



Photos courtesy Lisa Farese  
Ocean Palms students and staff continue their Fall Family Night slime tradition!

## Ocean Palms ushers in fall season with slime!

By Lisa Farese  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Ocean Palms Elementary School welcomed the fall season with pumpkins, candy — and slime. One of the many traditions at Ocean Palms includes sliming teachers and staff at the school’s annual Fall Family Night event. And with more than 500 buckets of slime sold, it appears this tradition will be long standing.

Additionally, students enjoyed inflatable experiences such as human foosball and the hamster run, alongside the candy walk, game truck, and face painting. There was also a putting challenge on the school’s newly installed putting green.

# Mat Ministry: Local church group offers comfort to the homeless

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Every month, a group at St. Francis In-The-Field Episcopal Church in Ponte Vedra, meets in the Parish Hall to transform Kroger plastic bags into mats for the homeless. And they find fellowship and a greater purpose at the same time.

It is an idea that organizer Cindy Fielding first established at a church in Ohio around 30 years ago. She decided that she wanted to start a similar ministry in Florida about a year and a half ago and tried making a mat using recycled Kroger plastic bags. She succeeded, and it did not take long for church members to join forces with her. Kroger plastic bags, said Fielding, are stronger and more durable for this purpose.

Known as “Mats and Merlot,” a team of 50 volunteers form an assembly line of sorts to smooth and cut recycled plastic bags into loops that are joined to form balls of plastic yarn called “plarn.”

The plarn is then used by nine women to crochet into sleeping mats. Church members, and oftentimes non-members who simply believe in the cause, enjoy working once a month in the late afternoon while sipping on a glass of wine, lemonade or water.

It takes 550 to 600 grocery bags and 25-to-30-man hours to complete one mat. Crocheters spend time working at home as well, as it takes 18 to 20 hours of crocheting to complete one mat, said Fielding.

So far, the ministry has processed more than 28,000 recycled grocery bags and donated 56 mats to the St. Francis House in St. Augustine. The homeless shelter then distributes the mats to those it must turn away due to a full shelter. The mats provide a waterproof barrier between the ground and the sleeping bag, bringing some comfort to those who must remain outside. The mats have been well-received, and many are



Photos by Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
Susan Corrigan and Pat Johnston crocheting at Mats and Merlot.



Walt Fielding and Judge Richard Townsend work as cutters of the Kroger bags during Mats and Merlot.

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**Mats and Merlot** cont. from pg. 1

already spoken for before the group makes a drop-off, said Fielding.

Each mat comes with a shoulder strap for easy handling and is unique in its design so that the recipient can easily identify the mat. This is done by using other types of bags such as Target and Publix bags just to add a different color and a more personalized look. The plastic mats are lightweight, resistant to mold and mildew and easily cleaned with water, Fielding said. For volunteers, the mats are “a sign of hope and love.”

“It is fulfilling to be able to provide some sort of comfort,” said Fielding, who lives in Del Webb. “We can’t imagine what it must be like to be homeless. We want to provide some warmth and comfort, so we gather as a group of Christians to help in any way that we can.”

Lead Smoother Linda Fralick agreed.

“We are all so blessed and fortunate,” she said. “When I know that somebody is going to feel a little more comfortable, that means everything. I like the gentle blessings, and I think that is what this is.”

Patricia Daniel, one of the loopers, said she likes the durability of the mats,

Jackie Main and MaryAnn Peres help to smooth the bags, adding that they will last for at least three years.

“Every time someone sleeps on them, they will be thinking about how someone loves them,” she said.

St. Francis House officials said they are appreciative of all the ways St. Francis In-The-Field supports its mission.

“Not only do they provide mats for us to give to the homeless men and women in our community, but they donate monetarily as well as their time, volunteering to prepare and serve meals and completing quarterly maintenance and beautification projects,” said Joy Burton, marketing/special events coordinator for St. Francis House and Port in the Storm.

*[Author’s note: Fielding’s goal is to collect 6,000 bags a month so that the group could make eight to 10 mats monthly. Anyone who wishes to donate bags can drop them directly at the church into two brown bins by the playground at any time. The church is located at 895 Palm Valley Road. Church members also do neighborhood pickups of bags in Palencia, Nocatee and Ponte Vedra Beach for those who have limited mobility, transportation issues or who don’t pass by the church regularly. Kroger bags only please. Email Fielding at [fieldingw@bellsouth.net](mailto:fieldingw@bellsouth.net) for more information.]*

Headed to drop off mats to St. Francis House.

**Indie Author Day announced for readers and writers**

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

Each year, libraries and organizations bring local independently published authors and readers together for a day of education, networking, live panels, and book events. This year, the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library is teaming with the local chapter of the Florida Writers Association, and sponsorship by the Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library, to host Indie Author Day 2023 on Saturday, Nov. 4 at the library. The free daylong event is open to the public, but participants must first register online: <https://sjcpls.org/event/indie-author-showcase/>

Indie Author Day begins at 10 a.m. with light refreshments followed by a keynote talk by Nancy J. Cohen, the award-winning indie author of the “Bad Hair Day” mysteries. Her novels won the Reader’s Favorite Book Award, and many other accolades. Starting at approximately 11 a.m., four indie authors — Nancy J. Cohen, Eric Hoffer Prize winner Julie G. DeLegal, and Jacksonville children’s author Melody Pendlebury — will discuss the pros and cons of being an independently published author in a panel discussion titled, “So, You Want to be an Indie Author?” Each author will be available to sign and sell their books following the panel discussion.

The final event of the day, beginning at 2 p.m., is a book fair with area indie authors who will briefly discuss their writing journey and their books. The authors are Martha Louise, Skye Taylor, Eileen Erikson, Maggie FitzRoy, Patricia Daly-Lipe, Judith Erwin, and the writing team of Rich and Lucy Lipari.

The sale of books by the various authors will benefit Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. The event is free and open to the public.



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# BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

**Breed:**  
Mini Australian Shepherd  
**Favorite Activity:**  
Playing fetch in the back yard with his favorite ball  
**Favorite Food:**  
Peanut Butter  
**Favorite Friend:**  
His big brother Roman, the Rottie  
**How did your BFF get his name?**  
We named him Hudson because it reminds us of our home state of New York where the Hudson River flows.



Meet Hudson!

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



## Senior NewsLine in this issue Pages 6 - 7

## Table of Contents

- 4 What's Happening in Ponte Vedra
- 5 Q&A with Sheriff Rob Hardwick
- 8 Briefs
- 8 Q&A with Vicky Oakes
- 11 PopHistory

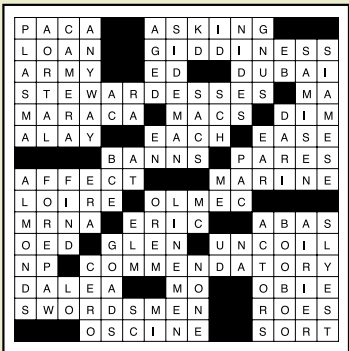
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Last month's Mystery Photo was Chet's Creek /Palm Valley Baptist Church.

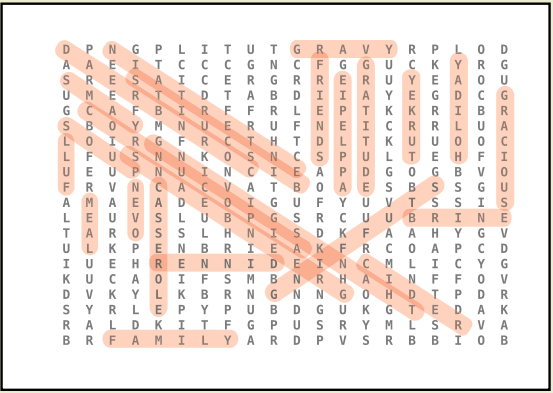


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A. turkey B. gathering C. holiday D. thankful

## Answers Puzzles PG 10



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November

Community Calendar

What's Happening in Ponte Vedra

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

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

**1st: Coastal Friends** will host its monthly luncheon on Nov. 1 at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. in Ponte Vedra Beach from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. The featured speaker will be Craig Smith, managing partner of The Alhambra Theatre and Dining. The cost of the luncheon is \$25 and reservations must be made in advance by contacting [bartshar@comcast.net](mailto:bartshar@comcast.net) as soon as possible.

**2nd: St. Johns County** Republican Executive Committee Business Meeting will be held on Nov. 2 beginning with a social at 5:30 p.m. followed by the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Visit [www.StJohns.GOP](http://www.StJohns.GOP) to register and for more information.

**4th: Indie Author Day** Celebration presented by Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library and the Florida Writers Association will be held on Nov. 4 from 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. The morning sessions include the keynote speaker, Nancy Cohen and panel of regional authors. The afternoon session will feature meet and greet opportunities with more than a dozen writers. RSVP for this

event at [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org).  
**4th: Wellness events at Sawgrass** Village will be held every Saturday in November from 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Hosted by Mind Body Social, all events are free and open to the community. Events include wellness classes such as yoga and barre, all held on the lawn in front of ABC Liquors. Visit <https://mbs.events/sv/> for more information and to register.

**6th: The St. Johns County** Civic Roundtable will meet on Monday, Nov. 6 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.

**7th: Vicar's Landing monthly** Boutique Sale will be held Tuesday, Nov. 7 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at 1000 Vicar's Landing Way. The sale includes antiques, household items, home furnishings, framed art, as well as designer and costume jewelry. With the holiday season fast approaching, the November sale will offer a parlor full of Christmas and holiday items. The public is welcome. Checks or cash only please. The Vicar's Employee Scholarship Fund receives the proceeds. Call Mary Lane Johnson at (904) 612-9277 or Beverly Webb at (904) 315-2610 for more information.

**7th: Bingo** will be held at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on Tuesdays from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. for five weeks beginning Tuesday, Nov. 7. Contact Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information and to register.

**7th: Ponte Vedra Democratic Club** will meet on Tuesday, Nov. 7 at 5:30 p.m. for Chat & Chew before the 6 p.m. meeting at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Road. Featured

speaker Jim McCarthy, past president of the North Florida Land Trust, will speak on overdevelopment in the area. Email [jkary@verizon.net](mailto:jkary@verizon.net) for more information.

**9th: St. Johns County** Republican Party District 4 meeting will be held at 6:15 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 9 at the Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Blvd. Visit <https://pvgop.com/> for more information.

**9th: Free Tech Help** with David will be held on Thursday, Nov. 9 from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Drop in for tech assistance with your Android, Apple, and Reader devices; no RSVPs required. Visit [sjcpls.org/branches/ponte-vedra-beach-branch/](http://sjcpls.org/branches/ponte-vedra-beach-branch/) for more information.

**10th: Food Truck Friday** will be held on Nov. 10 from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. This event is open to the public.

**12th: The 2023 Ponte Vedra** Auto Show, featuring 200 classic and collector cars, will be held from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 12 at Nocatee Station Field. Admission is free; visit [pvaautoshow.com](http://pvaautoshow.com) for more information.

**14th: The Lisa Kelly/JB Scott** Jazz Quartet, presented by the Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library will perform modern jazz and songs from New Orleans at the library on Nov. 14 with doors opening at 6 p.m. The group is composed of award-winning jazz artists, vocalist Lisa Kelly and trumpeter JB Scott, who co-lead the group featuring Jeff Phillips on piano, Dennis Marks on bass, and Rick Kirkland on drums. The program is free and open to the public.

**15th: Ponte Vedra Woman's Club** will host a General Meeting on Nov. 15, at 6 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing

Pkwy. The meeting will feature travel tips from the well-traveled. Email [Charity@pontevedrawomansclub.com](mailto:Charity@pontevedrawomansclub.com) if you would like to join the PVWC Angels, who provide Christmas gifts to students at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind. Gifts for the children will be collected at this meeting. Meeting registration is on the Ponte Vedra Woman's Club website under Events at [www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php](http://www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php).

**18th: The Nocatee Farmers** Market featuring a Fall Festival will be held on Saturday, Nov. 18 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. The Farmers Market is open to the public.

**18th: "How to Handle** Your Kids on Legal Issues" a free lecture by Megan Wall, St. Johns County Legal Aid, will be presented at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on Thursday, Nov. 18 from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.

**23rd: 8th annual Nocatee PEC** Turkey Trot will be held on Thursday, Nov. 23 at Nocatee Event Field, 245 Nocatee Center Way. Registration begins at 6:30 a.m., followed by a Kids Fun Run at 7:45 a.m. and the 5K Run at 8 a.m. Proceeds will benefit local St. Johns charities through St. Johns CARES. Each finisher will receive a t-shirt and medal and prizes will be awarded to age group winners. The race is rain or shine; visit <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/PonteVedra/PsychEdConnectionsTurkeyTrot> for more information.

**25th: GTM Research Reserve** will host its monthly Beach Cleanup on Saturday, Nov. 25 from 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. No registration is required; meet at the Visitor Center, 505 Guana River Road in Ponte Vedra Beach where gloves and trash bags will be provided. Visit [gtmnerr.org](http://gtmnerr.org) for more information.

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

Q: Do you have an update on the latest school rezoning proposal?

A: At our last School Board Workshop, we announced that we had acquired financing and would be moving forward with two new schools to open in fall 2026. One will be located in the Seabrook area of Nocatee, so instead of rezoning students in this area now, they will remain at Pine Island Academy until their new school opens in 2026. We will vote on this new rezoning proposal at our Nov. 14 School Board meeting. With the addition of these two new schools, we will be opening five schools in three years.

Q: Have the Teachers and Rookie Teachers of the Year been announced for each school?

A: Yes. I'd like to recognize and congratulate the teachers from District 4 (Teacher listed first, then Rookie):

Landrum: Samantha Gayso and Kyle Speed

Nease: Duane Spears and Sean Schoeneman

Ocean Palms: Jennifer Smith and Kali Wiley

Palm Valley (Elementary): Al Henson, III and Christina Walzel

Palm Valley (Middle): Carrie Lieffers

Pine Island (Elementary): Brittany Boden and Skylar Derr

Pine Island (Middle): Kristan Arnold and Jacob Munger

Ponte Vedra High: Katherine Baer and Kristen Noon

PVPV/Rawlings: Kimberly Caldwell and Madison Hamby

Valley Ridge (Elementary): Kristen Anderson and Samantha Calascione

Valley Ridge (Middle): Holly Nover

Q: Which employees have been honored as School Related Employees of the year?

A: We will honor these employees at a recognition ceremony on Nov. 15. For District 4, we have: Craig Orzolek, custodian at Landrum; Karen Cornelius, executive secretary at Nease; Michele Cardona, PK paraprofessional at Ocean Palms; Pedro Duarte, custodian at Palm Valley Academy; Ashlee Henderson, registrar at Ponte Vedra High; Kenry Gonzalez, maintenance coordinator at PVPV/Rawlings; Keri-Ann Hardy, bookkeeper at Valley Ridge Academy; and Cory Lewis, maintenance coordinator at Pine Island Academy.

I always say that great schools come from great students, great teachers, great employees and great volunteers — and we have them all in St. Johns County.

Q: Do you have any kudos to share?

A: On Oct. 18, I attended the Character Counts! Community Partners program, where eighth graders were recognized for their character. They spoke about what Character Counts! means to them and identified their favorite pillar. Congratulations to Jaiton Byers from Pine Island (Business Partner, the Richardson Group); Ellana Harper from Landrum (Business Partner, Surfside Pools and Spas); Averie Harkness from Palm Valley (Business Partner, RE/MAX Unlimited); and Owen Anderson from Valley Ridge (Business Partner, Brightway Insurance).

I'd also like to congratulate Mira Bhutani, an Academy of Biotechnology and Medical Research student at Ponte

Vedra High, who was chosen as the CTE U.S. Presidential Award recipient/representative for the St. Johns County School District.

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

A: In October, the school district recognized "Disability History and Awareness." I'd like to recognize and thank Vicar's Landing in our district for their support of these students. Vicar's Landing offers hands-on job training, internships, and the opportunity for full time jobs.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

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

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with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Now that the new golf cart law has become effective, what would you like St. Johns County citizens to know?

A: The state law is now in effect, as of Oct. 1, 2023. This new law prohibits anyone under the age of 18 from operating a golf cart unless they possess a valid Florida learner's permit or valid driver's license. Having a learner's permit requires at least some knowledge of rules of the road, which we are hoping will make drivers and riders safer.

Q: What are deputies with SJSO doing to enforce this new law?

A: As of yet, we have not issued any citations, but rather we are trying to educate community members about why this new law is important to keep our kids safe. We have a golf cart flier PSA that we have posted to our social media accounts and we have deputies that drive golf carts in some communities so they can stop and educate people. We are just trying to get the message out. This law is not meant to be punitive.

Q: As background, how did this new law come about?

A: We became aware of an increase in

golf cart related incidents involving juveniles (previously, one could operate a golf cart at age 14 on certain roadways with no training on rules of the road). We did some national research and found that there were approximately 13,000 golf cart related accidents that required an emergency room visit (between 2007 – 2017, according to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System of the US Consumer Product Safety Commission). Furthermore, the data showed that 40 percent of these involved children under the age of 16 and half involved children falling out of a moving golf cart.

We wanted to address this problem not just locally, but statewide, so we reached out to our bill sponsors, Rep. Cyndi Stevenson and Sen. Erin Grall. We met with nearly all legislators last spring and all cabinet members as we advocated for passage of this bill.

Q: Besides the safety component, are there any other advantages to the new law?

A: Now that this is a statewide requirement, some cities and counties had to amend their ordinances to reflect the new law. St. Johns County





# Senior NewsLine

## Engaging hobbies for seniors

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

The value of hobbies is undeniable. A 2014 study published in the Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology found that employees who

engaged in creative hobbies outside of work were more creative on work projects and had a better attitude on the job, while a separate study published in Psychosomatic Medicine in 2009 reported that individuals who engaged in enjoyable leisure activities had lower

blood pressure and a smaller waist circumference.

The myriad benefits of hobbies is good news for seniors, many of whom have ample time for leisure activities. Whether seniors are retired or still working but free from the responsibilities of parenting, the following are some fun and engaging hobbies to fill that free time.

- **Cooking:** Years spent hustling and bustling through the daily grind of personal and professional obligations might have forced individuals to embrace cooking that emphasized convenience over culinary skill. Now that there's more time to embrace one's inner Emeril, seniors can look to cooking classes or take the self-taught route and purchase a new cookbook filled with delicious recipes. A well-cooked homemade meal can provide a sense of accomplishment and affords seniors an opportunity to control the ingredients in the foods they eat, which can be important for individuals with health-related dietary restrictions.

- **Writing:** Many successful individuals have penned their memoirs after long, notable careers and lives. While individuals needn't follow suit with the goal of making their memoirs public, writing can be a great way for seniors to document their own lives and the lives of their families. Interest in genealogy has risen considerably in recent years, as

easily accessible websites like Ancestry.com and 23andMe.com have made it easier than ever for individuals to learn where they came from. Seniors can contextualize the information provided by genealogy websites by writing about their personal experiences and sharing what they know about the lives of their parents, siblings, grandparents, and other family members.

- **Gardening:** Seniors looking for hobbies that get them out in the great outdoors need look no further than their own backyards. Gardening can benefit the body in myriad ways. According to the Mayo Clinic Health System, gardening can burn as many calories as working out in the gym. In addition, the Mayo Clinic Health System notes that individuals who grow their own fruits and vegetables are more likely to include those foods in their own diets, thus saving them money at the grocery store and also increasing their intake of nutrient-rich foods.

- **Swimming:** Swimming is an ideal exercise for seniors, as it's low-impact but still a great way to utilize the entire body. A 2007 study published in the journal Quality of Life Research found that water-based exercise improves older adults' quality of life and decreases disability. A separate study published in 2008 in The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness found that water-based exercise can improve or help to maintain bone health in postmenopausal women.

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This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through USAg as part of a financial assistance award to USAg totaling \$74,999,835 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official view of, nor an endorsement, by USAg, ACL/ HHS or the U.S. Government.

## WHERE ARE YOU SPENDING THE WEEKEND? **PAR 5 OR AISLE 4?**

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# Senior NewsLine

## Statewide program provides free, unbiased insurance counseling for Medicare beneficiaries

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewsline.com

ElderSource is reminding residents that the agency’s Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE) program has specifically trained counselors to help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to understand their health care options so they can make the best decisions for their individual needs during the Open Enrollment period. During open enrollment, beneficiaries can change their Medicare Prescription Drug or Medicare Advantage plan to affect things like cost, coverage, drug formularies, in-network providers, and pharmacies.

“Medicare can be a daunting subject for most people and the Open Enrollment Period only runs from Oct. 15, 2023, through Dec. 7, 2023, but you don’t have to go it alone. During this time, lean on our experts for advice and utilize a local, valuable resource by connecting with the SHINE program,” said Linda Levin, ElderSource CEO.

SHINE is a program of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and is operated locally through ElderSource, the Area Agency on Aging and Aging

and Disability Resource Center for Northeast Florida. The SHINE mission is to provide free and unbiased information about Medicare and Medicaid for beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers.

SHINE also educates beneficiaries to protect, detect, and report potential errors, fraud, and abuse with their Medicare coverage. SHINE strongly encourages beneficiaries to be on the lookout for their Annual Notice of Change (ANOC), which they should receive from their plan no later than Sept. 30, 2023. Reviewing their benefits and evaluating their health care options each year is vitally important for beneficiaries. Acting quickly can assure a smooth transition into the 2024 benefit year.

To receive help from SHINE, individuals may call to schedule appointments at designated SHINE counseling sites, attend enrollment events in their local communities, or arrange to speak with a trained SHINE counselor at 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337). Visit [www.floridashine.org](http://www.floridashine.org) for a listing of SHINE counseling sites and enrollment events.



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Briefs

THE PLAYERS Championship donates \$5,000 to INK!'s Tools 4 Schools

The St. Johns County Education Foundation, Inc. which operates as Investing in Kids (INK!), announced it has received a generous donation of \$5,000 from THE PLAYERS Championship to benefit the nonprofit's Tools 4 Schools program.

According to a 2023 national survey conducted by AdoptAClassroom.org, on average, teachers across the country spend \$860 of their own money purchasing school supplies for students and classrooms. The purpose of INK!'s Tools 4 Schools program is to minimize expenses for educators and provide the academic supplies necessary for success with a goal of serving approximately 3,200 teachers and 51,000 students countywide.

"INK!'s Tools 4 Schools is a program launched 14 years ago to provide public school teachers in St. Johns County access to free school supplies for their students," said Cathy Newman, INK!'s Executive Director. "While school is in session between September and April, teachers can order needed supplies through an on-line system every month. Once an order is received, INK! staff and volunteers fill each order and deliver items to teachers at their schools," she said.

Newman said THE PLAYERS donation will help INK! replenish inventory for high demand items including notebooks, glue sticks, pencils, erasers, and markers, as well as more expensive items such as scientific calculators, USB storage drives, and binders.

Visit [www.ink-stjohns.org](http://www.ink-stjohns.org) for more information.

Annual Giving Tree to benefit 40 local non-profits

The St. Johns CARES 17th annual Giving Tree initiative will take place from Nov. 1 to Dec. 8. The wishes of clients from 40 non-profit organizations in St. Johns County serving Elderly, Veterans, Homeless, Abused, Children and Animals are printed onto holiday wish tags. The wish tags and posters are displayed in participating businesses, schools and organizations throughout the county. The donations placed in the collection boxes are then sorted and provided to the non-profit organizations for the holidays. Monetary donations are used to purchase wish items that were not donated.

Donation boxes with posters will be displayed at the host sites. Visit [www.stjohnscares.org](http://www.stjohnscares.org) for a list of participating host sites or to make a monetary donation. Contact [president@stjohnscares.org](mailto:president@stjohnscares.org) with questions.

2024 Legislative Priorities presented at annual Legislative Delegation meeting

The annual St. Johns County Legislative Delegation meeting took place on Friday, Oct. 13. Vice Chair Sarah Arnold of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners welcomed the Delegation and presented the County's 2024 legislative priorities. The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) unanimously approved the 2024 Legislative Action Plan at the Sept. 19 BOCC regular

Briefs cont. on pg. 9



with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Q: As we approach the end of 2023, what is the Elections Office doing to prepare for the 2024 elections?

A: The first election of 2024 is only four months away — the Presidential Preference Primary Election on March 19, 2024. The Elections Office has been hard at work recruiting poll workers, securing polling locations, organizing and replenishing materials, conducting voter outreach and voter education, and more.

Q: Are you still looking for poll workers for the 2024 elections?

A: We currently have a full roster of poll workers for the 2024 elections. We recruited all year to replace any retiring poll workers and will be completing our final Poll Worker Orientation classes in November. Poll Worker Orientation is a mandatory introductory class where interested St. Johns County voters can learn more about the role and responsibilities of a poll worker before beginning formal Poll Worker Training. Any St. Johns County registered voters interested in becoming a poll worker can still apply. This does not mean that you will train or be assigned, but you will be added to our pool of interested, available poll workers. To apply, visit [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) or call the Elections Office at 904-823-2238.

Q: Will the polling places be the same as the 2022 elections?

A: Our Poll Worker and Operations departments have been hard at work this year securing convenient and safe polling places for the 2024 elections. We reached out to our existing polling places in January to confirm availability for 2024. Out of our 41 polling locations, three facilities are no longer available — Celebration Lutheran Church (Pct. 107), Faith Community Church (Pct.

108/201), and Palm Valley Baptist Church (Pct. 403). It has been a priority of the Elections Office to replace these lost locations and find new locations while considering the growth of the county. Due to growth, we have also added two new polling places. We plan to release our finalized 2024 Polling Place list by early January.

Q: What should voters be doing to prepare for the Presidential Preference Primary Election?

A: It's never too early to be election ready. We recommend not waiting until you're at the polling place on Election Day to find out if your information is up to date. Visit [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) and click the "My Voter Status" link to verify that your name, address, and party affiliation are correct. The deadline to register to vote and to change your party affiliation for the Presidential Preference Primary Election is Feb. 20, 2024.

Q: When will we know the presidential candidates that will appear on the ballot in March?

November 30 is the last day for political parties to submit a list of presidential candidates for the Presidential Preference Primary ballot to the Secretary of State. On Dec. 19, the Secretary of State will certify the names of the presidential candidates for political party nomination to the Supervisors of Elections to be printed on the 2024 Presidential Preference Primary Election ballot.

Q: Do you have any other reminders for voters?

A: Due to law changes, all vote-by-mail requests expired after the November 2022 General Election. If you are planning to vote-by-mail for the 2024 elections, visit [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) to request a ballot, or call the Elections Office at (904) 823-2238.

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## Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps  
mail@floridanewsline.com

### Matt Greco

After trying many different sports, Matt Greco fell in love with playing lacrosse when he was eight years old. He first started playing in the Ponte Vedra Athletic Association (PVAA) Riptide Lacrosse Club, a recreation league, because of all the excitement surrounding the sport. In 2012, Greco's dad, Chris Greco, became president of PVAA Riptide Lacrosse, working to grow the program in Ponte Vedra Beach. Chris, who also coaches at PVAA Riptide Lacrosse, played club lacrosse at Boston College. Matt played for Riptide through the eighth grade (it ends at this grade), and then joined the Ponte Vedra High lacrosse team, the PVAA Jaws boys' travel lacrosse, and he was selected to play for the Florida Crabs (the state team). Now 18 years old and a Ponte Vedra High senior, Greco continues to play for all three teams in the "attack" position, while managing his school schedule, working out, volunteering, giving private lacrosse lessons to young players and working a part-time job.

While playing lacrosse over the years, Matt noticed some discrepancies between teams when it came to equipment. Some economically disadvantaged schools had players sharing equipment, and some had ill fitting gear. With helmets costing \$350, gloves \$150, elbow pads \$100,



Photo courtesy Kristina Greco  
Matt Greco

chest protectors \$150 and the mesh and stick \$300, Matt said that he knew he had to do something to help. So, he started "Play it Forward" during his sophomore year, collecting gently used gear from his teammates. The gear is then given away to those in need both locally in Jacksonville and internationally in Kenya. He has collected \$4,000 worth of gear to date which has been donated to Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Kids Lacrosse the World and River City Lacrosse. These organizations make sure the gear is given to those who most need it. Matt plans to pass "Play it Forward" to little brother Luke Greco (currently a sophomore and a lacrosse player) next year.

**Q: Why was it important to you to start Play it Forward?**

A: Since every year we get new gear, I noticed how much is going to waste. I began to feel that the old gear that was still in good shape needed to be given to other people. Lacrosse has given me a lot of opportunities. I have made so many friends through the sport, and I have developed a lot as a person by playing lacrosse. So, I wanted to give

that back to other people. Lacrosse has connected me to the lives of others across the globe and brought social justice to kids who deserve to play this amazing sport.

**Q: What other activities are you involved in at Ponte Vedra High?**

A: I am in the Honors Society, the LINK Crew, the Ultimate Frisbee Club, BEAM, and I am president of the Young Investors Club. For the Young Investors Club, I want to focus this year on investors and entrepreneurs, have guest speakers and make it more into a life skills class.

**Q: What field do you want to pursue in college, and will you play lacrosse?**

A: I am interested in going into sports law. It ties in well with my interests, and I have always wanted to work in sports management or as a lawyer, and that field is the best of both worlds. I would also like to play club lacrosse in college.

**Q: What advice do you have for younger players?**

A: Try all positions at a young age until you find the one that is perfect for you. Also, don't get discouraged if something doesn't go your way. Just use that as motivation to improve your game.

**Q: What principle guides you in life?**

A: Everything happens for a reason. Even if something negative happens, I think about it as motivation for the positive outcome of that.

*Author's note: To donate gently used gear to Matt Greco, email him at mattgreco22ft@gmail.com or go to playitforwardLAX.com.*

Briefs cont. from pg. 8

meeting.

At the Oct. 13 meeting, the St. Johns County Legislative Delegation, which includes Sen. Travis Hutson, Rep. Cyndi Stevenson, Speaker Paul Renner, and Rep. Bobby Payne, were able to hear public testimony on legislative issues, appropriations, and local bills.

The 2024 Legislative Action Plan requests more than \$69 million in state appropriations for the following local projects:

- State Road 16: To alleviate traffic congestion and improve safety.
- County Road 2209: To complete the central segment of this critical road corridor.
- Central Public Safety Station: To provide additional emergency response capacity.
- Regional Fire Training Facility: To address the emergency responder workforce shortage.
- South Ponte Vedra Beach: To protect property and infrastructure from further erosion.
- Genovar Park: To design and construct recreation enhancements, including a regional boat ramp.

The Legislative Action Plan also requests the Legislature address critical statewide or regional priorities, including:

- Removing outdated requirements that raise the cost of school construction or inhibit investment in new school construction,
- Identifying historic farming communities and providing pathways to conserve working lands and encourage public infrastructure investment.

### Get to Know ...

Interested in being featured? Email Martie Thompson at editor@FloridaNewsLine.com



## NOTICE OF CERTIFICATION OF TAX ROLL

Pursuant to Sections 193.122 and 197.323, Florida Statutes, Notice is Hereby Given that the Tax Roll for St. Johns County was Certified to the St. Johns County Tax Collector on the 12th day of October, 2023, for the Collection of 2023 Taxes Pending Value Adjustment Board Changes.

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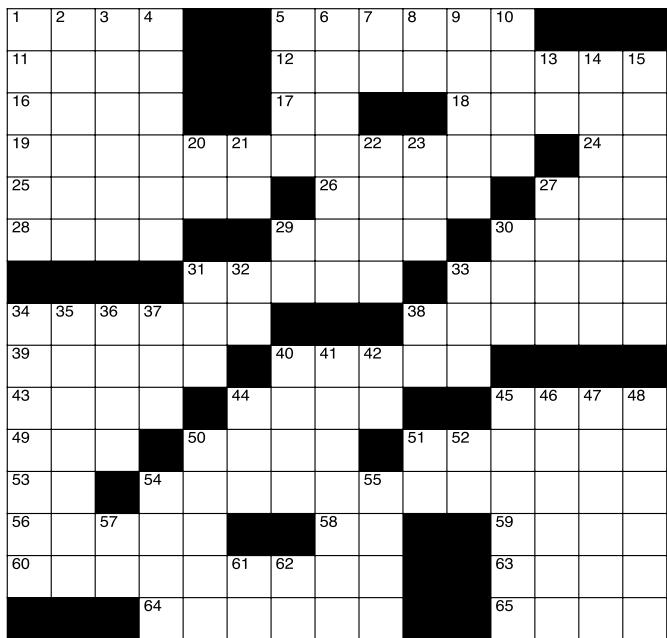
# Holiday Gift Guide

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Linda@FloridaNewsLine.com  
**(904) 607-5062**



Answers on page 3  
Provided by MetroCreative



## CLUES ACROSS

1. Nocturnal S. American rodent
5. Questioning
11. Give temporarily
12. Happiness
16. Military branch
17. \_ \_ \_ denotes past
18. Middle Eastern city
19. Air hostesses
24. Partner to Pa
25. Percussion instrument
26. Popular computers
27. Decrease light
28. Valley in the Osh Region
29. "To \_ his own"
30. Absence of difficulty
31. Notice announcing intended marriage read out in church
33. Trims by cutting
34. Impact
38. Military member
39. A French river
40. Member of prehistoric people in Mexico
43. Messenger ribonucleic acid
44. Musician Clapton
45. Greek sophist
49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
50. Narrow valley
51. A way to disentangle
53. Indicates not an issue (abbr.)
54. Recommending
56. Genus of legumes
58. Friend to Larry and Curly
59. Off-Broadway theater award
60. Fencers
63. Small Eurasian deer
64. Denoting passerine birds
65. Separate by category

### CLUES DOWN

1. Colorless fluid part of blood
2. Of a main artery
3. Photographic equipment
4. Confirms a point
5. Developed over time
6. Not the leader
7. \_\_\_ Lang (country singer)
8. Adults need one
9. Nests of pheasants
10. Antelopes
13. One quintillion bytes (abbr.)
14. Japanese three-stringed lute
15. Type of cat
20. Cools your home
21. The ancient Egyptian sun god
22. Pouches
23. Trigraph
27. Form of Persian spoken in Afghanistan
29. \_\_\_ route
30. Body part
31. Bridge building degree
32. Indicates position
33. Political action committee
34. Tasty snack
35. Part of a quadruped
36. Locate
37. Pitching statistic
38. Of I
40. City in Utah
41. Football players in the trenches
42. Hammer is one
44. A "nightmarish" street
45. Performers
46. Slang for cut or scrape
47. More breathable
48. Most slick
50. Provokes
51. Home to college's Flyers
52. Sodium
54. Large fish of mackerel family
55. Zero
57. \_\_\_ and behold
61. The Palmetto State
62. Popular Tom Cruise movie franchise (abbr.)

# TURKEY DAY WORD SEARCH

| D | P | N | G | P | L | I | T | U | T | G | R | A | V | Y | R | P | L | O | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D | A | N | I | T | C | C | E | G | N | C | F | E | G | U | C | K | E | R | D |
| A | R | E | S | A | C | D | T | R | G | R | R | G | R | U | Y | E | A | O | G |
| S | M | E | R | T | I | R | F | A | B | I | E | I | A | Y | G | G | D | C | U |
| U | C | A | F | B | I | U | E | F | R | D | L | P | T | K | R | R | I | B | G |
| G | B | O | I | M | N | R | C | T | H | T | F | E | I | C | U | U | L | U | A |
| S | O | U | R | G | F | K | O | S | N | C | E | L | T | L | E | E | O | O | C |
| L | F | U | S | N | N | I | N | C | I | S | A | P | D | G | T | R | H | F | R |
| L | E | U | P | C | A | C | V | A | T | O | F | A | U | S | O | B | B | V | A |
| U | R | V | N | A | D | E | O | I | G | B | R | Y | U | V | B | S | S | G | I |
| F | M | A | V | S | L | U | B | P | I | U | D | C | F | A | A | S | I | N | E |
| A | E | U | O | S | S | L | H | N | E | S | K | F | R | C | O | H | Y | G | V |
| L | T | R | P | S | N | B | R | I | D | A | I | N | C | M | L | I | P | C | D |
| T | U | K | H | R | E | F | N | I | B | E | K | H | A | I | N | F | F | O | R |
| I | U | C | A | O | I | B | S | M | B | N | R | G | O | I | D | T | D | A | K |
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| D | V | R | L | E | P | T | P | U | B | D | G | G | O | G | L | S | R | D | K |
| S | Y | R | D | K | I | T | F | G | P | U | S | U | K | M | T | R | I | A | B |
| S | A | A | A | M | I | L | Y | A | R | D | P | V | S | R | B | B | O | B | B |

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

## WORDS

APPLE PIE  
BISCUITS  
BRINE  
CASSEROLE  
CIDER  
CORNBREAD  
CORNUCOPIA  
DINNER  
ENTERTAIN  
FAMILY  
FRIENDS  
FULL  
GRACIOUS  
GRATITUDE  
GRAVY  
GREEN BEANS  
HOLIDAY  
MEAL  
OVEN  
SOUP  
STUFFING  
THANKSGIVING  
TURKEY  
YAMS



Solve the code to discover words related to Thanksgiving.  
Each number corresponds to a letter.  
(Hint: 26 = **H**)

- A. 6 20 11 1 24 25**  
*Clue: Gobble gobble*
- B. 12 3 6 26 24 11 19 17 1**  
*Clue: Coming together*
- C. 26 5 23 19 4 3 25**  
*Clue: Special event*
- D. 6 26 3 17 1 2 20 23**  
*Clue: Showing gratitude*

Final Peanut Butter  
Drive to benefit  
food insecure to be  
held



Photo courtesy Noelle Franco

The ninth annual Peanut Butter Drive, organized by Connor and Kelland Franco of Ponte Vedra Beach, will be held through Nov. 8. Donations of all nut and non-nut butters may be dropped off to the Franco home, 3072 Cypress Creek Drive North. The boys started their drive when they were in elementary school since peanut butter was their favorite food. All donations will go to SAYS and Epic-Cure. Contact Noelle Franco, (904) 386-6531, for drop off information or any questions.

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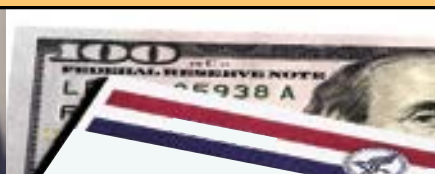
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# PopHistory

By Scott A. Grant  
mail@floridanewsline.com

## The Redemption of George Frederick Handel

In the summer of 1741, George Frederick Handel, the famous composer, was in dire straits. His musical career was foundering, and he had accumulated a considerable amount of debt. He was at risk of being sent to debtor's prison. A friend presented him with the text of an opera based on the life of Jesus. Handel was determined to set the words to music. He worked feverishly for 24 days, often foregoing food and drink, and produced 259 pages of music. Servants often found him in tears as he labored. He called his new work "Messiah."

"Messiah" debuted the following April at a benefit in Dublin to free inmates from debtor's prison. The event was a huge success. The demand was so great that ladies were urged not to wear hoop skirts to provide more space for attendees. One hundred and twenty-three prisoners were released from prison with sufficient profits left over to pay off most of Handel's own debt.

George Frederick Handel was born in 1685 in what is now Germany. At the time, Handel's home was part of the Holy Roman Empire, a loose conglomeration of states, principalities, and kingdoms that was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire. His first job was choirmaster for George, the Elector of Hanover. Handel elicited the Elector's ire when he broke his contract in 1711 to go write and perform Italian Operas for English audiences.

He arrived in England during the reign of Queen Anne. Despite becoming pregnant 17 times, only one of Anne's children survived past the age of 10. She died without an heir. Parliament determined to bestow the crown on Anne's nearest Protestant relative. That turned out to be George, the Elector of Hanover. And, in 1714, he was crowned George the First.

This caused obvious problems for Handel, and he was relegated to producing his operas in the lesser cities of the Kingdom. All of that changed for Handel in 1727, when he wrote three coronation anthems for George II. One of those, "Zadok the Priest," has been performed at every coronation since, including, most recently, that of Charles III.

The best-known movement of Handel's "Messiah" is the "Hallelujah Chorus." Handel claimed that when he wrote it, he saw the face of God. Legend says that when George II first heard the "Hallelujah Chorus," he was so moved that he spontaneously rose to his feet. And then, so did everyone else. When the King rises, all rise. Some say that it never happened or that the King rose for a different reason. But the legend persisted and to this day, it is traditional to rise for the playing of the "Hallelujah Chorus."

*Scott A. Grant is an author, historian, and fiduciary asset manager. He welcomes your comments at scottg@standfatic.com*

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

didn't have one to amend. With this cohesive law, the statewide tracking mechanism is more uniform and will be able to provide hard, factual data. Golf carts have very few safety features, so in absence of that, we felt we had to step up and are hopeful that this new law will keep our kids safer.

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

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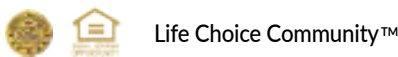


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