



Photo courtesy River of Life UMC  
The Pumpkin Patch is now open.

## Pumpkin Patch celebrates milestone

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

This year, the River of Life UMC Pumpkin Patch celebrates its 20th year. Pumpkin Patch hours are from 2 p.m. – 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. on Saturdays, and 11 a.m. – 8 p.m. on Sundays. Morning field trips are available Monday through Friday for daycares, playgroups and schools; call Becky Kimball at (904) 254-7325 to schedule.

The church's first Pumpkin Patch, back in 2002, was a very small

**Pumpkin Patch** cont. on pg. 13

## Dancing with the Doctors raises funds and entertains

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

A local non-profit foundation and a local dance studio recently collaborated to bring Dancing with the Doctors, based on Dancing with the Stars, to Northeast Florida. The event was held on Aug. 27 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville and featured doctors from the Mayo Clinic, who were paired up with professional dancers from Fruit Cove's own All About Ballroom dance studio. Proceeds from the event benefited the Maya Dronca Foundation, which supports childhood cancer research.

The Maya Dronca Foundation is named in loving memory of Serban and Roxana Dronca's daughter, who suffered from a rare form of brain cancer. This year's Dancing with the Doctors event was held on what would have been Maya Dronca's 10th birthday.

The idea for this event came up when Roxana and good friend Heather Kornick, co-owner of All About Ballroom, were discussing fundraising possibilities. They decided that Dancing with the Doctors sounded like a good way to partner together for an entertaining event that could also raise funds for the foundation.



Photo courtesy Ricardo Photography  
Dr. Charles Bruce and his professional partner, Alejandra Serrano.

"It was about a year of planning from when we came up with the idea until the event," said Kornick. "The event was a big success with close to 300 spectators in attendance — and we raised close to \$300,000 for the foundation."

Kornick said that nine Mayo doctors volunteered to participate since they knew Dr. Roxana Dronca from Mayo Clinic, where she is head of oncology.

Most of the doctors had no dance background and spent four months training for the event and learning their dances at All About Ballroom.

"It was wonderful to see how much work they put into it and how far they came in four months," Kornick said. "They really put their hearts and souls into it."

The event featured awards in two categories: fundraising and dancing. The top three fundraisers were Dr. Dana Harris, Dr. Charles Bruce and Dr. Razvan Chirila.

At the Dancing with the Doctors event, four judges, including two with professional dance backgrounds, picked the top three dance winners. Dr. Charles Bruce and his professional partner, Alejandra Serrano, took first place and a standing ovation for their merengue medley, during which Dr. Bruce both danced and sang. Second place was earned by Dr. Stephanie Faubion and her professional partner Jake Lukic for their waltz, while Dr. Razvan Chirila and his professional partner Heather Kornick earned third place with their



Photo courtesy Ricardo Photography  
Dr. Alina Oancea and her professional partner, Brian Brocato.

**Dancing with the Doctors** cont. on pg. 2

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Photo courtesy Ricardo Photography

Dr. Roxana Dronca and her professional partner, Gil Maldonado.

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**Dancing with the Doctors** cont. from pg. 1

quickstep/rumba routine.

“Every routine was excellent and entertaining in its own way,” Kornick said.

The evening concluded with a catered dinner and a professional dance show presented by the All About Ballroom staff.

According to Kornick, the doctors loved dancing so much that they have continued with lessons after the fundraising competition. Many plan to return for next year’s event, which is scheduled for Aug. 24, 2024 in a larger venue that can accommodate 500 people.

Visit <https://mayadroncafoundation.org/>



Photo courtesy Heather Kornick

Doctors and their professional partners at Dancing with the Doctors.

org/ for more information about the Maya Dronca Foundation. Visit [www.aabdance.com](http://www.aabdance.com) for more information about All About Ballroom, whose additional community service includes a local Dancing with the Stars event to benefit the Jacksonville Children’s Chorus. The studio also supports the Wounded Warrior Project.





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# October

## Community Calendar

### What's Happening in St. Johns

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

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

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

**3rd: Honeybee Quilters** Guild will meet on Tuesday, Oct. 3 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 QuiltFest 2023 follow-up including show and tell of show quilts with judge's comments. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit [honeybeequilters.org](http://honeybeequilters.org) for more information.

**3rd: Happy Hookers crochet** group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on Oct. 3 and Oct. 17 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.

**4th: 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 Oct. 4 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.

**5th: 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 Oct. 5 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.

**6th: Adult Book Club** at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will discuss "The Girl Who Survived," by Lisa Jackson at a meeting on Friday, Oct. 6 at 10 a.m. Register at [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org) or [dbraasch@sjcfl.us](mailto:dbraasch@sjcfl.us) or call the library at (904) 824-6960.

**7th: Unity Church Fall Festival** will be held at the church, 2777 Race Track Road, from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 7. The free event will have a Kids' Zone, bouncy house, face painting, food trucks, arts & crafts, and more. Visit [www.unityinjax.com](http://www.unityinjax.com) for more information.

**9th: ESOL Learn to Read**, with partners at Learn to Read St. Johns, will be held on Monday, Oct. 9. 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 [dbraasch@sjcfl.us](mailto:dbraasch@sjcfl.us) for more information.

**9th: The Northwest St. Johns** County United for Progress Club will meet on Monday, Oct. 9 at 6:30 p.m. Visit [www.nwstjohnsup.com](http://www.nwstjohnsup.com) or email [nwsjcp@gmail.com](mailto:nwsjcp@gmail.com) for more information or if you'd like to attend.

**10th: Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club** will host its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, Oct. 10 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 theme is "Halloween Thriller" and attendees are invited to wear their favorite costume. 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, Oct. 3; 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.

**14th: The Bartram** Trail Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday

of each month (this month, Oct. 14) from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. The topic is "All you Want to Know About Find-A-Grave," presented by member Michael Turpen. Email [ginglish@comcast.net](mailto:ginglish@comcast.net) for more information. Visit [www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClub-Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClub-Group) to send a request to join the club.

**14th: Friends of Alpine Groves** Park meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, Oct. 14) at 11 a.m. at the Harris-Bennett Farmhouse in Alpine Groves Park, 2060 State Road 13. This month, plans for the Winter Festival, to be held at the park on Dec. 9, will be discussed. 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.

**14th: AAUW St Augustine** will hold a scholarship fundraiser Card Party at Westminster Retirement dining room and auditorium, 235 Towerview Drive in St. Augustine from 10:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. on Oct. 14. Tickets are \$30 and include a buffet lunch and lots of camaraderie. Call or email Cathie Altman, (904) 501-5084 or [cathie.altman@gmail.com](mailto:cathie.altman@gmail.com) for reservations or more information. Visit <https://staugustine-fl.aauw.net/> for more information.

**16th: The St. Johns County** Civic Roundtable will meet on Monday, Oct. 16 at 10 a.m. at St. Augustine Waterworks building, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. The featured speaker will be Interim County Administrator Joy Andrews. 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.

**16th: The All Star Quilters** Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, Oct. 16 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. The Modern Quilt Guild will present a trunk show and more. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit [www.allstarquilters.org](http://www.allstarquilters.org) for more information.

**17th: Newcomers** of North St. Johns will host a luncheon featuring a presentation by Terri Rampone, owner of Nouveau Image Permanent Cosmetics, on Tuesday, Oct. 17 beginning at 11 a.m. at Jacksonville Golf & Country Club, 3985 Hunt Club Road. The cost for the luncheon and

program is \$35 for members. All reservations must be received by Oct. 7. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information.

**19th: William Bartram Scenic** Highway Corridor Management Group will meet at Westminster Woods, Gathering Place Room on Thursday, Oct. 19 at 6:30 p.m. and via virtual link. Contact [alabbat@comcast.net](mailto:alabbat@comcast.net) for the meeting link. Note this is a new location for our meetings through the remainder of 2023.

**19th: The Garden Club** of Switzerland will host Master Gardener Dianne Battle's presentation on "Providing a Habitat for Bee and Butterfly Larvae" at 10 a.m. on Oct. 19 at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd. There will be an opportunity to make a bee hotel. Visit [www.switzerlandgc.org](http://www.switzerlandgc.org) for more information and to let the garden club know you will attend and if you will make a bee hotel so supplies can be available.

**20th: "Should You Ever** Put Someone Else's Name on Your Deed?" a free lecture by Megan Wall, St. Johns County Legal Aid, will be presented at Council on Aging (COA) River House, 179 Marine Street in St. Augustine, on Friday, Oct. 20 from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday – Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**20th: The St. Augustine Film** Society will present the film "Compartment No. 6," winner of the Grand Prix Award at Cannes 2021. The film will be shown at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:30 p.m.) on Friday, Oct. 20 at The Waterworks, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. General admission is \$8; Film Society members and students are free. Visit [staugustinefilmsociety.com](http://staugustinefilmsociety.com) or contact [staugustinefilmsociety@gmail.com](mailto:staugustinefilmsociety@gmail.com) or (904) 254-9524 for more information.

**21st: Northeast Florida** Chapter of Sisters in Crime will meet on Oct. 21 at 10 a.m. in the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. (FOL Room). Christi Bachara Petrie, an investigator and Florida State Attorney, will be the featured speaker. Bring your coffee and bring a friend. Visit [www.nefloridasistersincrime.org](http://www.nefloridasistersincrime.org) or email [floridasistersincrime@gmail.com](mailto:floridasistersincrime@gmail.com) for more information.

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## COMPASS



## Q A

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

**Q. October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. What role does the clerk's office have in providing services for victims of domestic violence?**

A. Clerks assigned to our Family Law division support victims of domestic violence by processing petitions for injunctions. In 2022, 382 injunctions were filed with our office. For calendar year 2023, from January to August, 253 injunctions were filed. Our office provides these services year-round and even has an on-call clerk to process injunctions after hours.

**Q. What types of injunctions does the clerk's office provide?**

A. Our office provides injunctions for domestic violence, repeat violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking violence. Forms and instructions are available on our website. Victims are encouraged to use the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-500-1119, for support, advocacy, and assistance finding shelter.

**Q. How can the clerk's office help you file a Petition for Injunction?**

A. During normal working hours, a Petition for Injunction can be filed with the clerk's office. Once the forms are

completed, the clerk will file the petition and notify the judge's office. The judge may enter a Temporary Injunction and a Notice of Hearing will be entered or set for hearing without a Temporary Injunction. You can learn more about filing an injunction by calling our Family Law division at (904) 819-3674 or emailing: [injunctions@stjohnsclerk.com](mailto:injunctions@stjohnsclerk.com).

**Q. How does the clerk's office recognize victims of domestic violence?**

A. Our office, along with several other local organizations collaborated in 2022 to complete the St. Johns County Memorial Garden. It was created to remember those in our community who have suffered at the hands of others and to offer families and friends a safe, serene place to find comfort and healing. The St. Johns County Memorial Garden is the centerpiece of the judicial complex courtyard with a memorial plaque to victims and survivors of violence. It's a place for courthouse visitors and staff to pause and reflect.

**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@stjohn-sclerk.com.

## Q A

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

**Q: Do you have any Halloween safety tips?**

A: Yes. First, plan a route in advance and only trick or treat at homes or businesses that you are familiar with. It's best to go while it's still light outside, but definitely stay in well-lit areas and with a group. Establish a curfew and stick to it, so your family will know when you will be home. Be sure to take your cell phone as it can be used not only for communication, but also to provide a flashlight.

Make sure your child's costume, including masks and wigs, are flame resistant. They should also be light in color and reflective so they are clearly visible to motorists. Avoid costumes that are oversized and high-heeled shoes that can cause a child to trip. Instruct your child not to eat any treats until an adult can examine them.

If you will be out driving on Halloween, take extra time and watch for children darting in and out from between parked cars. Slow down and pay attention. Watch for children walking on roadways, medians and curbs. Enter and exit driveways and alleys very carefully. Remember, if you see suspicious activity, call the Sheriff's Office and report it.

**Q: What should parents know about sexual offenders/predators in the area?**

A: We have 211 active sexual offenders/predators in St. Johns County. We have a county ordinance, "Prohibited holiday

activity for sexual offenders,” which details activities that a registered sexual offender cannot participate in. They are not allowed to participate in Halloween activities by wearing a costume or decorating their home to entice children. They must turn off their outside lights by 5 p.m.

We will have a detail from SJSO doing spot checks for compliance on Halloween. You can visit our website, [www.sjsso.org](http://www.sjsso.org), select Resources at the top, and then select Locate Sex Offenders to determine if any are in your area.

**Q: What is the Sheriff's Office doing for Halloween?**

A: For the third year, we are hosting a haunted house called “Sheriff Hardwick’s Haunted Jail,” on Oct. 20, 21, 27, and 28 from 6:30 p.m. – 10 p.m. at 4025 Lewis Speedway in St. Augustine. There will be concessions, photo opportunities and more spooky but safe fun for all ages! New this year will be a Trunk or Treat with the sheriff deputies.

Tickets are available on Eventbrite at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sheriff-hardwicks-haunted-jail-tickets-718112111657>

The Haunted Jail was organized and created by Sheriff's Office employees as a 501.3c fundraiser for the SJSO Special Teams Association Inc. This is the safest place in town to enjoy a fun night for a good cause.

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

**Q: Can you explain how hurricane days for schools are determined in St. Johns County?**

A: The process all revolves around schools as hurricane shelters and if we have to open them. If we do, it takes one day to prep the facility, the day(s) that the facility is open serving as a shelter, and one more day to close the shelter. For Hurricane Idalia, we (unlike Duval County) did not have to open shelters. The whole goal is always to get schools back open as soon as possible and the district is either entirely open or entirely closed to keep consistent attendance throughout the district.

**Q: Can you shed some light on the rezoning plan for upcoming K-8 School NN (in Shearwater)?**

A: The school board had a workshop on Sept. 5 and three plans were presented for this school’s zoning: 1) Keep Shearwater together; 2) Split the neighborhood with those living closest to Timberlin Creek remaining there; and 3) Zone some living in RiverTown to School NN. At our school board meeting the following week, after receiving a great deal of feedback (which we wanted to get), I asked for the third plan to be removed from consideration and School Board Member Tony Coleman asked for the second plan to be removed. This leaves us with the first plan, which keeps Shearwater together and since no one from Shearwater will go to Timberlin Creek or Switzerland Point, should alleviate some traffic on County Road 210.

**Q: How about the rezoning for K-8 School OO (in Beacon Lakes)?**

A: We didn’t receive as much feedback about this one. All the students in this area, to include Beachwalk, Beacon Lakes, and Sandy Creek, will return from Ocean Palms/Landrum or Liberty

Pines Academy to attend School OO.

**Q: What issues exist at current schools that might require rezoning?**

A: By state law, we have to utilize all student seats across the county. Presently, we have seats available at Sebastian Middle School but meanwhile, Pacetti Bay Middle School is full and getting fuller due in part to Silverleaf and some other developments in the area experiencing tremendous growth. To solve both of these problems, it was proposed that middle school students from Palencia, Los Calenas, and Kensington be rezoned to Sebastian Middle School. There has been a lot of feedback about this and Patrick Canan, this district’s school board member, has said he’s in favor of exploring more solutions. Several potential solutions have been presented and now we are investigating them.

We also have an issue in Nocatee, where Pine Island Academy is overcrowded and getting more so due to new neighborhoods coming online. Another K-8 school is scheduled to be built nearby, but there is no funding for it yet, so in the meantime, our planners proposed moving some students from Pine Island Academy to Valley Ridge Academy until this new school is built. We received a lot of feedback on this and it seems there are more students affected than we originally thought, so Kelly Barrera, the school board member for this district, asked our planners to try to find another solution.

In conclusion, I’d say we’re honing in on a final solution to populate the new schools and working hard to find a solution to the issues at the existing schools.

**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 Commission  
Chairman Christian Whitehurst, District 1**

**Q: Can you share some background on your “yes” vote for the Landings at Greenbriar and the Landings at St. Johns at the Sept. 5 Board of County Commissioners Meeting?**

A: After attending multiple meetings over the course of the last 18 months I was able to arrive at a decision to approve The Landings based on these facts:

1. The proposed development is an “in-fill” parcel. (A vacant parcel surrounded by development) Our LDC encourages development on infill lots.
2. The proposed development was Residential B (2 units per acre), which is what the Future Land Use Map had this land zoned for. The FLUM is a guide for what kind of development is coming and is a guide for developers when making decisions about where to build.

Any resident can pull up the FLUM on the county’s website to see what the land around them is zoned for and that way they will know what development to expect in the coming years.

3. They saved 49 percent of the land in preservation/open space, not to be developed. Although the use was Res-B they are building less than two units per acre when you look at the over 900 acres of land contained within the parcel boundaries. When a development can save hundreds of acres that is an environmental benefit that I wish more of our past projects could have included.

4. Nearly 60 percent of the approved homes are age restricted at 55+. This means almost 60 percent of the homes will have zero impact on our school district while still contributing taxes. The



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Briefs

**St. Johns County making progress on 195 capital projects of \$504 million**  
At the St. Johns County Board of County Commission meeting on Sept. 5, the new infrastructure delivery team presented an update on selected capital projects among the 195 projects either being designed or already under construction totaling more than \$504 million in infrastructure improvements for the St. Johns County community.

Led by Interim Assistant County Administrator Colin Groff, the infrastructure delivery team is taking a more cohesive, innovative approach to completing capital improvement projects. The team includes the Office of Management and Budget, Land Management, Procurement, Growth Management and Public Works.

“This new team will implement cross-functional team concepts to breakdown silos and build collaboration,” Groff said. “We will encourage and reward innovative ideas from both our own staff and the consultants we hire. This team will be the catalyst to complete projects on time and hopefully under budget in St. Johns County.”

The county has 75 capital projects in design that total nearly \$103 million and another 120 capital projects under construction that total more than \$401 million. The highlighted projects included a Countywide Signal Optimization Study, the Hastings Community Center and Library as well as Mill Creek Regional Park and the widening of County Road 210 East.

“We plan to present an update of critical projects every month which will highlight three or four projects,” Groff said. “The goal is to communicate to the public important project milestones, the progress we are making on projects and what is being built by St. Johns County to improve their quality of life.”

**St. Johns Cultural Council announces Arts for All grant program**  
The St. Johns Cultural Council has announced its new “Arts for All” grant program (AFA). With support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cultural Council will award a total of \$80,000 in grant funds to arts, culture, heritage organizations, and individual artists in St. Johns County. The goal of the Arts for All grant program is to improve funding for programming that is primarily for the benefit of county residents.

Arts organizations with annual revenues of less than \$200,000 are eligible to apply for between \$5,000 and \$10,000, and individual artists can apply for up to \$5,000. Arts, culture, and heritage projects can be of any discipline and must take place in St. Johns County between Jan. 1, 2024 and Dec. 31, 2024.

“By limiting eligibility to small organizations and individuals, Arts for All grants are more accessible to local artists and emerging cultural organizations from rural, minority, and underserved communities in our County. Because of this, we hope to share more of the

County’s varied arts, culture and heritage with our residents,” said Christina Parrish Stone, the Cultural Council’s executive director.

Online applications are open now and will close on Wednesday, Nov. 15. After review by a panel of local arts educators, consultants, and organization leaders, grant awards will be announced in December. Applicants must be St. Johns County residents or organizations based in St. Johns County and meet basic eligibility requirements included in the AFA Guidelines. Visit <https://stjohnsculture.com/arts-for-all-grants/> for more information.

**THE PLAYERS Championship announces open auditions for National Anthem performers**  
As THE PLAYERS Championship makes its preparations to celebrate its 50th Anniversary, the tournament is inviting the talent of Northeast Florida to audition to perform the National Anthem before its annual Military Appreciation Ceremony and concert on Tuesday, March 12, 2024.

Local performers of all ages are encouraged to participate and share their rendition of the National Anthem. Interested musicians are asked to upload a video and submit an application by 5 p.m. on Monday, November 6, 2023. Once submitted, auditions will go through a judging process and if selected, the winner will be notified by the tournament via email. All questions regarding the application process should be directed to [mirandarossum@pgatourhq.com](mailto:mirandarossum@pgatourhq.com)

Visit [www.theplayers.com/anthem](http://www.theplayers.com/anthem) to apply.

**Bartram Trail Newcomers’ and Women’s Club to host Halloween Thriller**  
The Bartram Trail Newcomers’ and Women’s Club will host its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive, St. Augustine. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. 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 than Oct. 3, 2023. Be sure to indicate your entrée choice on the check memo.

The October luncheon theme is Halloween Thriller and attendees are invited to wear their favorite costume. Line dancing with Hal and LouAnn will also be an activity at the meeting. Line dancing is a perfect exercise for improving coordination and balance, increasing cardiovascular health and brain memory, and is seen as an effective treatment for depression, dementia and Alzheimer’s.

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 Linda Beard at [bartramtnc@gmail.com](mailto:bartramtnc@gmail.com) for more information. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](https://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) to download a membership form.

**19th annual Halloween Doors & More supports Community PedsCare**  
On Saturday, Oct. 14, The Foundation of Community Hospice & Palliative Care will transform the Jacksonville Fairgrounds Exhibition Hall into a magical, candy land-themed day of family-friendly fun and entertainment for the 19th annual Halloween Doors & More. Northeast Florida’s premier Halloween event since 2005, Halloween Doors & More, will begin at 2 p.m. for fun attractions with candy, toys, food, interactive experiences, and live characters. Visit with the Jacksonville Jaguars Cheerleaders, trick or treat at the 14-foot-high Fantasy Doors, stroll the Magical Meet and Greet Streets to see favorite costumed characters, show off dance moves in the Fiesta Family Disco, visit the Booutiful Salon for a spooktacular make-over, and stop by the Grown-Up Grotto and Food Court to enjoy gourmet foods and drinks. Fantasy Smiles are required, and costumes are encouraged.

Proceeds from Halloween Doors & More benefit Community PedsCare®, the pediatric program of Community Hospice & Palliative Care, supporting children living with serious and life-limiting illnesses and their families. Most Community PedsCare® services are provided without charge, regardless of insurance coverage. All vital care and support are provided at no cost to the family, which is made possible through generous community supporters, efforts of The Foundation of Community Hospice & Palliative Care, and Medicare.

To purchase Halloween Doors & More admissions, call (904) 886-3883 or visit [HDM.CommunityHospice.com](http://HDM.CommunityHospice.com).

**Newcomers of North St. Johns announces October luncheon**  
Newcomers of North Saint Johns will hold its October luncheon on Tuesday, Oct. 17 at Jacksonville Golf & Country Club, 3985 Hunt Club Road in Jacksonville. The event features lunch and presentation by Terri Rampone, owner of Nouveau Image Permanent Cosmetics. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests; all reservations must be received by Oct. 7. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information.

Luncheon includes a choice of entrée as follows: chicken marsala served with mushroom risotto and green beans; parmesan-crusted salmon served with roasted potatoes and asparagus; or chef’s choice market vegetarian entrée. All entrées come with a house salad with ranch and balsamic dressings available on the table along with fresh rolls and butter. Dessert features a chocolate crème brulee timbale.



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# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## Business Briefs

### Housing market in flux; inventory increases

While outside temperatures may continue to soar as fall approaches, the opposite is true of Northeast Florida’s housing market. A cooling period has begun with the inventory of single-family homes increasing in August, while pending sales and prices are down. Home affordability in the region crept up slightly during the last month of summer, but housing continues to be expensive compared to last year and previous years.

“The real estate market is fluctuating. Interest rates, inflation, and changing labor markets are factors,” said Diana Galavis, 2023 president of the Northeast Florida Association of REALTORS®. “Home affordability took a slight upward tick, but overall housing is significantly more expensive than this time last year.”

Pending sales were down, which is heavily due to interest rates. Buyers now have an opportunity to preview more active inventory, and there is an increase of new listings to 3,022, a rise of 12 percent in August. Meanwhile, active inventory jumped 10.9 percent to 5,012 homes in the region.

In August, Northeast Florida’s Home Affordability Index for single-family homes over the region’s six counties registered at 66, a slight 1.5 percent hike upward from July, when the index came in at 65, its lowest point ever; however, August’s score still indicated a 14.3 percent drop from the same time in 2022.

The Housing Affordability Index measures housing affordability for the region. A higher number means greater affordability. This index measures affordability factors for all homebuyers making a 20 percent down payment. An index of 100 is defined as the point where a median-income family has the exact amount of income needed to purchase a median-priced existing home. An index value over 100 means that the family has more than enough income, while a value below

100 means that a family doesn’t have enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan.

While affordability is still lower than it was last year, the index in August was still higher than it was in July, which is a good sign for buyers. The region’s months’ worth of supply rose 10 percent to 2.7 months. The median sales price for single-family homes fell 3 percent to \$383,000 and was down 1.8 percent from August the year before.

In Duval County, the August 2023 median price of single-family housing was \$335,150, a 1.6 percent hike from July 2023 when it registered \$330,000. The median days on the market in June decreased to 29. Month-to-month, closed sales rose 6.6 percent to 941, pending sales dropped 6 percent to 926, and new listings increased 9.7 percent to 1,509. Active inventory for the county rose 10 percent to 2,214 homes, a 2.4-month supply. In July, the home affordability index fell 3.8 percent, registering at 75.

In St. Johns County, August 2023 median prices decreased 6.8 percent to \$550,000 for single-family homes. The median days on the market continued to hover at 36. Month-to-month, closed sales fell 17.5 percent to 428, pending sales tumbled down 21.6 percent to 428, and new listings rose 7.5 percent to 760. Active inventory rose to 1,568 homes, an increase of 8.7 percent from July 2023, and 3.7-month supply. The affordability index increased slightly, 4.5 percent to 46, yet still indicated St. Johns County is an expensive place to live.

**Small Business Development Center offers workshops**  
The Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of North Florida (Florida SBDC at UNF) provides workshops and events to anyone starting or growing a business. Here are some of the workshops offered in October:

### Cybersecurity: Avoiding risks to your small business (webinar)

Friday, Oct. 6, 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

In this session the fundamentals of cybersecurity will be discussed and how you can apply it to your business. We will define various cybersecurity risks, identify how you can safeguard your information, and provide best practices to work safely and securely in the modern world. To be covered in this session:

- Background on information security and cybersecurity
- Understanding and managing risks
- Safeguarding information
- Working safely and securely
- How can the SBDC help?

### Demystifying Surety Bonds (webinar)

Thursday, Oct. 12, 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

As a small business owner, winning contracts is crucial to success; however, many contracts require a surety bond to guarantee that you will fulfill your obligations. The Surety Bonding Webinar Series will help business owners understand how surety bonds demonstrate financial security to your clients while giving you the confidence to bid on bigger and better contracts. This webinar, presented by Emily Golecki, Surety Specialist with Florida Surety Bonds, Inc., will help attendees gain insight on what surety bonds are, how they are underwritten and why they can benefit your business

Visit <https://www.unf.edu/sbdc/training-and-events.html> for more information and to register for these and other events.

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## St. Johns County approves Fiscal Year 2024 budget

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

The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Budget of \$1,665,664,624 and unanimously approved a flat millage rate for FY24 at the Sept. 19 Board of County Commissioners special meeting. This is the fourth

consecutive fiscal year that the millage rate has not been raised and remained flat. The public can review the approved FY24 Budget by visiting [www.sjcfl.us/omb](https://www.sjcfl.us/omb) and accessing the FY 2024 Final County Budget Presentation link to a new interactive website.

Highlights of the FY24 Budget include

the following:

- \$656.4 million for the Capital Improvement Plan, designed to construct and improve key infrastructural components of the county that will benefit the public for decades to come
- More than \$59 million in State of

Florida appropriations for transportation, land conservation, and coastal protection

- \$2 million for the Land Acquisition Management Program (LAMP) to purchase and preserve valuable natural resources within the County

**St. Johns County Budget** cont. on pg. 15

# JOB FAIR

Tuesday, October 24, 2023  
11:30AM - 4:00PM

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with St. Johns County Supervisor of  
Elections Vicky Oakes

**Q:** St. Johns County voter registration numbers dropped by approximately 15,000 voters since last month. What caused this?

**A:** The drop in numbers is a direct result of our bi-annual list maintenance required by FS 98.065. Supervisors are required to send a notice to all voters who have not voted during the last two general elections (2020 and 2022) and have not contacted our office since November 2020. Notices were mailed to 16,688 St. Johns County voters on Aug. 4. Voters can respond to the notice by calling the Elections Office or returning the postcard (which is postage paid) to acknowledge our request to confirm their legal residence is correct, update their voter record with a new address, or request their voter registration be canceled.

**Q:** What happens if a voter doesn't respond to the notice you send them?

**A:** If the notice is returned undeliverable or no response is received from a voter after 30 days, they are moved to the inactive list, which begins the voter on the path to removal from Florida's voter rolls. Following two federal general elections (2024 and 2026), if an inactive voter does not vote, update their address, or have any contact with our office, they will be removed from the rolls in December 2026.

**Q:** Were unresponsive voters removed from the voter rolls?

**A:** No, voters whose notice was returned undeliverable or did not respond within 30 days were moved from active registered voters to a status of inactive.

**Q:** Is an inactive voter eligible to vote?

**A:** Yes, but the voter must first confirm their local address prior to voting, requesting a vote-by-mail ballot, or making any changes to their voter record.

**Q:** Is this a new law?

**A:** No, we have been doing bi-annual list maintenance for many years; however, new laws went into effect July 1 that changed the notices that Supervisors mail, and the action taken from results of the mailing.

**Q:** Have other new laws helped Supervisors improve the accuracy of our voter rolls?

**A:** Yes. Supervisors now receive weekly reports from the Clerk of Courts on persons convicted of a felony the previous week so we can begin the removal process of the convicted felons. New laws now require the Florida Division of Driver Licenses to report voters who have updated their driver license address, but not their address on their voter record, to the Supervisors and the

Q&A with Vicky Oakes cont. on pg. 13

## Coming in our November issue: Senior NewsLine!

Does your business cater to seniors and their caregivers? Make sure you are included in this special section, which contains helpful information just for this special segment of our community.

This popular annual section sells out quickly, so make your space reservation today!

Contact Linda Gay  
904-607-5062  
Linda@floridanewslines.com



# Local coffee shop celebrates first anniversary



Photos courtesy Beckie Schwartz

On Sept. 9, Noah's Agape Cafe hosted its first birthday celebration at the cafe, which included a DJ, face painting, karaoke and a representation of other non profit organizations from the area. Noah's Agape Cafe, located immediately south of the Julington Creek Bridge in Fruit Cove, is a non-profit organization that seeks to offer those with intellectual differences a meaningful job. Visit [www.noahsagape-cafe.org](http://www.noahsagape-cafe.org) for more information.



**Q&A with Christian Whitehurs** cont. from pg. 6

transportation engineers also explained that age restricted communities don't travel as much during peak traffic hours, making the traffic impacts less difficult to mitigate.

5. The applicant was willing to widen their link of Greenbriar Road, a project that has been in the county's plans for more than 20 years. They will widen it up front, before the first home is occupied. The traffic challenges that we are facing were caused by neighborhoods being built before the roads. This project recognizes the flaw in that plan and has done just the opposite.

6. The applicant had data from the St. Johns County School District that showed us how many children we could anticipate from this project. Those numbers combined with the fact that they will be opening three new K-8 schools in the next two years, before the first home in this project is occupied with a resident, showed our board that the schools would have adequate capacity.

As many of your readers now know, I am required by law to make my decisions based on the competent, substantial evidence presented at the hearing.

It was based on all of these facts that I made the decision to vote to approve The Landings project.

**Q: What can you tell us about the properties purchased via the LAMP program recently?**

A: We approved the purchase of three parcels of land with high quality wetlands, about 30 acres off County Road 13 South for \$735,000. When we purchase property with LAMP, the land will be conserved forever, to serve generations to come.

**Q: Do you have an update on the widening of County Road 210 East, that was not completed by the Beachwalk developer as he promised?**

A: The county has taken over this project from the developer, John Kinsey. Engineering and design is currently underway and we should see dirt moving in three to four months. The project will be completed and then we will send Mr. Kinsey the bill.

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

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

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# Scott Taylor Gay

**June 23, 1954 - September 7, 2023**

Born in Jacksonville, Florida to parents Robert Gay Sr. and Leonora Gay Plummer. Scott grew up in the San Marco area where he attended Hendricks Avenue Elementary followed by St. Johns Country Day School for his middle school years and graduated from Episcopal High School, where he excelled in sports and academics. He graduated in 1976 from the University of Florida with a degree in Building Construction.

He worked for his father's construction company, Robert Gay Construction from 1976 to 1991 as vice president and lead estimator. In 1991 he started a casework manufacturing company, Commercial Casework, and grew it from a two-man operation to one of the largest commercial casework manufacturers in the Southeast with 70 employees. Commercial Casework sold in 2013 and Scott joined WW Gay Mechanical Contractor as an Estimator and Project Manager.

He loved to cook and make others happy with delicious food, which developed into S&A Catering. He retired in 2019 and worked numerous small jobs and volunteered his time at his church.

Those left to cherish his memory include his wife of 38 years, Linda, and his two children, Taylor Gay and Katie Gay. Sister-in-law Tracy Deley (Shannon). Brother Robert Gay Jr. (Karen), Sister Angie Davis (Storm) and numerous nieces and nephews. And his many Friends who were family. We will always carry your memory in our hearts.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*



# Bartram Trail Rotary to celebrate 20th anniversary

By Rotarian Al Kalter  
mail@floridanewslines.com

In Fall 2003, a group of 25 local men and women were granted a charter to form the first Rotary Club in NW St. Johns County. Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Mandarin and endorsed by northeast Florida's Rotary District 6970, these business and community leaders joined together to become an official part of the world's oldest and most international service organization. And thus, on Nov. 5, 2003, the Rotary Club of Bartram Trail was officially born.

In the two decades since, this local Rotary Club has made a difference in the community and in the world. From helping area schools, veterans, and handicapped citizens, to service projects in less fortunate countries, and to promoting international understanding through the high school exchange program, Rotarians here have continually demonstrated Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self."

Next month, the club will mark the 20th anniversary of its founding with a gala banquet, not only to celebrate the 20-year mark, but also to look back on all of its accomplishments and look ahead to its bright future. Former club members or other interested community residents are invited to join in the event, which will take place on Friday, Nov. 3 at Maggiano's at the St. Johns Town Center. For more information about the events and to purchase tickets, email the club at [Rotary.BartramTrail@gmail.com](mailto:Rotary.BartramTrail@gmail.com).

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.bartram-trailrotary.org](http://www.bartram-trailrotary.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.

# SoleMates share common desire to be champions for girls

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Girls on the Run SoleMates are leveraging their love of movement to train with a purpose to raise critical scholarship funds for girls in their community. Studies show that a girl's self-confidence begins to drop by age nine, but SoleMates know that it doesn't have to be that way.

In addition to cultivating meaningful and healthy relationships, participating in Girls on the Run transforms girls' lives by helping them increase their self-confidence and teaching them critical skills to manage emotions, resolve conflict, help others, and make intentional decisions. In fact, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy highlighted Girls on the Run as an example of a program for girls to learn life skills through engaging activities and lessons.

SoleMates help to advance this powerful mission while training for a physical activity. In March 2023, Girls on the Run SoleMates raised \$45,938, which translates to 306 Girls on the Run scholarships.

Whether they are counting miles on the trail, laps in a pool, reps in the weight room, or downward dogs in the studio, SoleMates can train for any athletic activity of their choice. SoleMates that



Photo courtesy Girls on the Run  
SoleMates help fund scholarships for Girls on the Run while they train for a physical activity.

choose to train for the 2024 Gate River Run in Jacksonville or the 2024 Shark Bite Half Marathon in New Smyrna Beach will have access to the exclusive SoleMates VIP Experience. The SoleMates VIP Experience is a private party for SoleMates and a guest before and after the race in the air-conditioned WJCT building and includes food, beverages, parking, indoor restrooms, gear storage, and plenty of post-race pampering.

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# Life

## Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewsline.com

### Sarah Olson

Sarah Olson looks for the fun in everything she does. Born and raised a “Jersey Girl,” she went to high school with a cousin of Bruce Springsteen. She earned her accounting degree from Greensboro College in North Carolina, where she met her husband Jon, who graduated from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. They married in Hershey, Pennsylvania and moved to Harrisburg as newlyweds. A year later they returned to North Carolina, this time to Winston-Salem, where they lived for more than 15 years before moving to Jacksonville. It was here that Sarah made the career change from accounting to real estate, which she’s been involved with ever since. A runner, she marked the New York City Marathon off her bucket list last year, when she ran in honor of her aunt who passed away from ALS. She and Jon have two daughters: Emily, a graduate of the University of Central Florida who is a high-risk obstetrics nurse in Fort Lauderdale, and Erin, a junior at the University of Central Florida studying health sciences. Sarah and Jon live in St. Johns with their two dogs, Tessa and Pearl.

**Q: What made you decide to go into real estate as a career?**

### Get to Know ...

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



Photo courtesy Sarah Olson  
Sarah Olson

A: In 1999 when I had our first baby, I decided my personality was too fun to be at my desk job any longer. So I went into real estate. While in Winston-Salem, I opened my own boutique brokerage on Main Street, with a focus on eco-friendly, sustainable homes. In 2012, feeling burned out, I went to work in the paddlesport industry. I helped start a company that manufactured underwater lighting for paddleboards and kayaks. This is what actually brought me to Jacksonville in 2015.

**Q: When did you move to St. Johns County?**

A: We moved here right before COVID. I was back in the real estate business by this time, and I saw property values in St. Johns County

really starting to take off. We decided to go ahead and buy our “empty nester” house.

**Q: How did you find the Galloway Run Club?**

A: When I first moved to Jacksonville, my goal was to run a marathon and I learned about the Jacksonville Galloway Run Club from a friend at the gym. Galloway offers a unique run/walk method for training for half and full marathons. Our chapter in Jacksonville is one of the largest ones in the world. We provide pacers for the Disney and London Marathons. Right now, I lead a power walk group for Galloway.

**Q: How did you become involved with Marathon High?**

A: Marathon High is a Florida non-profit that works with public schools to encourage kids to support each other and run half marathons. This is our 13th season. There are adult running buddies and the main coach for each high school’s team is a teacher at that high school. We also offer scholarships, through our corporate partnerships, to our participants as they go on to post high school training or education. It is the one of the most heartwarming and fun filled activities I’ve been involved with.

**Q: What do you like to do in your spare time?**

A: I’m learning the art of improv comedy as well as taking acting lessons to engage my creative side. Of course I like to power walk and cross train and I love to play golf.

**Pumpkin Patch** cont. from pg. 1

patch nestled in among the trees since the church’s property had not been cleared. Now, 20 years later, the church offers a festive fall atmosphere.

Those who visit the Pumpkin Patch can enjoy activities of games, books, activity sheets, decorating a pumpkin with fun foam stickers, and taking pictures at the several photo stations. There are also several picnic tables for use by a family, company, or group outing or party. The Pumpkin Patch is a fundraiser for the church and The United Methodist Children’s Home.

“We also collect non- perishable foods and household items such as laundry soap, cleaning supplies and toiletries, to be given to local food banks and homeless shelters, so when you visit our Patch, please bring an item or two to donate,” said Kimball.

The annual free Family Fall Festival will be held on Saturday Oct. 21 from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. and will include hotdogs, chips, drinks, cotton candy, popcorn, snow cones, activities for the children and entertainment. River of Life UMC is located at 2600 Race Track Road.

**Q&A with Vicky Oakes** cont. from pg. 10

Department of Health updates us daily when voters on our rolls pass away so we can remove them from the rolls.

**Q: What else do you do to keep our voter rolls current?**

A: St. Johns County voter rolls are sent out every 60 days to the Post Office National Change of Address (NCOA) matching, so we are notified of voters who changed their address with the Post Office. This information is used to contact the voter and update addresses.

**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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Briefs cont. from pg. 8

Beverage choices include water, tea and coffee. A cash bar is also available.

Newcomers of North St. Johns offers a variety of activities for St. Johns County residents to get acquainted, including smaller lunch groups, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, holiday parties, day trips and cultural events.

Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime welcomes investigator

The Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime will feature Christi Bachara Petrie, an investigator for a Florida State Attorney, at its meeting on Oct. 21 at 10 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library.

Whether a crime of passion, a premeditated, or a spontaneous act, there will be traces of what happened at a crime scene. That evidence is critical to formulating a strong legal case for prosecution. Petrie is well acquainted with the legal and criminal community. A longtime investigator for the Florida State Attorney, Fourth Judicial Circuit, her brother, Henry (Chip) Bachara is an attorney, as was her late husband, Gayle Petrie. As an investigator, Petrie has been responsible for gathering and evaluating crime-scene evidence, assisting local and state law enforcement agencies, making arrests, and testifying in court. During her tenure, she has worked high-profile cases and will describe some of her experience and her responsibilities, plus answer questions.

The group welcomes misters and sisters to learn more about writing, promoting, and enjoying crime fiction. Contact [floridasistersincrime@gmail.com](mailto:floridasistersincrime@gmail.com) for more information.

St. Johns County Budget cont. from pg. 9

• 45 additional St. Johns County Fire Rescue firefighter positions for the newly constructed Fire Station 11 (State Road 207)

• 18 additional law enforcement officer positions and four corrections officer positions

• Additional St. Johns County Public Library System positions, amounting to 35 additional service hours per week, that will allow library branches to open on Sundays and Mondays

"The Fiscal Year 2024 Budget reflects the proactive vision of St. Johns County," Office of Management and Budget

Guest Column

Visit the farmhouse at Alpine Groves Park

By Deanne Adams, Secretary, Friends of Alpine Park

Step back in time as you visit the 1886 Harris-Bennett Farmhouse at Alpine Groves Park. The three rooms downstairs (parlor, bedroom and kitchen) are completely furnished with antiques and vintage items donated by supportive friends.

As you enter the kitchen, you'll see the cast iron porcelain sink, which is original to the farmhouse. It was installed about 1937 when the John Harris family purchased the 55-acre citrus grove and farmhouse. The sink has its original faucet, soap dish, and metal drain board. A vintage strawberry-patterned tablecloth was used to make a skirt for the sink to conceal stored items.

Director Jesse Dunn said. "Through the collaborative efforts of our County Commissioners and staff, we have arrived at the launching point of a new era of possibilities designed to support, protect, and empower our community."

As part of the FY24 Budget, St. Johns County ensured it maintained its prestigious AAA credit rating as assessed by Moody's, the highest possible credit rating available to a government.

The St. Johns County Property Appraiser's Office certified valuation determination reflects a 16.5 percent taxable value growth increase for FY24 over FY23. This 16.5 percent increase in taxable value results in \$43.6 million in

incremental property taxes for St. Johns County. The State of Florida's Save Our Homes provision protects homesteaded properties from the full percentage increase in assessed value. Homesteaded property owners will experience, on average, a 3 percent increase in property taxes. About two-thirds of St. Johns County residential parcels are protected by the Save Our Homes provision. A non-homesteaded commercial property is capped at a 10 percent annual increase. Florida statutes provide many exemptions and land classifications that reduce the taxable value of properties for eligible filers.

The Fiscal Year 2024 Budget goes into effect Oct. 1, 2023.

Above the sink are shelves filled with "Autumn Leaves" dishware made by the Hall Company and distributed by the Jewel Tea Company.

Another highlight of the kitchen is the Hoosier cabinet, which was a popular and useful kitchen item during the 1920s – 1940s. It served as a workstation for baking and storage when houses didn't have built-in cabinetry and countertops. Vintage kitchen items fill the cabinet, including a food grinder, stand mixer, graters, rolling pin, canning jars, biscuit cutters and cookbooks.

Visit the farmhouse for a tour on the second Saturday of each month from 12 p.m. – 2 p.m. Docents are members of the Friends of Alpine Park.

Contact [friendsofalpinepark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofalpinepark@gmail.com) for more information.



Photos courtesy Friends of Alpine Park Sink with strawberry-patterned tablecloth skirt.

# Bartram Trail Theatre Department to stage “Beauty and the Beast”

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Bartram Trail High School Theatre Department will present Disney’s Beauty and the Beast, Nov. 2 – Nov. 5 at the

Bartram Trail High School Auditorium, 7399 Longleaf Pine Pkwy. Showtimes are Thursday, Nov. 2 at 7 p.m.; Friday, Nov. 3 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, Nov. 4 at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Nov. 5 at 2 p.m.



Photo courtesy Stephen Billy

Disney’s Beauty and the Beast will be staged Nov. 2 – Nov. 5 at the Bartram Trail High School Auditorium.

“Based on the Academy Award-winning animated feature, this iconic stage musical includes all of the beloved songs that we know so well,” said Stephen Billy, director of the production.

This is the first time BTHS has produced “Beauty and the Beast,” although the school’s theatre department has staged several Disney titles in the past.

According to Billy, there are more than 100 students in total involved in the production, including cast and crew. Rehearsals began on Sept. 5 and will take place four to five days per week until the opening.

Online tickets purchased in advance are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students with valid school ID. Tickets are available at the door for \$20. Visit <https://bit.ly/BTHSBATBTIX> for ticket information.

# Bolles students unite for #MauiStrong fundraiser

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Bolles students on all four campuses raised funds for those affected by the devastating Maui wildfires the week of Sept. 4. Participating students collectively raised \$4,150 to support Maui Nui Strong, a Hawaii-based initiative that is providing direct relief to individuals, families and businesses impacted by the natural disaster.

Students, faculty and staff members who participated at the upper school were allowed to wear jeans and a

Hawaiian shirt on Sept. 8 for a special #MauiStrong dress-down day. The Middle School Bartram Campus organized its fundraiser similarly, with participating Bulldogs allowed to wear jeans and either Hawaiian shirts or Bolles t-shirts that day. Lower school students who contributed received floral leis to wear.

Bolles senior Katherine Asbury ’24 of the Upper School Student Council was essential in collaborating with Campus Heads to organize this effort.



Photo courtesy The Bolles School

Bolles students collectively raised \$3,888.26 to support Maui Nui Strong.

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# Gardening

## Fall gardening, and hornets?

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewslines.com

We live in an area which has been affected by invasive species, both flora and fauna. Most of us know about the pythons in the Everglades and kudzu in Georgia, which have had profound impacts on native wildlife. Unfortunately there is a new menace we may encounter soon, and that is an Asian insect, the yellow-legged hornet. Recently two have been identified in Savannah and it would be naïve to think they are the only invaders.

The problem is that these hornets are a threat to honeybees, which they will devour. They were discovered by an amateur beekeeper near their hives. The hornets prey on bees as they come and go, and can seriously impact the hives once they are targeted. For help in identification, see [https://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/MISC/BEES/Vespa\\_velutina.html](https://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/MISC/BEES/Vespa_velutina.html).

If you think you have seen one, please talk to a Duval County Master Gardener Volunteer, at (904) 255-7450. They will advise you how to report the insect to FDACS, if they confirm it could be a yellow-legged hornet. Take a picture if you can. Our agricultural industry doesn't need any more invasive species to deal with, and this is potentially very serious.

And finally — gardening. Fall is a time when some of us like to spruce up our flower beds with mums and other seasonal color. Check out <https://tinyurl.com/ybv7f8dk> for inspiration. If you intend to plant a display bed, give plants a good start by first working some compost into the area before planting. Add some slow-release fertilizer, water the plants well, and spread mulch. If there isn't enough rain, make sure to water them. Since mums — Chrysanthemums — are perennials, they could come back the following year if they are happy in their location. Dead head fall flowers especially annuals to keep the blooms coming.

For vegetable gardeners, don't stop scouting for insects. Either source transplants or, if there's time, sow seeds for new plants to replace early crops once they are harvested (see the

Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/VH021>). Instead of ornamental cabbages, why not grow attractive kales and Chinese greens in the landscape? If you do so and suffer insect or disease problems in your flowers, only use chemical products that can also be applied safely around edible plants. There are plenty of organic or OMRI listed products that would be suitable. Just be sure to read and follow product labels, which are the law.

Autumn is a good time to plant shrubs and trees. For maximum benefit to wildlife, which has co-evolved with native plants, consider if you have space for an oak tree. Oaks support a wide range of environmentally valuable insects and other invertebrates. If small shrubs and trees are more in scale with your landscape, a redbud tree (*Cercis canadensis*) is just one possibility. It blooms in late winter to early spring, providing honeybees and more an early food supply. The flowers cover the bare branches making a lovely show before the heart-shaped light green leaves appear. Another pretty choice would be a native flatwoods plum, *Prunus umbellata* (<https://www.fnps.org/plant/prunus-umbellata>). It also blooms in early spring.

Whichever plants you are drawn to, I hope they give you joy.

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Travel

Exploring the Salt of the Earth

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewsline.com

You may not consider a salt mine an exciting site, but I'll swear otherwise. Here are four extraordinary salt mines open to visitors.

Wieliczka Salt Mine near Krakow, Poland, earned one of the 12 spots on the very first UNESCO World Heritage list. Its operations date back to the 13th century, making it one of the most historic and famous salt mines. The mine reaches so deep the Eiffel Tower could easily fit. The complex sprawls over nine levels, but tourists descend only three levels.

Tours begin with a walk down 380 stairs to the first level, about 210 feet underground. They cover nearly two

of St. Kinga includes chandeliers that look like glass, but are giant rock salt crystals that have been dissolved and reconstructed. Three men worked more than 30 years to create this immense sanctuary, removing approximately 20,000 tons of salt.

The salt mine is free from bacteria, viruses, and pollutants and provides health benefits. Many visit the private spa and wellness facilities for therapeutic purposes.

Hallstatt, Austria Salt Mine: Many years ago, I visited the cliffside village of Hallstatt, in the heart of the Alps. Visitors ride a steep funicular to the mine entrance perched high on a mountain

overlooking the tiny lakeside hamlet. Before entering, guests don denim jumpsuits and sit down to ride the miner's slide to lower depths — a big surprise, but great fun.

Salt mining in Hallstatt dates back more than 7,000 years, making it one of the oldest salt mining sites in the world. Guided tours include the underground salt lake. Tourists straddle a bench attached to a small train to return

to the surface. The Hallstatt salt mines offer visitors a glimpse into the area's history, natural scenic beauty, and one of the most breathtaking Austrian villages.

While in Bogota, Columbia, I visited the Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá, one of Colombia's most famous and unique attractions. This remarkable cathedral lies within a former salt mine. The miners built the first chapel in the 1930s and dedicated it to the patron saint of miners. Over time, workers expanded the chambers, creating a serene place of worship, like a traditional Roman



Chapel of St. Kinga.

miles on winding passageways and 800 stairs, but an elevator lifts you back to the surface.

Everything, including the tunnel walls, floors, sculptures, and crystal decorations, is salt, except for the wooden supports. You see dull gray chambers where salt sculptures tell stories: some historical, religious, or quirky, like gnomes. One room contains figures depicting the legend of St. Kinga.

Centuries ago, working underground wasn't always safe, so the miners created chapels for prayer. The stunning Chapel



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Wieliczka Salt Mine.

Catholic church with a dome, nave, and stations of the cross.

Visitors gradually descend a dark, downward-sloping walkway before the sanctuary opens and leads to chambers displaying artistic sculptures and colorful illumination. The cathedral, a fusion of art, religion, and geology, serves as a religious site and tourist attraction. Thousands of pilgrims and visitors come to reflect and pray, especially during the Holy Week before Easter.

The only salt mine in the U.S. open to the public is Strataca, located in Hutchinson, Kansas. The sprawling salt mine rests within one of the world's largest rock salt deposits. A long, 90-second elevator ride transports you down 650 feet to the former work area.

Don't worry about getting claustrophobic; visitors enter a wide-open space after the elevator ride.

Self-guided displays and video stations explain the mining techniques since the 1923 opening. Two trains give rides through the mine's older, more confined areas. The driver narrates, speaking about the challenges of working underground. The dry air creates an excellent underground storage facility. The movie industry sends many films, props, and costumes for safeguarding, seen on tour. Although Strataca doesn't quite measure up to the more artistic mines, it's still fascinating.

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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Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Ah, October ... one of my favorite months to fish. We finally get some cooler weather and all the fish are filling up on the end of the warm season's bounty. It also seems that more than half the summertime crowds vacate our waterways for different activities. Need I say more?

Shrimping should still be at its peak this month with the number-to-size ratio being the best before catering towards size as their numbers dwindle into December. I have had some great days in November and December, but that's never a sure thing so make sure you stock up while you can.

At the same time all the fish that have been eating shrimp all summer will be stocking up on the last of the shrimp too, especially the stripers. They've grown a lot from the beginning of summer and with the water temperatures cooling they will be different animals. Look for them around their usual haunts such as bridges and deeper docks.

Further down river, past downtown, the bull redfish congregate on the deep-dredged channel edges to spawn this

time of year. While it's a much more consistent fishery there, we do have some bull reds push into our part of the river occasionally, so if you're feeling lucky it might be worth looking around a bit and soaking some crab or mullet on a few of our drop offs and ledges.

Mullet should still be moving through in the river and along the beaches. They give us such great opportunities to target some larger fish like tarpon and jacks really close to shore. If nothing else, it's still a spectacle when the stars align and you happen to be in the right place at the right time.

Transitioning to the surf, I can't forget the pompano and whiting fishing that is really good this month. As I've stressed before, when surf fishing you can't be too tied to a certain spot, but rather certain conditions. Try to find the clean water first then find your troughs and runouts. It will be much more worth your time. Sand fleas, clam, and fresh shrimp got you covered for the whiting and pompano. Throw a mullet out there too if you're looking for something bigger and remember, it doesn't have to be far. Good luck, stay safe, and tight lines.

What would you like to read in The CreekLine?  
Email [editor@floridanewslines.com](mailto:editor@floridanewslines.com)  
and let us know!

Coming in our November issue:  
**Senior NewsLine!**

Does your business cater to seniors and their caregivers? Make sure you are included in this special section, which contains helpful information just for this special segment of our community.

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Appointments are available at both our San Marco and Baptist Medical Center South locations. For more information or to book an appointment, scan the QR code or call **904.202.7300**.

If you have any of the following, you might be at high risk for breast cancer and should talk to your doctor:

- You or a family member have tested positive for genes that increase breast cancer risk like BRCA1 or BRCA2
- You have strong family history of breast or ovarian cancer
- You have dense breasts
- You have had a benign or precancerous breast biopsy
- You were exposed to radiation therapy between the ages of 10 – 30



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