development; 8. Preserve buffers, thereby protecting an existing neighborhoods' privacy and other quality of life aspects; 9. Ensure that development and construction do not lead to die-off of trees in abutting preserve areas; 10. Continue to allow the county's surveyor to create a tree inventory; 11. Preserve more trees in commercial settings; 12. Ensure that 100 percent of disbursement of funds from the county's Tree Bank goes toward the purchase and installation of trees; 13. Monitor and ensure adherence to code is accomplished with higher fines; and 14. Notification of clearing within 300 feet of the property to the people on the property line.


**Q:** What is the next step?

A: Our team (staff) at the county is now going over these 14 points and will make a presentation showing, among other things, financial ramifications to the Board of County Commissioners at our Oct. 17 meeting. I encourage people to attend this meeting and use their three minutes of public comment so that we commissioners will know their opinions.

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

A: Readers can email me at [bcc4kjo-seph@sjcfl.us](mailto:bcc4kjo-seph@sjcfl.us) or call me at (904) 679-2620.

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# Local Rotary Club creates hope in the world

By Rotarian Al Kalter  
mail@floridanewsline.com

When Scottish Rotarian Gordon McNally became the president of Rotary International in July, the global organization adopted his theme for the year, “Create Hope in the World.” For the Rotary Club of Bartram Trail — Julington Creek, this is a mission that the club has taken to heart for quite some time.

Local Rotarians have spearheaded a project to construct a water system for the village of La Virtud, Honduras, as a solution to the water problems that the community has. The project aims to provide a complete drinking water system that will meet the needs of the entire village, improving living conditions, and facilitating various activities. The system will supply 87 houses, two schools and one church, serving approximately 435 people.

Working with the Rotary Club of Usula in Honduras, which is coordinating the project on site, Bartram Trail Rotarians enlisted the support of five other Northeast Florida Rotary Clubs and secured grants from Rotary District 6970 and from the Rotary Foundation, the international charitable arm of the organization. In total, more than \$55,000 was raised to make this project a reality.

The project began in May, after approval of environmental permits by the Environmental Management of the Municipality of San Pedro Sula. First up was clearing the site, which was carried out by community members, organizing themselves in working groups to address the various stages of the physical execution of the project.

Now, a few months later, the foundation of the 25,000-gallon water tank is complete. The project will continue with completion of the storage tank, construction of a dam at the creek water source, and piping for collection and distribution of water. When it is all done, Bartram Trail Rotarians will know that they have made a difference in this small community, and helped to build bridges of friendship across the globe.

The Rotary Club of Bartram Trail — Julington Creek meets every Thursday morning from 7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. at Westminster Woods on Julington Creek. Guests and prospective members are always welcome. Visit [www.bartramtrail-rotary.org](http://www.bartramtrail-rotary.org) for more information. There are more than 34,000 Rotary Clubs around the world, with more than 1.4 million Rotarians, making Rotary the oldest and most international service club in the world.



Photo courtesy Al Kalter  
Concrete being mixed on site.

# ElderSource offers free online support to those caring for aging loved ones

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewsline.com

More than 53 million Americans provide unpaid caregiving to family members in their home. This difficult responsibility challenges caregivers with life and death decisions they are sometimes unprepared to make. Local nonprofit ElderSource has spent decades supporting those who find themselves in this tough-but-crucial position. As part of that work, ElderSource now offers Trualta — an online platform that provides caregivers with free access to valuable tips and information related to their lifesaving work.

“The Trualta toolkit offers skills training and wellness activities the caregiver can

use with their aging loved ones,” said ElderSource CEO Linda Levin. “Users will have access to helpful lessons and articles that cover things like improving mobility, managing wheelchair to bed transfers, and transitioning from the hospital or to a nursing home, which they can access on their timeline.”

The platform is also designed to provide caregivers with strategies on improving their own well-being, with information on things like setting boundaries, balancing work with caregiving, and more.

Visit [MyElderSource.com](http://MyElderSource.com), call (888) 242-4464 or email [caregiversupport@myeldersource.org](mailto:caregiversupport@myeldersource.org) for more information about Trualta.



Photo courtesy ElderSource

ElderSource now offers Trualta, an online platform that provides caregivers with free access to valuable tips and information related to their lifesaving work.

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# Gardening

**Roll on Fall?**

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewsline.com

It's too early to start expecting cooler weather, but I need to hope! In early August, so much of the country has been and continues to be assaulted by record heat, fearsome storms, and truly hellish wildfires. The latest forecast is for a much more active hurricane season, although it's been quiet so far. The average peak of the season is in early September, so please be prepared.

We can plant containerized perennials year-round, and rainy summer weather can be helpful in getting them established. Do pay attention to their needs in case the rain doesn't come regularly. They will need consistent watering until they are established. Install your plants late in the day and rig up temporary shade for them during the hottest part of the day if they start to wilt.

Tonya Ashworth, our Duval County Horticultural Extension Agent, has compiled a fact sheet on butterfly gardening, to help us encourage our most beautiful insects. Many of these plants are also highly attractive to a wide range of pollinating insects and serve a valuable purpose. Check it out: <https://tinyurl.com/2z58v8s3>.

Late summer- and autumn-flowering plants will be coming into their own, which should attract insects that are preparing to overwinter. Birds also need to bulk up before and during migration, so late season flower and grass seeds are as important for them.

It has been clear for a few years now that we have a population of hummingbirds that overwinters here in Jacksonville. If you can supply flowers throughout the cool season that would be so helpful. In the event of frost or hard freeze, keep those flowers safe by covering them with frost cloth. Suitable nectar plants include shrimp plants (*Justicia brandegeei*

ana), pentas or starflowers (*Pentas lanceolata*), particularly the old-fashioned tall red variety, firespike (*Odontonema cuspidatum*), and fire bush (*Hamelia patens*), which also supplies our mockingbirds with delicious fruits. Of these, I've found that the shrimp plant is probably the most hardy, but that could depend on your local microclimate.

Cool season vegetables can be sown indoors to get a head start on the season, but don't make the mistake of starting lettuce too early. Too much warmth before they've matured will cause them to "bolt" or start to flower and the leaves become bitter. To remind myself of planting times, I refer to the Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/VH021>. If you haven't tested your soil recently you may submit a sample to our Extension Service for a free analysis. The ideal pH range for vegetables is between 5.5 and 7. For more extensive testing, the Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide has information on tests performed by the University of Florida.

For lawn lovers anticipating an application of fertilizer before the — hopefully — cooler months, this article can help you decide when and how to apply it: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP236>. You'll see that the title includes the term "best management practices," and it encompasses all you need to know about watering and mowing your lawn, be it St. Augustine or any other turf. There is an informative series of webinars available from the University of Florida, covering a range of topics. If you enjoy online learning, check out <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/webinars/for-homeowners/>. "Turf Update" was just uploaded in July, and "After the Storm Tree Care" will be available shortly.

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# The Pantry Raiders

Waffles can be breakfast,  
lunch or dinner

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Few people can resist the appeal of waffles. They're tasty in the morning for breakfast, and equally at home in the afternoons or evening with chicken or ice cream accompanying them. Indeed, few foods can be enjoyed any time of day as easily as waffles.

Waffles can be made from gluten-free and alternative ingredients, making them available to people who have different types of food limitations. Such is the case with this recipe for "Belgian Waffles" courtesy of "Plant-Based Gourmet" (Apollo Publishers) by Chef Suzi Gerber. This recipe features ingredients that fit into a plant-based lifestyle.

## Belgian Waffles

Makes 3 or 4 waffles

2 ¼ cups gluten-free flour (conventional all-purpose flour may be substituted; reduced by 2 tablespoons)

1 tsp. sugar

1 ½ tsp. baking powder

¼ tbsp. salt

1 cup room temperature oat milk or flax milk

1 ½ tbsp. melted butter or non-dairy butter

1 tsp. vanilla extract

½ tsp. apple cider vinegar

1. Mix the flour, sugar, baking pow-



Photo courtesy MetroCreative  
Belgian Waffles

der, and salt in a bowl. In a separate bowl, combine the oat milk, butter, vanilla, and apple cider vinegar, then slowly add the dry ingredients to the wet, whisking to combine.

2. Grease a waffle iron and preheat. Pour about half a cup of the batter into the waffle iron and let stand for 30 to 45 seconds, then close and cook approximately 3 to 5 minutes. Gently open to check, adding an additional 1 to 2 minutes if needed. Repeat with the remaining batter.

Tip: Add freeze-dried berries, whole or powdered, or even blue spirulina or pitaya powder to get colorful waffles with fruity flavors and even a bit of crunch. Alternating colors of waffles is fun, nutritious, and festive.

# Fishing

## Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Oh my goodness, is it hot outside. I recorded water temperatures as high as 96 degrees in the river last month and while that's still a little cooler than what the air temperatures have been, the fish aren't going to be as energetic and less likely to feed because of it. Warmer water holds less oxygen, so fish can become lethargic and even die if oxygen levels get low enough. It's kind of like when you or I leave this state that's practically at sea level for the mountains. Any activity the first few days is going to be harder since you have less oxygen at the higher altitudes. You will acclimate eventually, and some fish will too, but they are much more likely to move or change their habits to be more comfortable.

Best advice I can give considering this is to fish when and where the fish are comfortable. Early or late and even at night can be very productive because the fish will have less heat to contend with. Shallow water cools the fastest and holds more oxygen because it's inherently closer to the surface, so try fishing shallower. Also look at the winds. If the winds are blowing out of the west, then

the cooler water will be on the west side of the river and if it's blowing out of the east, it'll be on the east side. Shade is also never a bad thing either.

Redfish, bass, stripers, and some small sheepshead are still hanging around the docks and bridges. Live shrimp have been the best ticket for all of them. The shrimp have been consistent, but I have yet to see one bigger than what I call medium. I will say that the sizes can be different at one spot or another so if all you're catching are smalls try a different spot.

The mullet should be moving in the river and the surf, so don't neglect any large schools you see. Fish around them — and where you see them moving through — and larger fish are likely to be there as well. Fingers crossed we get a good migration this year.

I hope all of your fishing goals are getting accomplished. I have yet to get my river tarpon, but September is still a great month for that so hopefully I'll have some good news in October. Stay cool and stay safe. Tight lines.

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Travel

Explore Newfoundland:  
Aviation and icebergs

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Both the opening of the musical “Come From Away” and a sign in the airport say “Welcome to the Rock.” A fitting motto for the island of Newfoundland. “The Rock” was once an independent country, but now belongs to Canada.

In early transcontinental aviation, planes flying to or from Europe needed to land and refuel. They stopped in Gander, a little town in Central Newfoundland, making it the world’s busiest airport. Many celebrities passed through, including Marilyn Monroe, Elvis, and Fidel Castro, who went sled riding. Gander Airport’s traffic declined over the years and then became the site where 38 jumbo jets landed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

These days, Gander is not the most accessible place; still, I wanted to visit the Canadian province and see the premier of the Broadway show performed in its hometown. The moving production, “Come From Away Gander,” sends the audience into laughter and tears. The play explains how the welcoming regional residents responded to the 7,000 “plane people” who disembarked. They warmly hosted them for four to five days until the airspace reopened.

While in Gander, tour the International Airport Lounge, with mid-modern

furniture and décor that looks like it did upon opening in 1959 (and on 9/11, 2001.) The lounge feels like a 1960s time capsule, plus includes an upstairs museum with memorabilia. A display I found incredibly captivating was the video showing the 9/11 air controllers’ radar screen scrambled with circling flights.

Naturally, I had to explore Central Newfoundland’s picturesque scenery. The rocky coastline copies Maine’s, but with steroid-injected boulders. This sparsely populated region remains home to fishermen and loggers. Hare Bay offers boat outings for fishing and bald eagle/whale watching. Climb up the Dover Fault overlook to gaze down on a major break in the earth’s crust.

Barbour Living Heritage Village shows life from the perspective of 19th-century merchant traders. Fishermen brought their catch to the merchants who paid them not in cash but with a barter sys-



Iceberg and rocky coast of Newfoundland.



Photos courtesy Debi Lander

Gander International Lounge at the Gander Airport.

ports the isle into the future. The stunning building, seemingly out of place, won numerous architectural awards. The structure may look futuristic, but it takes its shape from the cod fishing families’ traditional fishing sheds and salt-box houses. The Inn’s furniture is handmade on the island, signed hand-sewn quilts top the beds. Local fresh fish dominates the menu, and the hotel hires foragers to source the island’s herbs,

tem. The workers had to buy their goods from merchant-owned stores.

You’ll find the region’s sandy beach and strong surf at Lumsden Beach. I took a fun ATV ride along the shoreline and through the rocky terrain bordering the beach.

A two-night outing required a ferry boat crossing to another island called Fogo. Drive along and see Fogo’s little-changed history unfold. Brightly painted houses in tiny fishing communities like Tilting, founded by the Irish, still look much as they did 200 years ago. Many residents, now fourth and fifth-generation descendants, willingly offer captivating stories — with an Irish accent. Fishing co-ops developed in 1967 helped raise the struggling fishing trade.

The 29-room Fogo Island Inn trans-

seaweed, berries, and greens. Rates are steep, but the profits return to the island through a charitable foundation benefiting the residents.

To get a prime view of Iceberg Alley, hike up Fogo’s Brimstone Head, a rocky 160-foot outcropping. The bergs break off glaciers in Greenland and make a two-year slow journey southward. What a sight to see giant icebergs floating by in July.

Since roads are few and driving between locations takes longer than expected, I missed seeing the Viking settlement and the capital city, St. Johns.

If you go: AdventureCentralNewfoundland.ca

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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