



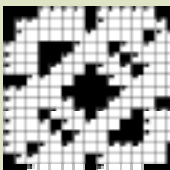
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Photos courtesy Jennifer Robertson  
Girl Scouts from Troop 2220 with birdhouses.

## Girl Scouts earn Silver Award

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

Girl Scouts from Troop 2220 in Fruit Cove recently helped wild-life — and in the process earned the prestigious Silver Award, the highest award a scout can earn during her middle school years. It all started when, during one of the troop’s camping trips to Camp Kateri in Hawthorne, Florida, the girls noticed that a lot of bushes and trees had been cleared from the property.

The clearing was done to mitigate fire damage, but the troop wanted to do something to help the wildlife that they knew would be negatively impacted.

“The girls thought through how they could help the local wildlife reestablish their habitats,” Troop Leader Alicia Strang said. “This one thought evolved into two

**Girl Scouts** cont. on pg. 2

# Bartram Trail cheer wins fifth consecutive state title

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

“Pressure is a Privilege” is the mantra of the Bartram Trail High School varsity cheer team according to long-time coach Danielle Parker. On Feb. 2 in Lakeland, the cheerleaders won their fifth consecutive Class 2A large division state championship and Parker said that she made sure that all the team members knew they had something to live up to — and that it was a privilege to feel the pressure to perform.

“Two of our athletes have been on the team for four years ... and now have won four championships. Four for four,” she said. “You always want to win, of course, but this provided extra drive.”

As a high schooler, Parker cheered at Bartram Trail herself and became the varsity head coach in 2012. This year’s victory joins previous titles in 2008, 2015, 2017, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Parker said tryouts for the team were held last April and practices began over the summer, continuing in earnest once school started in August. By November, they had added an extra day of practice



Photos courtesy Danielle Parker  
The Bartram Trail varsity cheer team won its fifth consecutive state championship in February.

for a total of three weekly.

New this year was a St. Johns County Championship, which included four different competitions between all eight St. Johns County high schools’ cheer teams. Parker knew of other counties in the state that have similar events and she said they modeled this championship after them.

“It’s important for the team to get in


front of a crowd,” she said. “This helps to get ready for competition season.”

Scores from all four of the local competitions were tallied and Bartram Trail was named the St. Johns County champion.

The Bartram Trail team qualified for the FHSAA state competition by placing second to Niceville in the regional event held in Port St. Joe in January. At the state competition, Niceville won the Class 1A title, while Bartram Trail won the Class 2A title.

The team also placed second in the Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA) regional competition held in December. This qualified them for the UCA national competition at Wide World of Sports at Walt Disney World, Feb. 9 – 11, where the varsity team finished 12th out of 58 teams.

“I think focusing this year on performing under pressure really helped us,” Parker said. “Performances never go perfectly, but it’s important to be smart cheerleaders and save the stunt. Pressure is indeed a privilege.”



The Bartram Trail varsity cheer team finished 12 nationally out of 58 teams at Wide World of Sports.



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Girl Scouts from Troop 2220 with informative signage.

Girl Scouts cont. from pg. 1

projects — birdhouses and bat boxes.”

To qualify for the Silver Award, scouts can work in small groups of up to three girls and have to put in 50 hours of work identifying a problem and taking action to make a difference. For Troop 2220, six of the nine scouts (two projects with three girls each) worked on the birdhouses and bat boxes.

“Part of the Silver Award is educating others on why we felt our projects were important and that is why we created signage that was installed at Camp Kateri along with the bird-

houses and bat boxes,” said Strang. “This way, future campers would not only learn about our project and the importance of protecting the wildlife, but also have some guidance on how they could also make a difference as we included links for making their own.”

Strang said the troop earned certification from the Florida Wildlife Federation for their birdhouses and bat boxes.

Troop 2220 was started in 2017 when the girls were in kindergarten and first grade. The troop is still together and the girls are now between 12 and 14 years old.

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# BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

**Breed:**

Giant Schnauzer

**Favorite Activity:**

Playing with her dog sister, Rose

**Favorite Treat:**

Peanut butter

**Favorite Friend:**

Anyone who will play with her!

**How did your BFF get their name?**

Our other dog's name is Rose, so we decided on another plant name and we picked Ivy.



Meet Ivy!

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 The CreekLine. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in The CreekLine! Email editor@floridanewline.com to enter your pet.



When you advertise, you encourage repeat business, create traffic, and attract new customers!

Don't miss our April issue featuring our Summer Camp and Activities Guide! Deadline 3/22/24

Call Linda Gay today to reserve your space! 904.607.5062



Happy St. Patrick's Day from your friends at The CreekLine!

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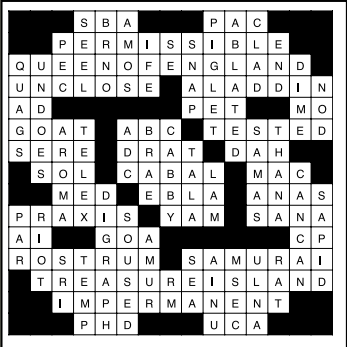
## MYSTERY PHOTO



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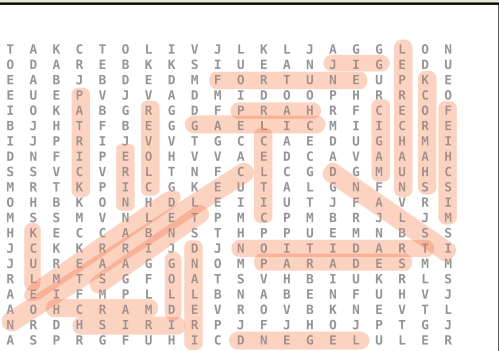
Last month's Mystery Photo was the window at San Juan del Rio Church.



Answers to our Puzzles PG 14



A. stitch B. yarn C. pattern D. hobby



## Coming in the April Issue! Summer Camp Activities Guide

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wbu.com/staugustine



# March

## 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.

**4th: ESOL Learn to Read**, with partners at Learn to Read St. Johns, will be held on Monday, March 4. 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.

**5th: Honeybee Quilters Guild** will meet on Tuesday, March 5 at 7 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church at the Loretto Road Campus in the Kids' Space at 2501 Loretto Road. Featured will be a recap of the AQS Daytona Show. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit [honeybeequilters.org](http://honeybeequilters.org) for more information.

**5th: Happy Hookers** crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on March 5 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.

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

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

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

**9th: The Bartram** Trail Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, March 9) from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. The meeting will feature a review of members' participation in RootsTech 2024. Email [ginglish@comcast.net](mailto:ginglish@comcast.net) for more information. Visit [www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClub](http://www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClub)

Group to send a request to join the club.

**11th: The Northwest** St. Johns County United for Progress Club will meet on Monday March 11 at 6:30 p.m. Dr. Mary Gatta of the American Association of University Women will talk on "Women and Economic Insecurity in the Sunshine State." For more information, visit [www.nwstjohnsup.com](http://www.nwstjohnsup.com) or email [nwsjcp@gmail.com](mailto:nwsjcp@gmail.com).

**12th: Bartram Trail** Newcomers' and Women's Club will host its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, March 12 at 11 a.m. at St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. This month's theme is "St. Patrick's Day Trivia." Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. St. Patrick's Day attire is encouraged. Checks for \$32 should be made payable to BTNC and mailed to Brenda Jenkins, 2204 Fort Mellon Court, St. Augustine, FL 32092 no later than March 5. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](http://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) for food choices and updated information.

**14th: Butterfly Gardening** will be presented by Carolyn and Bob Warren on March 14 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. They will discuss Carolyn Ann's Butterfly Garden at Edgewater Landing community, from concept to present day. All are invited to this event hosted by the Garden Club of Switzerland. Contact [switzerlandgc@gmail.com](mailto:switzerlandgc@gmail.com) or visit [www.switzerlandgc.org](http://www.switzerlandgc.org) for more information.

**14th: William Bartram** Scenic Highway Group will meet on Thursday, March 14 beginning at 6:30 p.m. at Westminster Woods, Gathering Place Room. Join the discussion to keep NW St. Johns County Scenic and Historic and preserve the State Road 13 Scenic Highway. Virtual meeting access is available; contact [alabbat@comcast.net](mailto:alabbat@comcast.net) or call (904) 699-8475.

**15th Adult Craft:** Hello Spring will be held on March 15 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. Crafters will create a decor piece for the home. Space is limited; register by calling (904) 827-6960.

**18th: The All Star** Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, March 18 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. Susan Ache, quilt book author, will talk and show some of her creations. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit [www.allstarquilters.org](http://www.allstarquilters.org) for more information.

**20th: Coin Collecting** for Kids will be held at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on March 20 from 4 p.m. – 5 p.m. Join Tony Bonaro from the Florida United Numismatists to learn about history, geography, math, and science while studying coins. Call the library at (904) 827-6960 for more information.

**23rd: Dress a Girl** Around the World at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will be held on Saturday, March 23 at 10 a.m. Learn to make dresses and shorts for girls around the world. You can pick up a kit to create at home, or turn in dresses you created to the Bartram Trail Branch. We also accept fabric and notion donations. Call the library at (904) 827-6960 for more information.

**29th: "Do You Need** a Living Will and How Can You Avoid the Need for Guardianship" 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, March 29 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.



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

**Q: Can you explain how the State Attorney’s Office interacts with the Florida Legislature?**

A: We are presently in the middle of the annual legislative session, which this year runs from early January through early March. Our office interacts in a couple of ways with the legislature when it comes to passing laws. I think it’s good to give lawmakers our perspectives.

There are various committees that I regularly deal with and testify before: the House Committee on Criminal Justice and the House Committee on Criminal Justice Appropriations are probably the most frequent.

Sometimes we are called to testify our opinion on proposed laws; this year I have testified on laws regarding immigration and child pornography. Depending on how we feel about how a proposed law will affect public safety, we might give our opinion in favor of or in opposition to the bill. Sometimes we are invited by the committee to testify and other times our coalition of the 19 State Attorneys, known as the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association, will monitor bills coming through committees and go to

Tallahassee to speak one way or the other if we feel it’s needed.

**Q: Do you interact in other ways?**

A: Another way we interact with the legislature is by helping to draft language for a bill we feel is necessary and then submitting it to a legislator for their staff to put in the form of a bill. A bill must pass three committees before being eligible to go to the House floor for a vote.

This year, we worked with District 17 Representative Jessica Baker, who introduced the Officer Jason Raynor Act. We had found that some statutes pertaining to resisting arrest were inconsistent. This bill clarifies the statutes to make it crystal clear that a defendant cannot resist, with violence or the threat of violence, the arrest or detention by a law enforcement officer who is working within the scope of his or her official duties. This bill has passed all three House committees and the companion bill in the Senate is expected to pass the remaining two necessary committees. Then, we are hopeful both chambers will vote to pass the bill and it will go to the governor to sign into law.



with St. Johns County Property Appraiser  
Eddie Creamer

**Q: Can you share your office’s tax roll calendar?**

A: The first important part is between Jan. 1 and March 1, where we accept homestead exemption applications, which have a deadline of March 1. Between Jan. 1 and June 1, we are in our valuation process, valuing properties as of Jan. 1 and recording all sales. On June 1, we close the tax roll and send it to the Florida Department of Revenue as well as to each county taxing authority, CDD and CRA.

**Q: What happens during the summer?**

A: For the month of June, we are locked out of the tax roll while the Department of Revenue is performing their evaluation, making sure we are consistent. Then on July 1, we submit the tax roll back to the Department of Revenue, with any changes they indicated, to begin the process for TRIM. By Aug. 5, all taxing authorities have to submit their proposed millages back to us.

**Q: When do you mail the TRIM notices?**

A: This year, we will mail them on Aug. 16, which triggers the 25-day period that homeowners who

disagree with us can file a petition with the Value Adjustment Board. Also, during this 25-day period, which ends this year on Sept. 10, 2024, we can approve homestead exemptions if the person was otherwise qualified as of Jan. 1. We are prohibited from doing this after the Sept. 10 date.

**Q: What happens next?**

A: On Oct. 1 we send the tax roll back to the taxing authorities and the Tax Collector and at that point we are locked out of the tax roll and cannot make any changes. On Nov. 1, the Tax Collector mails the property tax bills and once again we can correct any errors made, such as if a homeowner corrects their home’s square footage or if the Value Adjustment Board had any changes.

And finally, on Jan. 1 of the next year, we start the process all over again.

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

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

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# Peripheral Neuropathy Breakthrough!

*“My feet feel like they’re on fire.”  
“Each step feels like I’m walking through mud.”  
“I live in constant fear that I’ll fall.”  
“I can’t sleep, my hands and feet tingle all night.”*

What do all of these people have in common? They suffer from **peripheral neuropathy**. It’s estimated that more than 20 million people in the United States have peripheral neuropathy. Unfortunately this figure may be significantly higher as the disease is often misdiagnosed because of its wide array of symptoms.

Dr. Jann Turpin of Riverplace Acupuncture Integrative Health in Jacksonville shares this belief. “I’ve been treating neuropathy, in all its various forms, for over one decade and so often my patients come to me because of the symptoms, not because of the diagnosis. They saw one of my newspaper ads, or read the testimonial of another patient, or spoke to another patient and said to themselves, ‘hey, I feel the same thing’.”

Lisa B. testified to this. “Pain doesn’t wake me at night anymore and I can walk as much as I want to all day without pain. I’m going to start exercising on the treadmill, for the first time in years. These are things I couldn’t do before seeing Dr. Jann and getting acupuncture!”

Those diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy often face a very grim reality; Western medicine declares that there is no solution while most alternative therapies carry large price tags and offer little to no resolve. Which is why Dr. Turpin and the staff at Riverplace Acupuncture pride themselves on being ‘the last resort with the best results’.

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves and this damage is commonly caused by lack of blood flow in the hands and feet. This shortage results in a lack of nutrients; the nerves then begin to degenerate and die which causes pain ranging from discomfort to debilitating. Because neuropathy is a degenerative condition, once the nerves begin to deteriorate they will continue to do so until they are completely expired, leaving those suffering with severe balance issues. “In this case, the absence of pain is not necessarily a good thing,” shares Dr. Turpin. “This usually means that your nerves are hanging by a thread.”

So how exactly is Dr. Turpin able to reverse the effects of this degenerative disease? “Acupuncture has been used to increase blood flow for thousands of years which helps to get the necessary nutrients to the affected nerves. But the real magic happens when I integrate ATP Resonance BioTherapy™. This is tech that was originally developed by NASA to expedite recovering and healing.”

*“I just can’t say enough about Dr. Jann,” Lisa shared through tears of joy. “My husband and I moved here 3 years ago and he’s gone to the beach almost every day. I always stayed home because of the pain and discomfort. Yesterday I walked on the beach with him! And next week we’re starting ballroom dancing lessons. I am truly living life these days.”*

By seamlessly blending the ancient science of acupuncture with modern medical solutions, Dr. Turpin has achieved a 90% success rate in reversing the effects of neuropathy. She starts each patient with an initial consultation during

which a sensory exam is performed. “This not only aids in making a proper diagnosis but it helps to define just how much nerve damage has occurred,” tells the doctor. “This is important because if a patient has suffered more than 95%, there is little that I can do to help them. I’m familiar with the medical miracle but I know my limits as a practitioner and the limits of my medicine.”

When it comes to treating peripheral neuropathy, regardless of its origin, early detection greatly improves your chances of a full recovery.

If you or someone you love is suffering with chronic pain that presents as burning, tingling or ‘pins and needles’ or you’ve recently been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy, it’s important to know that there are options. There is hope!

Call (904) 720 - 8887 to schedule an initial consultation or visit [www.RiverplaceAcupuncture.com](http://www.RiverplaceAcupuncture.com) to read more incredible success stories.











2024 Presidential Preference Primary Election · March 19, 2024

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Republican Party Presidential  
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- Chris Christie
- Ron DeSantis
- Nikki R. Haley
- Asa Hutchinson
- Vivek Ramaswamy
- Donald J. Trump

Candidates listed in order by last name.

NOTE: The deadline for presidential  
candidates to withdraw from Florida’s  
Presidential Preference Primary  
Election ballot was December 12, 2023.

If a presidential candidate suspends  
their campaign after that date, their  
name remains on the ballot. All votes  
will be counted and results certified to  
the State as required by law.

Several polling places have changed  
since the last election. Affected  
voters were mailed new voter  
information cards. Check your polling  
place before heading to the polls!

Vote-by-Mail

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The deadline to request a vote-by-mail ballot **to be  
mailed** for this election is March 7, 2024, by 5 PM.  
Vote-by-mail ballots must be received by the  
Supervisor of Elections Office by 7 PM on Election  
Day to be counted.

Vote-by-mail ballots can be returned:

- By mail
- Secure Ballot Intake Stations, available at all early  
voting locations during the hours of voting
- In-person at the Elections Office

Early Voting

March 9 - March 16, 2024  
Includes two Saturdays and one Sunday  
Open 9 AM to 6 PM daily

**Ponte Vedra Branch Library**  
101 Library Blvd, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

**Julington Creek Annex**  
725 Flora Branch Blvd, St. Johns, FL 32259

**Supervisor of Elections Office**  
4455 Avenue A, Suite 101, St. Augustine, FL 32095

**St. Augustine Beach City Hall**  
2200 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080

**Southeast Branch Library**  
6670 US 1 South, St. Augustine, FL 32086

**Hastings Branch Library**  
6195 S. Main St, Hastings, FL 32145

Election Day

March 19, 2024  
Polls open 7 AM to 7 PM

- You must vote at your assigned precinct on  
Election Day
- ID is required when voting in person

Visit [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov) to find your polling place and  
review your sample ballot.



Coming in the April Issue!

## Summer Camp Activities Guide\*

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

**Q: Can you address the potential ballot initiative proposed by the school district?**

A: At our February workshop, we began the discussion of placing a ballot initiative on the November ballot to add 1 mill of property tax to help fund our operational needs. It would have a four year term and then need to be voted on again. It would generate approximately \$52 million per year. The school board will have to vote formally to do this and then the Board of County Commissioners will have to approve the initiative for placement on the ballot.

**Q: What kinds of things would this fund?**

A: Most importantly, it will help us increase our compensation for employees, including teachers, which will help with our retention. Duval, Nassau, and Clay counties all have a tax like this to help support them and they are therefore able to pay their teachers and employees more. Additional items that the additional 1 mill would fund would be safety improvements, additional training, enhancements to performing arts in our schools, support for high school athletics and summer daycare for our summer employees.

**Q: Can you shed light on the recent news that all schools will soon have just one nurse?**

A: We are at a place where we have to reset our budget; this is all a matter of resources. We’ve depleted our reserves to a point we don’t like and it is also affecting our bonding ability. Nurses are paid through the general fund; we receive no funding for school nurses and in fact, we are among a minority of schools in

the state to have a nurse in each school at all. We are so grateful to be able to have a nurse in each school. We want to meet our students’ needs. We hope to address this further if the 1 mill initiative passes in November.

**Q: What’s the latest on the new school construction?**

A: At our mid-February board meeting, our bond counsel was in attendance and we formally agreed to borrow up to \$170 million to build our two newest K-8 schools in Nocatee and Silverleaf. We will go to the market the first week of March. These two schools are scheduled to open at the start of the 2026 – 27 school year.

The two schools opening this fall are on schedule and we are in the process of staffing these schools. Principals are reviewing internal applications and conducting interviews; they will open to external applicants in April. Site work continues on schedule at the RiverTown school, which is scheduled to open in August 2025.

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

A: We are saddened to have lost our former colleague, Bill Mignon. He served our county for 56 years, beginning as a teacher and then as principal of RB Hunt Elementary, Nease, and Pedro Menendez. After he retired, he ran for the school board and served 12 years. He was a pillar in our education community and he will be greatly missed.

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

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

**Q&A with Brandon Patty** cont. from pg. 6

residents. No appointment is required to participate. We know it can be challenging for working individuals and families to apply for passports during the week. This event makes the process that much more convenient. There will be a team of deputy clerks ready to assist applicants through the process as quickly as possible.

**Q. What information should residents**

**know before they arrive for Passport Saturday?**

A. Anyone traveling internationally, including infants, must have a passport. Every passport applicant must appear in person, regardless of age. Children 15 years or younger must be accompanied by both parents or legal guardians. For 16 or 17-year-olds, one parent or guardian must be present. Clerk staff will also be available to take passport photos for \$10.65. You may use your own photo if it meets U.S. Department of State guidelines.

Visit <https://stjohnsclerk.com/passports/> or information and details about required documentation, forms of payment accepted by the U.S. Department of State, and any special requirements. Passport applications are available on the clerk’s website or at <https://travel.state.gov>.

**Q. How do people get in touch with you?**

A. Our office number is (904) 819-3600 or call my cell phone at (904) 599-8688 if I may ever be of service. Our main offices are in the St. Johns County courthouse, 4010 Lewis Speedway and our website is [www.stjohnsclerk.com](http://www.stjohnsclerk.com).



# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## You can save more for retirement in 2024

By Chris Thompson, CFP®, CMFA®, CRPC®

As an investor, one way you can enhance your long-term retirement security is to fully leverage the potential of tax-advantaged retirement savings vehicles. Each year, the IRS releases new guidelines on the amount of money you can contribute to these accounts. New contribution limits in 2024 allow you to save even more this year through plans such as 401(k)s, 403(b)s and IRAs.

Contribution limits for workplace retirement accounts have been raised by \$500 for the year 2024. In 2024, the IRS allows pre-tax employee contributions to 401(k) or 403(b) plans of: \$23,000 for those under age 50 or \$30,500 for those age 50 and older (includes a \$7,500 “catch up” contribution).

When combined with employer contributions, a maximum of \$69,000 can be directed to your workplace retirement plans in 2024 (plus the \$7,500 catch-up contribution for those age 50

and older). Note that total contributions can’t exceed your annual compensation at the company that houses your plan.

If offered by your employer, you may be able to make after-tax contributions to a Roth 401(k). Note that any after-tax contributions are counted toward the \$69,000 total maximum limit for employee and employer contributions to workplace plans. Save an amount that makes sense for you, but it can be beneficial to take full advantage of any matching contribution offered by your employer. For example, if an employer offers to match up to 5 percent of your income into a 401(k) if you make a similar contribution, it, in effect, means you’re doubling your contribution for your retirement savings, before investment earnings are taken into account. This is a great way for your savings to make a big impact.

IRA contribution limits move up periodically to reflect cost-of-living changes.

2024 is one of those years. The new limits are: \$7,000 for those under age 50; and \$8,000 for those age 50 and older.

Note that contributions can’t exceed 100 percent of your earned income if you earn less than the limits stated above. Also, these limits apply to total IRA contributions for the year. This is applicable even if you hold multiple IRAs or make contributions to both Roth IRAs (which feature the potential for tax-free earnings growth) and traditional IRAs.

To make fully tax-deductible (pre-tax) traditional IRA contributions in 2024, your modified adjusted gross income cannot exceed: \$77,000 for single or head-of-household tax filers or \$123,000 for married couples filing a joint return.

Not everyone can make maximum Roth IRA contributions. In 2024, full Roth IRA contributions can only occur if your modified adjusted gross income is less than: \$146,000 for single

or head-of-household tax filers; or \$230,000 for married couples filing a joint return.

Determining how much to set aside for retirement and in what types of savings vehicles is best determined through careful planning. Discuss your retirement strategy with your financial advisor and consult with a tax professional on all tax-related matters.

*Chris Thompson, CFP®, CMFA®, CRPC® is a Private Wealth Advisor and Managing Director with Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC, in Jacksonville. He specializes in fee-based financial planning and asset management strategies and has been in practice for 31 years. To contact him, email [chris.thompson@ampf.com](mailto:chris.thompson@ampf.com); visit [www.ameripriseadvisors.com/chris.thompson](http://www.ameripriseadvisors.com/chris.thompson) or call (904) 380-2290.*

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**Q&A**

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

**Q: What can you share about your new K-9 program for the jail?**

A: This is a brand new program and it’s not typical to have K-9s in the jails. But we’ve had a handful of drug overdoses since I’ve been sheriff and since our goal is to make people better than when they came in, we wanted to institute this program. Unfortunately, we do have some who sneak in contraband. Currently we have the 3-D scanning machines like in the airport, but narcotics can be hidden in bodies, so sometimes illegal narcotics get in the jail. We have to be proactive and innovative to protect the safety of not only our inmates, but also the 220 employees who work in the jail.

**Q: How did you start the program?**

A: First we went through an extensive

search to find the best kind of dog, and determined it would be a German Shorthaired Pointer or GSP. These are very active, hunting-type dogs with a keen sense of smell, a lot of stamina, and a high work ethic. We found two sister dogs, Raven and Korra, in Canada and brought them here at the end of last year. Concurrently, we were defining the responsibilities of the handlers and selected two deputies, Dep. Lebon and Dep. Hiras, to undergo extensive training. When Raven and Korra arrived here, after a transitional period where they became acquainted with their handlers and the handlers’ families, we shipped the dogs and the handlers off to Marion County for specialty training. Marion County is also instituting a program like this and we are training together.

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

A: The training is progressing very well and the dogs are scheduled to receive their Certification for Scent by the end of February and have all training completed by the beginning of March. At that time, we will swear them in as deputy sheriffs and they will be issued a badge and identification number.

**Q: And then they will begin their duties?**

A: Yes. They will work with an unorthodox and unknown schedule so as to keep the element of surprise. The K-9 teams will work on opposite days so that every day is covered at our two primary facilities: the work release center, which houses 20 to 30, and our main facility, which houses approximately 400. The dogs are trained to sniff many different illegal substances, including fentanyl, cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin. The dogs are also available to back up our K-9s on the street when needed.

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

A: They can email me at [sheriff@sjso.org](mailto:sheriff@sjso.org). Also, our website, [www.sjso.org](http://www.sjso.org) has a wealth of resources.




Photo courtesy Rob Hardwick  
Sheriff Rob Hardwick and Kendall Hardwick with Korra and her handler.





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**TAX TIP**  
Just as a reminder, your individual tax return now asks a question as to whether you have had any dealings with cryptocurrency during the year. If you have, you also must report all digital asset related income on your 2023 return. The question has also been added to Forms 1041 for Estates and Trusts, Form 1065 for Partnerships, and Forms 1120 and 1120S for Corporations. Depending on the type of return, the wording is tailored to the type of taxpayer. The question for 2023, basically asks if you acquired or disposed of any digital asset. If you have, it must be reported.


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# Scalar Waves: Beneficial frequencies to help the body heal itself

By Lilly Castro, LMT  
[mail@floridanewsline.com](mailto:mail@floridanewsline.com)

According to scientists and physicists, Scalar Energy comes from a field of energy beyond the universe. It is also referred to as the “Zero-Point Energy Field.” The discovery of scalar waves goes back to the 19th century, by mathematical genius James Clark Maxwell who developed quantum physics. After this, Nikola Tesla was able to demonstrate the existence of this energy — scalar waves. He believed if harnessed correctly it could offer endless possibilities.

Since the discovery of scalar waves, the medical field has seen remarkable relief for conditions such as arthritis, depression, PTSD, muscular and joint pain mitigation of seizures and overall improved body function.

Quantum biologist Dr. Glen Rein, Stanford University Medical Center, observed that scalar waves had a positive influence on the immune and nervous system regardless of the belief system of the individual. Our cells, when functioning at their maximum health potential, range between 70 – 90 millivolts. Disease and aging occur when the cellular energy depreciates to levels below this range.

From a scientific view point, scalar fields produce the following effects: neutralize harmful effects of electric and magnetic fields, increase covalent levels

of hydrogen atoms that hold DNA together, maximize nutrient uptake and cellular detoxification, balance both hemispheres of the brain, improve sleep, rapid post-surgical healing, better response to stress greater emotional clarity, and relief of pain.

“Scalar fields have a potential for increasing energy and reversing aging. They increase the connection between that universal energy which is limitless, without time and space, and your awareness of it, to use it in order to manifest whatever you want to manifest, whether it’s health, or happiness,” said Dr. Victor A. Marcial-Vega M.D., John Hopkins Research Physician, Oncology.

Scalar waves move at super luminal velocity, which means beyond the speed of light. The scalar vortex creates coherence which is a very important principle. Where there is coherence in the body, along with super luminal velocity of movement/cell signaling, it’s enhancing an entire environment within us and around us.

*Lilly Castro, LMT is co-owner of Life Force Energy Wellness Center in Mandarin. Visit [lifeorceenergywellnesscenter.com](http://lifeorceenergywellnesscenter.com) or call (904) 323-4411 to learn more about their offerings, including the EESystem (Energy Enhancement System) and two hour complimentary sessions each Wednesday for active military members and veterans.*

# Health care services expand at Durbin Park

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

University of Florida and UF Health leaders broke ground on Feb. 21 at UF Health Durbin Park, a 42.5-acre health and wellness campus that will advance health care services as part of UF’s regional expansion plan for Jacksonville and St. Johns County.

The first phase of the UF Health Durbin Park development, located in northeast St. Johns County, will include a full-service 150-bed hospital with a focus on orthopaedics, neurosurgery, cardiovascular medicine, and women’s services, as well as a multidisciplinary medical office building and an ambulatory surgery center. The project is expected to bring 2,000 new jobs to the area, for a total of 12,000 jobs in St. Johns and Jacksonville over time, and represents a \$1 billion investment in Northeast Florida.

The latest effort complements UF’s goal

of introducing innovative programs in medicine, business, and engineering throughout Northeast Florida, including Jacksonville, said Mori Hosseini, chair of the UF Board of Trustees. These are aimed at supporting the region’s growing workforce and academic needs in biomedical technology and focused on pioneering technology related to simulation, health applications of artificial intelligence, patient quality and safety, health care administration, and fintech — opportunities to create strong synergies by uniting UF’s powerhouse programs with the city’s rising stature as a national health care and technology hub.

Once complete, the 395,000-square-foot hospital will include acute, intensive, and emergency care; operating rooms; and an imaging suite and hybrid labs for interventional procedures. Site work for construction of the hospital began in December 2023 and UF Health

expects to care for the first patient by late 2025. The ambulatory surgery center will focus on orthopaedics and other surgical services, providing a full spectrum of care, including operating and procedural rooms, office space, and rehabilitation facilities.



Photo courtesy UF Health  
University of Florida and UF Health leaders broke ground on Feb. 21 at UF Health Durbin Park.



# St. Johns County Parks and Recreation invests more than \$1.4 million into playground upgrades

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Throughout 2023, the St. Johns County Parks and Recreation Department invested a total of \$1,415,095 into substantial upgrades and additions to the county's park playgrounds. In NW St. Johns County, Aberdeen Park, located at 1401 Shetland Drive, saw the installation of the Field of Dreams Playground, the Parks and Recreation Department's first-ever all-inclusive play area with ADA-accessible structures, made possible by collaboration with the Field of Dreams board and Northwest Tower Committee. Additional NW St. Johns County improvements include:

- Veterans Park Bridge Addition: \$16,164.11
- Mills Field Playground Refurbishing: \$9,350
- Alpine Groves Playground Refurbishing: \$5,000
- Veterans Park Playground Refurbishing: \$5,000

Following is a full list of improvements made through funding approved by the Board of County Commissioners:

- New Cornerstone Playground: \$410,065
- Collier-Blocker-Puryear (CBP) Playground Replacement: \$295,385

- Aberdeen Park FOD Play Structure Expansion: \$180,000
- Vilano Beach Oceanfront Park Playground Replacement: \$146,313.70
- Deleon Play Equipment: \$140,000
- W.E. Harris Shade Covering: \$59,435
- Deleon Shores Shade Covering: \$56,722
- Windswept Acres Shade Structure and Swing Set Bay Replacement: \$47,765.9
- Treaty Park Playground Refurbishing: \$21,000
- Veterans Park Bridge Addition: \$16,164.11
- Nocatee Playground Refurbishing: \$9,995
- Mills Field Playground Refurbishing: \$9,350
- St. Augustine Little League Playground Refurbishing: \$7,250
- Davis Park Playground Refurbishing: \$5,650
- Alpine Groves Playground Refurbishing: \$5,000
- Veterans Park Playground Refurbishing: \$5,000

Playgrounds cont. on pg. 13

# Rotary Pub Crawl puts the Fun in Fund-Raising

By Rotarian Al Kalter  
mail@floridanewslines.com

It's a long-standing tradition, a super-fun afternoon, and a great way to raise money for our local community. The Rotary Club of Bartram Trail – Julington Creek announces that its 2024 Bartram Trail Rotary Pub Crawl will take place on Saturday, March 23 in the Shops of Bartram Walk, beginning at 3 p.m.

Since its debut in 2009, the Pub Crawl has become a fun tradition, uniting people for a cause that goes beyond just having a good time. It's a unique opportunity to mingle, enjoy the vibrant local spots, and most importantly, support a great cause. The funds raised play a crucial role in supporting various local charities, including the Betty Griffin Shelter, Homeless Coalition of St. Johns, Rethreaded, K9s for Warriors, Mission to End Student Homelessness and local food banks.

A maximum of 150 participants will gather next to Moon Dog Pie House to check in and start making the rounds

of the plaza, where five establishments will offer to quench your thirst with a beer. The first stop is Moon Dog, followed by 2nd Bay Brewing, then Bono's, La Nopalera, and finally Iggy's. Raffle drawings and a poker run will liven up the festivities and give everyone a chance to win some prizes.

Tickets are \$50, and may be obtained from any Rotary Club member, or contact the club directly at Rotary. BartramTrail@gmail.com. Sponsorships are also available to local businesses that wish to support the event and promote themselves.

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

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Linda Gay

(904) 607-5062

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# Are you at risk?

An appointment at our **High Risk Breast Screening and Prevention Clinic** can bring you peace of mind if you're at high risk for breast cancer.

If you've ever been told by your doctor that you are high risk for breast cancer, you might benefit from an appointment at the **High Risk Breast Screening and Prevention Clinic** at **Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center**.

During your visit, you'll meet with a breast oncology provider who will perform a comprehensive evaluation to determine your true risk and then design a unique imaging or surveillance plan just for you. This could include:

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- Lifestyle modification
- Genetic testing

Frequency of visits will be determined after your initial visit, and your plan will be shared with your primary care doctor to incorporate into your overall health plan.



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





**Briefs**

**Newcomers club to play St. Patrick's Day trivia**

The Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club will hold its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, March 12 at 11 a.m. at the St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. The March luncheon will feature St. Patrick's Day trivia, hosted by John Harrell of Fast Jax Trivia. St. Patrick's Day theme/color attire is encouraged for attendees.

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 March 5. Be sure to indicate your entrée choice on the check memo. Email Linda Beard at bartramtnc@gmail.com for club information. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](http://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) to see pictures of meetings and download a membership form.

**Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum purchases property for expansion**

The Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum is expanding its footprint in the nation's Oldest City with the purchase of the historic Sanchez House at 105 St. George Street in St. Augustine. Karpeles Manuscript Library Inc. CEO Mark Karpeles and CFO Cheryl Alleman, who are the son and daughter of the museum founder, the late David Karpeles, paid \$4.5 million for the property in January.

The interior renovations for the new

full-size Karpeles Manuscript Library museum are underway with an opening planned in summer 2024. Built in 1809, the Sanchez House spans more than 3,800 square feet and is located near the Columbia Restaurant.

The Karpeles Manuscript Library currently operates a Mini Museum at 106 St. George Street, which is across the street from the new location. It is the smallest walk-in museum in the United States. The Mini Museum encompasses about 100 square feet in St. George's Row, a collection of indoor shops and restaurants. It displays reproductions of documents from the Karpeles collection including a collection of original drawings from early Disney films.

Founded in 1983 by David and Marsha Karpeles, the Karpeles Manuscript Library archives contain one of the largest private collections of historic documents and manuscripts in the United States, with more than 10,000 pieces totaling about a million pages, in the categories of literature, science, religion, political history, exploration, music and art. To make the collection more accessible to the general public, all Karpeles museums are free to visit, and the collection rotates between its museums three times per year.

There are nine Karpeles Manuscript Library Museums in the United States including the two St. Augustine locations and a location in Lake Mary, which is the museum's headquarters. Visit [www.karpeles.com](http://www.karpeles.com) for more information.

**Student art celebrated during month of March**

The St. Augustine Art Association (STAAA) is presenting the 19th annual St. Johns All-County High School Art Show, featuring artwork of more than 150 students from grades nine through 12, at the Bradley Mayer Main Gallery, in downtown St. Augustine, March 1 – 31. The artwork can be seen in-gallery or online.

The exhibit is a favorite of STAAA, bringing a truly fresh and unique perspective to art today, and it started as far back as the 1940s. In STAAA's early years, artists Tod Lindenmuth and Elizabeth Warren set out to host the association's first student art show. More than 60 years later, in 2004, Diane Bradley joined STAAA as a life member and board member after retiring from a 30-year career as a middle school and high school art teacher. She soon began hosting art classes after school, and was inspired to create an opportunity for students to exhibit their work. Bradley set off to establish a partnership with St. Johns County schools, and with the help of high school art teacher David Olson and St. Augustine High School assistant principal Allyson Breger, STAAA hosted its first St. Johns All-County High School Art Show in 2005 — with only two schools. Now, the exhibit features work from eight schools and more than 150 students, in part thanks to Tommy Bledsoe, former St. Johns County School District curriculum coordinator.

Visit the exhibition in-gallery Tuesdays through Sundays, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. as well as online at [staaa.org](http://staaa.org).

**Pickleball players have new play options**

Pickleball in North Florida now has a new outlet for the enthusiastic players of the fastest growing sport in the country. First Coast Pickle has formed, offering an outlet for pickleball players seeking new friends, new challenges, and a great time. Organized and headed by Matt Bacon, co-founder and commissioner, the new league commenced play on Feb. 19.

"Everybody has a lot of fun playing pickleball," Bacon said. "This league will offer more opportunities to play, socialize and meet new players from all around North Florida."

Invented in 1965 by three Washington State fathers whose children were bored, pickleball has caught the public's attention. Named for the dog of one of the fathers, players are known as Picklers and use a paddle larger than one used in ping pong but smaller than a tennis racquet.

The league will play four flights: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. Each flight will have playoffs, winners, and recognition for players. Visit [firstcoastpickle.com](http://firstcoastpickle.com) for more information.

Briefs cont. on pg. 15



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# Life

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## Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewsline.com

### Leanne Haishtaine

Leanne Haishtaine is a relatively new resident of St. Johns, moving here with her family in July 2023. She was raised and lived in Brooklyn prior to that, so the move south was a big one for her and her family. She always loved working with kids, so she pursued a career in education and graduated from SUNY – Oneonta with an undergraduate degree in English. While working on her master's degree, she was certified to be in the classroom and she taught special education/English Language Arts at a few different grade levels in Brooklyn. She found working in the public schools to be difficult so she started working in a family daycare and then in a preschool. "It's an education in itself when it's just you and an assistant working with 12 two-year-olds," she said. "I really loved it, but knew I needed to make more money." After she was married, she worked as a special education teacher in private schools and once she married and had her own children, she left her position to raise them. Today, she cares for her two youngest children, aged four and one (her oldest, age seven, attends Durbin Creek Elementary) as well two other young children whose parents are teachers in St. Johns County. The Haishtaine family lives in the Julington Creek area with their two pets, a Yorkie named Yoyo and an adopted cat named Jellybean.



Photo courtesy Leanne Haishtaine  
Leanne Haishtaine and her daughter.

#### Q: How did you meet your husband, Michael?

A: I met him on the OkCupid app. I had been online dating for 10 years and had dated every Jewish guy in the tri-state area. Michael is from Israel and had just arrived in New York when we met. A week after we started dating, his parents were visiting from Israel and he wanted me to meet them. I thought, "Why not?" and thought how much they reminded me of my parents. Michael and I were married in 2015.

#### Q: How did you come to live in St. Johns?

A: We were living in a basement apartment in Brooklyn and knew with our young family that it was time to move. We looked at Texas and Florida. I have a sister who lives in Boynton Beach and she told me about the good schools in St. Johns County. Highly-rated public

schools were important to me, as was a strong Jewish community and affordable housing. We found them all here. There are plenty of Jewish people here in the NW St. Johns County area and I was glad to know that there would be other Jewish kids in my children's public school. We moved here in July 2023.

#### Q: What is it that you like about Chabad St. Johns County?

A: There are no synagogues in St. Johns; the closest ones are in St. Augustine and Mandarin. The family who runs Chabad St. Johns, Rabbi Mendel and Dini Sharfstein, do such a great job of planning events to bring Jewish people together. They bring events to the community as well as holding services at their home one time a month. Our daughter attends an after school program on Wednesdays in Nocatee and we go to services on High Holidays. The Chabad family is orthodox, but not everyone who attends is expected to be — all are welcome.

#### Q: What are your hobbies?

A: I take and edit too many photos, especially of our family. I also recently started a Girl Scout troop with another mom since there wasn't room in the local troop for my daughter. I like to daydream about trips we will take when the kids get older, like camping and to the Grand Canyon.

[Editor's Note: Visit [www.jewishsjohnscounty.com](http://www.jewishsjohnscounty.com) for more information about Chabad St. Johns County.]

Playgrounds cont. from pg. 11

"In an effort to enhance recreational play equipment within St. Johns County, the Parks and Recreation team has made a conscious initiative to fund the replacement and improvement of playgrounds throughout the county to improve our users' experiences," Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Jamie Baccari said. "With a focus on community participation, Parks and Recreation actively worked with local youth to determine the types of play equipment they wanted to see in local projects."

2024 is sure to see further improvements to St. Johns County's parks and play areas for the benefit of residents of all ages.

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The  
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By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Tamales are a traditional Meso-american dish made of a masa dough and fillings, and then steamed in a corn husk or banana leaves. While tamales certainly are delicious, the time-consuming nature of making them may compel some to avoid preparing them at home. This recipe for “Chicken Tamale Pie” offers the flavors of tamales in a single-pan dish. Try it, courtesy of “30-Minute Meal Prep” (Sourcebooks) by Robin Miller.

Chicken Tamale Pie  
Serves 4

- 1 (8.5 -ounce) box corn muffin mix (such as Jiffy)
- 1/3 cup milk
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 1 large egg
- 2 tsp. taco seasoning
- 1/2 cup corn, canned, fresh or frozen (thawed if frozen)
- 2 cups shredded, cooked chicken
- 1 cup red enchilada sauce, divided
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese,

or a blend of cheddar and Jack, or Mexican cheese blend

Fresh cilantro leaves (whole or chopped) for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F. Coat a 9-inch pie plate or oven-safe skillet (such as cast iron) with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the corn muffin mix, milk, butter, egg, and taco seasoning. Fold in the corn. Transfer the mixture to the pre-pared pan, and smooth the surface. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until a wooden toothpick inserted near the cen-ter comes out clean or with moist bits cling-ing to it.
3. Meanwhile, in a large skillet or sauce-pan, combine the chicken and 3/4 cup of the enchilada sauce. Set the pan over me-dium heat and warm the



Photo courtesy MetroCreative  
Chicken Tamale Pie.

Briefs cont. from pg. 12

St. Augustine Celtic Music and Heritage Festival announces entertainment in March

The St. Augustine Celtic Music & Her-itage Festival is being held in America's Oldest Celtic City with multi-award-winning cultural events on Saturday, March 9 from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m., and Sunday, March 10 from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. Top international and U.S. Celtic bands, Highland Games, workshops, lectures, Celtic food and artisan crafts, and a St. Patrick Day parade will be featured, plus a whiskey tasting event on Friday, March 8 from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m. The Celtic Music & Heritage Festival and activities will be held at Francis Field, 29 W. Castillo Drive in historic downtown St. Augus-tine.

The event's touring bands are from Scotland, Ireland, Canada, and the U.S. with traditional and Celtic rock music. An extensive music line-up includes festival favorites Albann-ach, Dublin City Ramblers, Jamison, La Unica, Seven Nations, Steel City Rovers, and Syr, with Emmet Cahill returning after a five-year absence.

Tickets and VIP passes include a vari-ety of entertainment options for both days. Vendors will offer Celtic cuisine along with a variety of food and bever-age, as well as handmade and imported Celtic crafts. Visit www.celticstaugus-tine.com for more information about tickets, the Festival, and St. Patrick Parade.





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# Mill Creek Academy and Toco Creek teachers named Teachers of the Year

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

Tina Hemby, an eighth-grade pre-algebra teacher at Mill Creek Academy, was named the 2023 – 2024 St. Johns County School District Teacher of the Year at a special recognition banquet in St. Augustine on Feb. 1. Aimee Monie, a chemistry teacher at Toco Creek High School, was named as the 2023 – 2024 St. Johns County Rookie Teacher of the Year.

Hemby has 29 years of experience as an educator in mathematics, elementary education, and general science in St. Johns County District Schools, and previously in South Carolina. She has been honored with a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, among many recognitions and memberships in educational associations.

Hemby is a Clinical Evaluator Trained Teacher (CET) and Mentor; teacher member of St. Johns County School District’s Unity Cohort; Math Department Chairperson and is trained in Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a grade level representative.

Hemby was inspired by her father who was a math teacher. She cultivates a positive learning environment to build a solid teacher-student relationship. In Spring 2023, more than 80 percent of her students scored a mastery level on



Aimee Monie.

the eighth grade Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) mathematics test while meeting or exceeding mastery of the State of Florida’s

student pre-algebra benchmarks.

Monie is a chemistry teacher at Toco Creek High School and has worked just over one year as an educator in the St. Johns County School District. In addition to her dedication to young people and day-to-day teaching responsibilities, she mentors numerous students inside and outside of the classroom and serves as a volunteer with multiple organizations on campus. Monie stated that she is honored and privileged to teach students and witness their growth and positive changes experienced in school and in life. She incorporates inquiry-based learning techniques in her classroom to engage students and help them develop critical thinking skills. While a Rookie teacher herself, Monie mentors, answers any questions, and holds unofficial trainings with several of the newer teachers in her department.

As Teacher of the Year, Hemby will represent St. Johns County at the State of Florida Teacher of the Year event in July 2024.

Finalists for 2023 – 2024 Teacher of the Year included Hemby; Kristen Anderson, a first-grade teacher at Valley Ridge Academy; Samantha Gayso an eighth-grade teacher in English Language Arts (ELA) at Alice B. Landrum Middle School; Robyn Rice who teaches Exceptional Student Education (ESE) at John A. Crookshank Elementary School; and Master Chief Duane Spears who teaches 10th and 11th grade students as an instructor in Naval Science studies and Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) at Allen D. Nease High School.



Photos courtesy Investing in Kids (INK)  
Tina Hemby.

## TCE celebrates National School Resource Officers Day



Photo courtesy Kelli Gallant

On Thursday, Feb. 15, Kelsey Gorski’s second grade class celebrated Timberlin Creek Elementary’s resource officer, Deputy Anthony Harrel.





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A vibrant teal poster for an Easter event. At the top center is a circular logo with the letters 'mpc' in a stylized, lowercase font. Below the logo, the word 'EGGSTRAVAGANZA!' is written in large, bold, dark blue capital letters. Underneath this, the text 'Games - Inflatables - Crafts - Pony Rides - Egg Hunts' is displayed in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The event details, 'Sunday, March 24th from 3:00-5:30pm' and '2501 Loretto Road, Jacksonville, FL', are in white. The venue, 'Mandarin Presbyterian Church', is also in white. Below the venue name, the phrase 'FUN-FILLED EASTER ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!' is written in bold, dark blue capital letters. At the bottom center, there is a white rounded rectangle containing the text 'Scan for Details' in black, a white double arrow pointing right, and a QR code. The bottom of the poster features a close-up photograph of several colorful Easter eggs in shades of purple, green, blue, and yellow, some with white patterns.

**mpc**

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# Fishing

## Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis  
mail@floridanewslines.com

Just like that, we're entering the third month of the year and spring is well underway. February held some warm days like last year and fishing has responded well. March is like the October of spring as we start to transition back into our summer pattern. Trees will be brandishing vibrant green leaves and even the fish will somehow absorb the colors to look more picturesque. It's hard not to get excited about fishing in March.

Specks responded to the warm weather last month, and lots of big fish moved into area creeks. This month most of the bigger fish should still be in the shallower water. They can seem very scattered when they do this so be patient and fish thoroughly. Minnows may not be the best for this since they are a slower presentation. Small jigs or beetle spins work well when you need to cover water searching for fish. I don't find them to be too picky when they're in the shallows either. I like bright colors so they can see it. By the end of this month lots of them will be done spawning and they'll start moving back to deeper water and back out to the river. If you're

looking to keep any, remember to only take what you need. These fish are sowing the seeds of our fishery for the coming years.

Bass will be doing very similar things to the specks this month. Unfortunately, they just don't seem as numerous. We don't have the best sight fishing opportunities, so looking for beds can be tough. If you slowly and methodically work shorelines, you should eventually come across some fish. I spend most of my time with shiners this time of year since it's the most consistent way to catch larger fish.

It's also not too soon to be thinking about chasing some saltwater species in the river. Redfish will be moving in hungry and one of the best bait this early in the year is blue crab. Before we get the flush of bait fish, crab is just about the only thing on the menu, but they don't seem to mind. Another crab eater to be on the lookout for would be sheepshead. Use a smaller piece of crab or clam if you're trying to fool one. Get out there and enjoy it. Tight lines.

# County adopts golf cart ordinance

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewsline.com

The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners voted 5-0 on Jan. 16 to adopt Ordinance No. 20247, amending Ordinance No. 2018-42, regarding the regulation of the operation of golf carts, low speed vehicles, and mini trucks within St. Johns County in the interest of public safety, conforming to recent changes in State statute. The new ordinance outlines requirements to operate a golf cart or similar vehicle on designated County roads or multi-use paths.

The requirements outlined in the adopted ordinance include the following:

- A golf cart may not be operated upon a designated county road or multi-use path by a person who is under 18 years of age unless he or she possesses a valid learner's permit or a valid driver's license.

- A golf cart may not be operated upon a designated county road or multi-use path by a person who is 18 years of age or older unless he or she possesses a valid form of government-issued photographic identification (ID).

“Our top priority is the safety and security of our residents and visitors,” St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick said. “During the 2023 Legislative Session, the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office successfully advocated to change the state statute in regards to golf cart drivers. Because of underage golf cart drivers, we have seen an increase in accidents with serious bodily injuries. By requiring golf cart drivers under the age of 18 to possess a learner’s permit or driver’s license, we are ensuring the driver has basic knowledge of the rules of the road.”

*Coming in the April Issue!*

# Summer Camp Activities Guide &

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# Gardening

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewsline.com



Photo courtesy Lesley Arrandale  
Flatwoods plum blossom

## Crape murder? And new trees

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewsline.com

In early February, I noticed some neighbors out pruning their crape myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica*). While they aren't my favorite group of plants, there is no doubt that they can find a place in many southern landscapes. From their beautiful flowers in colors from white through pink and pale mauve, to deep cherry red, and their varied sizes from small shrubs to mid-size trees, it can be argued that there is a crape myrtle for any yard. Do your research and you could find a crape myrtle the exact color and size to suit your landscape.

I was spurred to write about them when I saw one gardener taking great care in pruning his mid-size crape myrtles. If you need to prune a crape myrtle please take the advice in this article: <http://tinyurl.com/2ej5jvdm>. It shouldn't be a quick cut over with electric shears, but a considered trim with suitable pruning tools like clippers and loppers. Minimize pruning to correct structural problems like rubbing branches, but if you have a plant that was badly pruned in the past, you can prune it more aggressively to encourage a more attractive growth pattern, although it might take a few years to show the results.

There are some lovely flowering trees around town. Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and red maple (*Acer rubrum*) are standouts. Our native plums, chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*) and flatwoods plum (*Prunus umbellata*), which doesn't tend to sucker, cover themselves with many delicate small white flowers. All these trees attract early bees and enable honeybees to begin replenishing their hives and solitary bees to build up their strength after emerging as adults. A little later, fringe trees (*Chionanthus virginicus*) bloom copiously before they leaf out, with bright white "tassels" of flowers. Female trees can produce many small black fruits (drupes) that are attractive to birds. It's still a good time of year to plant shrubs and trees, so why not consider some of our native trees and shrubs (<http://tinyurl.com/5n76mzz6>).

Although dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) are beloved in the panhandle and north central Florida, climate and soil conditions are not ideal here in northeast Florida. Dogwoods easily fall prey to problems like powdery mildew and twig borers, which makes them a poor choice. Much of Duval County along the St. Johns River and east to the ocean is now in Zone 9b because of rising temperatures, so if you have an ailing dogwood tree it is probably time to remove it.

Larry Figart, our Extension Urban Forestry Agent, confirmed that the following

advice would be useful to homeowners who are contemplating replacing a tree. And the city tree planting program is still available.

- Choose a tree that isn't susceptible to the disease that may have killed the tree. This is especially important for mushroom root rot (armillaria). If your tree turned brown almost overnight, examine the trunk behind the bark, just above the soil line. A fine white lacy mycelium is indicative of this fungus.
- Don't plant directly on top of a ground stump but choose a place two or three yards away from the root flare.
- Remove as many old roots as possible as well as any sawdust. The sawdust or stump grindings can be composted but only if the heap is managed well and generates heat. Layer brown and green material, keep it moist not wet, and turn it regularly (<http://tinyurl.com/2s484xp2>).
- If the ground is uneven, bring in good quality topsoil and incorporate it widely in and around the new planting area. Leave it to settle, without compacting the area.
- If the new tree is to be planted in the right of way, consider taking advantage of the City of Jacksonville's free tree planting program: <http://tinyurl.com/3stjbb33>.
- If you are going to plant the tree yourself, go check out <http://tinyurl.com/2t4uv3y3> for more information.

Spring is historically a drier season here, so take particular care to water any new plantings appropriately, especially woody shrubs and trees, which can be pricey investments. Make sure to mulch correctly — no "volcano" mulching please! Mulch heaped up around tree trunks just invites fungal diseases, so when replenishing mulch in established beds and around trees, always keep it away from the actual plants it's intended to protect. For information about different types of mulch see <http://tinyurl.com/4e39hcyz>.

The next "New Leaf – Yard & Garden" newsletter will be out in early March (<http://tinyurl.com/mw59am22>). Don't forget to check it out.

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Travel

Dreams Come True in Lucerne, Switzerland

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewslines.com

As a child, I fondly remember the book “Heidi,” about a young orphan girl sent to live with her grandfather in the Swiss Alps. She develops a deep love of the mountains and nature. Looking back, I believe I was drawn more to the illustrations than the storyline, as I clearly recall wishing to see the Alps, chalets, and grazing cows. My chance finally came when I signed up for a river cruise from Basel, Switzerland, to Cologne, Germany.

My travel buddy Judy and I flew to Zurich and boarded a train directly from the airport to Lucerne. Swiss Rail makes it easy. I’m glad I listened to a friend’s recommendation to spend two days in Lucerne because the beauty and ambiance of the city can’t be overstated. The stunning Old Town rests on Lake Lucerne’s banks, surrounded by stunning mountains featuring Mt. Pilatus, rising approximately 7,000 feet.

After a five-minute walk from the train station, Judy and I dropped our bags at the hotel. We set off to explore the enchanting city by crossing the famous Chapel Bridge. This covered wooden bridge rests on stilts with a picturesque tower first built in 1333. Lush flowering window boxes line the railings, and religious paintings grace the architectural archways.

A stroll through the pedestrian-only historic center included fascinating houses painted with historical scenes

or artistic details of former artisan guilds. You’ll see fountains, flowers, unusual rooflines, and inviting shops.

We then headed across town to the Lion Memorial, another famous landmark carved into a rock face. Next to the monument lies the Glacier Garden Museum, a place that truly surprised us. The interactive displays start with geology, the Ice Age, and the formation of the Alps. Stairs within the rock gardens lead to fantastic views above the lake and city. The unexpected fun came when we entered the Mirror Maze and lost our way among our mirrored reflections and the path. This hall of 51 mirrors was built in 1896 for the Swiss National Exhibition in Geneva and moved to Lucerne in 1899. We left exhausted from laughing at ourselves. I absolutely recommend a visit.

In the evening, we dined on (you guessed it) cheese fondue. When in Switzerland, you must try it as well as decadent Swiss chocolates.

The following day, we signed up for a day tour beginning with a lake cruise that transported visitors to the entrance to the most vertical cog railroad in the world. The thrilling and speedy ride up Mt. Pilatus presents an ever-changing landscape. We left the fog-enshrouded lake behind and ascended to clear, sunny skies at the summit. Here, I basked in the soaring panorama of the Alps: Eiger, Mönch,



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
Going up on the cog railroad.

and Jungfrau, a dream come true. We also met hearty hikers who climbed the peak, something I do not dream about.

A gondola ride zipped us partway down the mountain, stopping where visitors can enjoy toboggan runs or challenging rope courses. We lingered at the dramatic background and rode a second gondola down to the outskirts of Lucerne. The day ended with a sunset cruise on the lake, albeit without a memorable sunset, but the narration answered many questions about the area.

Before leaving on a train to Basel, we wanted to visit the impressive Jesuit Church but found it closed. But, we discovered a fascinating cuckoo clock store (very pricey) and numerous chocolatiers. We missed Lucerne’s many museums but delighted in every minute of our stay. The city becomes a photographer’s jackpot and the perfect way to start a trip through Switzerland and Germany.

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



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