

Ponte Vedra NewsLine

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Ponte Vedra, Palm Valley, Nocatee and South Ponte Vedra Beach

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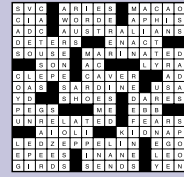
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Photos courtesy Jaclyn Rodriguez

The Survivors' lap at Relay for Life is very meaningful.

Relay For Life set for April 13 at Nease

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Nease High School will host the American Cancer Society Relay For Life of the First Coast six-hour event again this spring. Hundreds of area residents will join together to fight back against cancer on Saturday, April 13 from 4 p.m. – 10 p.m.

Relay For Life provides an opportunity for registered teams and participants to set up a tent-site on the track to fundraise for American Cancer Society life-saving programs, services, and research. Teams and participants take turns walking around the track for the duration of the event to show their support of those touched by cancer.

"In 2023, more than 1.9 million new cancer cases were expected to be diagnosed in the United States and more than 600,000 Americans were expected to die from cancer," said Jaclyn Rodriguez, senior development

Relay for Life cont. on pg. 9

Supporting each other: Womens Food Alliance makes the connection



Photos courtesy Leigh Cort

Themed events are held monthly for WFA members. November 2023 was at Cuba Libre Havana Jax with member Silvia Pulido.

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewslines.com

When Leigh Cort worked in the hospitality industry in New York in the 1980s, she was inspired by an elite and small organization known as "Roundtable for Women in Food Service" that invited her to join.

"It was a very rare breed of entrepreneurial women. I learned about the fellowship of women in the hospitality industry who cared about each other because there were so few of us," said Cort, who grew up in Asbury Park, New Jersey. "We were there to support each other."

That was the genesis for what was to come in Cort's career as she founded Womens Food Alliance (WFA) 10 years ago in Northeast Florida after she made the move south with her husband in search of warmer weather. They first moved to St. Simons Island where Cort took a position as direc-

tor of catering at The Ritz-Carlton in Amelia Island for five years before eventually moving to St. Johns County and opening Leigh Cort Publicity in 2000.

"It was in my heart and soul that I always counted on women," said Cort, who recently expanded the organization to Coastal Georgia with 30 members in that region so far.

There are 170 total members currently in the WFA, and the organization plans eight to 10 programs and events a year, always holding the events at member businesses. This includes a pre-event hour of networking and business exchange.

According to the WFA mission statement, the organization "cultivates and advances networking, education and collaboration for women in the culinary and hospitality industry in the Northeast Florida and Coastal Georgia region."

For Cort, there is one memory from her career in New York that really highlights the power of professional fellowship and became the basis of the mission statement.

Cort's first job as a party director in New York City's Trump Tower included 1,500 guests honoring famed sculptor Erte. An hour before the party began, Cort realized that she had forgotten all about coat racks.

"It was winter in New York City, and I was panic stricken," said Cort. "But I remembered that there was a woman who had just started a rental business of staff and then services. I called her, and she saved my life. She not only got me coat racks, but she got me staff because you can't have coat racks without people taking tickets. I realized that my friends in New York were my backbone."

Womens Food Alliance cont. on pg. 2



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Womens Food Alliance cont. from pg. 1

That strength is now at the core of WFA, and Cort said she is most passionate about connecting women in a variety of different careers within the industry and lifting each other up.

“We are here to enjoy each other’s company and to learn what is going on in our industry,” she said. “The most exciting part for me is always watching our members thrive and shine.”

Member Kayshla Bentley of Mrs. Bentley’s Desserts said she joined the organization because of the warm welcome and support that she received from every woman in the alliance.

“Leigh’s energy and positivity were absolutely infectious. She is such a hard-working woman and is an absolute inspiration to me,” she said. “This organization has been very special to me in all aspects of my business. It has encouraged me to branch out of my comfort zone and learn to partner and support other women just like me. These women have all pushed me to be the best version of myself and has taken my business to a level I never thought it could be.”

Member Cindy Stavely, St. Augustine Pirate & Treasure Museum and Colonial Quarter executive director, said she has been a member for 10 years, including serving on the advisory council.

“My connection to the Womens Food Alliance is driven by shared values, support, and networking opportunities. These amazing women provide a platform for collaboration, mentorship, and resources, helping in various aspects of my hospitality driven position in the community,” said Stavely. “Aside from the extremely informative guest speakers we’ve had the privilege to hear, the long-standing friendships and shared experiences will be a wonderful part



Womens Food Alliance Leadership Council 2024: Georgia.

of my professional journey. So many fun, loving and inspiring moments throughout the years.”

[Author’s note: For more information about Womens Food Alliance, visit www.WomensFoodAlliance.com]

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Delores, Resident at Westminster St. Augustine

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Residents should be aware of jury duty scam calls

By NewsLine Staff
 mail@floridanewsline.com

The St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller’s Office is warning residents about fraudulent phone calls from scammers claiming to be representatives of the clerk’s office or law enforcement.

“Clerk staff will never phone a resident to request payment for failure to appear,” St. Johns County Clerk and Comptroller, Brandon J. Patty said. “If you receive one of these calls, please provide no information to the caller, end the call immediately, and report the incident to law enforcement. As always, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about jury duty or the services we provide.”

In this event, the scammer claims that the individual has missed jury duty and must make immediate payment of two citations signed by a judge to avoid arrest. The scammer demands payment for failure to appear for jury duty.

Failure to appear for jury duty requires attendance in court before any penalties are imposed, which would be ordered by a judge. When residents don’t respond to a summons for jury duty, they are sent an official letter through the U.S. Postal Service.

If you would like to confirm jury service, please do not hesitate to contact our Jury Coordinator at (904) 819-3629. We advise residents to also contact the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office if they think they have been a victim of a jury duty scam.

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April

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 or call (904) 819-3234. Tuesday clubs include: 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.

2nd: Essential Tremor - Meet, Greet & Educate will be held on Tuesday, April 2 at 11 a.m. at Baptist HealthPlace at Nocatee, 400 Colonnade Drive, Suite 130. "Essential Tremor and Social Stigma: How to Best Deal With It" will be presented by support group leader Jan Kary and her lifetime buddy Linda DuBois, who will role play social situations difficult for people with ET and, with audience input, decide on best responses. RSVP to Jan Kary at jkary@verizon.net or (202) 438-6750.

2nd: Purely Social Happy Hour hosted by Ponte Vedra Woman's Club will be held on April 2 at 5:30 p.m. at Sawgrass Marriott in Ponte Vedra Beach. This is an informal gathering for women to get to know each other. Attendees will order off of the menu for their drinks and food. Visit www.pontevedra-womansclub.com for more information.

2nd: Vicar's Landing monthly Boutique Sale will be held Tuesday, April 2 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. at 1000 Vicar's Landing Way. The sale includes framed art, 14k gold, sterling silver, costume and designer jewelry, antique and household furnishings plus many decorative knick-knack items. The public is welcome. Checks or cash only please. The Vicar's Employee Scholarship Fund receives the proceeds. Call Janet Nicosia at (904) 607-2078 or Beverly Webb at (904) 315-2610 for more information.

3rd: Coastal Friends will host its monthly luncheon at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy., on April 3 from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Mayor Donna Deegan will be the guest speaker.

The cost of the luncheon is \$25 and reservations must be made in advance by contacting bartshar@comcast.net as soon as possible as space is limited.

4th: Bingo will be held at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on Thursdays from 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. for four weeks beginning Thursday, April 4. Contact Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information and to register.

6th: Wellness events at Sawgrass Village will be held every Saturday in April 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.

9th: Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library Speaker Series presents University of North Florida professor Dr. Simon Shiao, an active performer around the world. Dr. Shiao arranges regular opportunities for his violin students to work with visiting artists such as the Tokyo String Quartet, and Dover Quartet. The graduates have gone on to attend graduate programs, to perform in professional symphony orchestras and to accept teaching positions throughout the U.S. The students performing on this series come from all corners of the state. This concert at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library on April 9 is free. Doors open at 6 p.m. and the event begins at 6:30 p.m.

9th: Adult Coloring Club will meet at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library on April 9 from 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. No RSVP is required; bring a snack or drink for yourself or to share. Visit sjcpls.org/branches/ponte-vedra-beach-branch/ for more information.

12th: Food Truck Friday will be held on April 12 from 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. This event is open to the public.

13th: The GTM Research Reserve will host Family Seining on April 13 from 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. (the second Saturday of each month) for a guided family seining activity. Pull a seine net through Guana Lake, collecting species of fish, crabs, and other habitats. Learn about the animals and their roles. All necessary gear, including waders and boots will be provided. Registration required online at <https://gtmnerr.org/>

13th: Coast Guard Station Mayport is hosting an Open House on April 13 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. The event is open to the public. Come meet your local Coast Guard members, local maritime first responders, and take tours of Coast Guard Cutters, boats, and helicopters. For more information, contact BM1 Michael Baldi at (904) 564-7523 or follow U.S. Coast Guard Station Mayport on Facebook.

16th: Judge Timothy Corrigan, Chief United States District Judge of the US District Court for the Middle District of Florida, will address "Ode to the Rule of Law" on Tuesday, April 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library as part of the Friends of the Library Speaker Series. The public is welcome to attend.

17th: Ponte Vedra Woman's Club will host its general meeting with dinner on April 17 at 12 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Pkwy. The program features Master Gardener Kathy Esfahani of "Kathy's Creative Gardens." The cost of the dinner is \$35; visit www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php to register to attend.

18th: St. Johns County Republican Party District 4 monthly meeting will be held on the third Thursday of each month (this month, April 18) at 6:15 p.m. at Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Blvd. Visit stjohns.gop for more information.

18th: Free Tech Help with David will be held on Thursday, April 18 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/ for more information.

20th: The Nocatee Farmers Market will be held on Saturday, April 20 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. The Farmers Market is open to the public.

20th: NE Florida Sisters in Crime will meet on April 20 from 10:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Library. April speaker Charlene "Charlie" Shunick will present "Living with Missingness: The Impact of Suffering with a Missing Person." Contact floridasistersincrime@gmail.com for more information.

22nd: Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will hold its monthly meeting on Monday, April 22, at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library 101 Library Road. Chat and Chew begins at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting begins at 6 p.m. Featured speaker is Jeanne Moeller, president of the St. Johns County Homeless Coalition, an organizations striving to end homelessness by stabilizing vulnerable families in safe and decent homes and providing support services to help them gain self-sufficiency. Email PVDemClub@gmail.com for more information.

25th: Recycled Book Craft: Book Page Flowers at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library from 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. on April 25. Use pages from damaged and discarded books to create beautiful paper flowers. Program is for adults or teens attending with a participating adult. Supplies are limited; RSVP encouraged. Visit sjcpls.org/branches/ponte-vedra-beach-branch/ for more information.

25th: Check your blood pressure with Nurse Fran at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center on Thursday, April 25 from 10 a.m. - 11a.m. There is no charge for this event. Contact Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.

25th: "What Financial Obligations Put You or Your Loved One's Nest Egg in Danger?" a free lecture by Megan Wall, St. Johns County Legal Aid, will be presented at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on April 25 at 11 a.m. Contact Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information and to register.

25th: The Savvy Job Hunters Ministry Workshop will host a free Zoom workshop, "Must-Have Interviewing Tips and Mock Interviews," presented by Buddy Webster, Partner, LEADERS Professional Recruiting, Inc., on Apr. 26 from 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Email pottesen66@gmail.com to register. All are welcome to attend.

27th: Ponte Vedra Writers Group will host John Boles, an award-winning writer and TV and film professional, who will present "From Manuscript to Movie - Converting Your Book to a Screenplay," at its meeting on Saturday, April 27 at 11 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. It is free and open to the public. Visit www.floridawriters.org for more information.

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with St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

Q: Can you give an update on bills passed in the recently concluded legislative session?

A: There are a number of bills that were passed by both legislative houses and are on their way to the governor for his signature. They are:

HB 1161 pertains to verification of eligibility for homestead exemption that applies to totally and permanently disabled veterans. Currently, when purchasing a home using a mortgage, the mortgage company would not recognize this exemption until the following year and would therefore require escrow. Now, the Property Appraiser's office will give a preapproval for the exemption so that the mortgage company will not escrow funds the initial year.

HB 103 relates to certain property owners whose addresses are considered "protected and confidential," such as police officers, judges and victims of domestic violence. This bill expands the list to include city and county attorneys.

HB 7073 is a tax package that is basically a catchall for items that didn't make it into other bills. Relevant for us are a couple of items: currently, if you improperly claim homestead exemption, you will be liable for unpaid taxes as well as penalties and interest. This bill is a kind of amnesty in that if you improperly claim homestead exemption, but you let the Property Appraiser

know about it before they discover it, you are not liable for any of those things (unpaid taxes or penalties or interest). Another item involves the period of time that a homeowner has to start rebuilding their homestead that has been damaged or uninhabitable as the result of a natural disaster. The time to begin rebuilding will be increased from three years to five for the homeowner to maintain homestead exemption and caps.

Q: Are there any bills that passed that will be on the ballot in November?

A: Yes, HB 7017, since it pertains to homestead exemption, which is constitutional, must be voted on by citizens and requires 66.66 percent approval to pass. This bill proposes an annual inflation adjustment to the homestead exemption. Specifically, the second \$25,000 band of homestead exemption for homes over \$50,000 will be adjusted annually with the Consumer Price Index. The effect is that would raise the amount of that \$25,000 of the exemption by the amount of the Consumer Price Index (CPI); so, for example if the CPI is 3 percent, then this \$25,000 exemption band would be \$25,750. If passed by voters, this would go into effect on Jan. 1, 2025.

With all of these changes, I'd encourage homeowners to call our office at (904) 827-5500 if they have any questions.

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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 to read more incredible success stories.





with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Can you share some background about the recent Brawl of the Badges event?

A: I had wanted to start a boxing program for our PAL youth and we did, after the county gave us some classroom space to use. We average around 60 kids in the PAL boxing program with adults teaching, so we could see that boxing is a popular sport. We challenged our SJSO staff to see if there was interest internally in boxing and about a dozen of our employees participate in our boxing wellness program.

Then the idea for the Brawl of the Badges came about and we decided to pit police officers vs. firefighters. Sgt. Krissie Padgett is the reigning Guns and Hoses champion, and she came with me to SJSO from the St. Augustine Beach Police Department. She had experience with this type of competition and was instrumental in setting up the event. We hosted Brawl of the Badges at the Ketterlinus Gym on Feb. 24, right after and next to the Florida Man Games, which were held earlier at St. Francis Field.

Q: How did the event go?

A: It was very exciting and we had about 1,000 people in attendance. Community partners including Woolsey Law, Mastercraft, 201 Wraps and Amp Hardcore Gym ensured that we had no overhead expenses. The night featured eight bouts, starting with two featuring our PAL boxing kids. The female fight featured Maddy Olsen vs. Maggie McHone and the male fight featured Kaleb King vs. Aiden Graves. The six other bouts were adult bouts — three female bouts and three male bouts. All the boxers on the police side were SJSO employees, while on the fire side, employees from the St. Augustine City Fire Department and St. Johns Fire and Rescue were featured, along

with a few members from Amp Hardcore Gym and Fight Like a Girl Gym. It was a great night for kids and for boxers and their families.

Q: Did you have judges?

A: We had some great guest judges: James Singletary and Alexandre “Cafe” Dantas, both well known MMA champions; Marcus Pollard from the NFL; Ernest Wilford, a former Jacksonville Jaguar who now works as a detective for JSO; and Brandon James, a St. Augustine High School graduate who played in the NFL and now is a teacher and coach at St. Augustine High School. Veronica Fuata, former Teacher of the Year at Cunningham Creek Elementary School, sang the National Anthem.

Q: Do you have plans for another event next year?

A: We are already looking forward to 2025 and plan to piggyback again with the Florida Man Games. We plan for next year’s event to be a fundraiser for PAL and in fact any extra money we had from this year’s event was donated to PAL. Brawl of the Badges is a great community partnership that highlights the relationship we have with our partner agencies. It’s a good time of camaraderie with our brothers and sisters in fire and rescue and gives the PAL kids an opportunity to show off their talent. It also shows the community that we enjoy life like everyone else!

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



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

Q: Do you have an update on naming the two new schools?

A: Yes, we named the two new schools opening for the start of the 2024-25 school year at our board meeting in March. The school in Beacon Lakes, K-8 OO, has the new name of Lakeside Academy. The school in Shearwater, K-8 NN, has the new name of Trout Creek Academy. We selected these names from a list of suggested names that the school principals and community members had come up with and provided to us.

Q: What is the next step?

A: The principals will continue working with community members to establish their school’s identity, to include school colors and mascots. SAC membership and PTOs are being formed and hiring is ongoing. Employees have transferred in from other schools to fill some vacancies. Both schools have also named their assistant principals, who have a start date of July 1. David Barns will be the assistant principal at Trout Creek Academy and Rebecca Whaley from PV/PV Rawlings will be the new assistant principal at Lakeside Academy. It’s a very exciting time.

Q: Do you have an update on the legislative session?

A: The 2024 legislative session just ended and we are pleased that two of the education deregulation bills that we were watching and in favor of were passed in the Senate and the House: SB 7002 and SB 7004. Sen. Hutson was instrumental in getting these bills passed and we are hopeful that they will receive the governor’s signature.

Q: Can you comment on SAC surveys?

A: This is the time of year that SAC

surveys are going out and stakeholder feedback is being collected. Principals and administrative teams will use this information as they plan for the next school year and to guide their School Improvement Plans.

Q: Do you have any kudos to share?

A: I have some heroes to recognize from our school district. First, Pine Island Academy bus driver Lisa Romanelli performed the Heimlich maneuver on a student on her bus. Her quick and decisive action helped save a choking student.

Second, Nease lacrosse coach Matt Gurowski was with his team on a bus driving down Interstate 95 when he saw a truck had just driven into a retention pond and was going underwater. He had his bus driver pull over and he jumped into the pond and helped to get the truck driver out of the cab.

We truly have some wonderful people who work in our school district.

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

A: As we move into the final quarter of the school year, I’d like to encourage parents to have a direct line to their school administrative teams. This is always the best way to gain accurate information and resolve any issues.

Finally, I would like to encourage students to stay focused and maintain strong attendance through the remainder of the school year.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

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



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Nocatee first responders receive Rotary Hero awards

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra (Nocatee) honored first responders for service during the past year: to St. Johns County 2023 Firefighter of the Year Lieutenant Nyani Mattison from Station No. 18 in Nocatee and to St. John County Sheriff's Office 2023 Deputy of the Year, Detective Robert Forrest. The third annual Rotary Heroes Awards event was also presented by the Ponte

Vedra Rotary Foundation, the club's charitable arm. The awards were given in recognition of excellence in Vocational Service which is one of Rotary's foundational values.

When asked about her personal mission as a firefighter, Mattison said: "I want to respond to every call, every single day, the best I can. I want to be a mentor and example to the people around me."

Mattison has obtained her Managing Fire Officer Certification from the National Fire Academy. She has a bachelor's degree in public administration from Flagler College.

When asked what inspired him to go into law enforcement, Forrest said: "It is an honorable profession and I chose this path to help others, especially those who cannot help themselves."

Forrest has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a bachelor's degree in forensic studies from Florida Gulf Coast University.

The Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra, chartered in April of 2018, is one of 67 Rotary Clubs in North Florida that comprise Rotary District 6970. The club meets on Tuesday mornings at 7:15 a.m. at Trelor Park Restaurant in Nocatee Town Center.



Photo courtesy Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra

St. Johns County 2023 Firefighter of the Year Lt. Nyani Mattison from Station No. 18 in Nocatee and St. John County Sheriff's Office 2023 Deputy of the Year, Detective Robert Forrest.

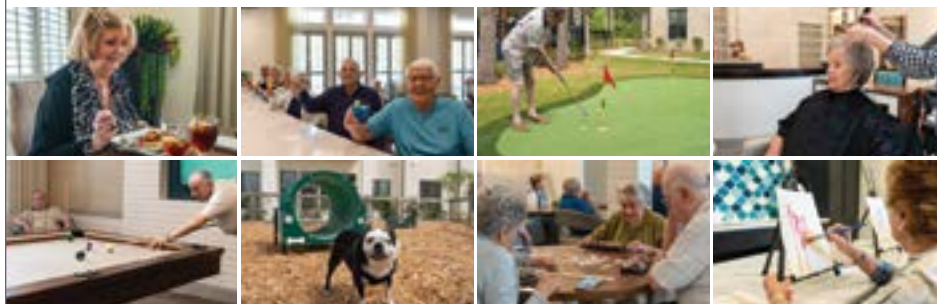


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Please RSVP no later than April 29th
Contact Cruise Center at 904-260-3401 x 250
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Briefs

St. Johns County Community Health Assessment open for resident responses

The Florida Department of Health in St. Johns County and the Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida, Inc. have partnered to conduct the 2024 St. Johns County Community Health Assessment. This vital process, undertaken every three years, aims to pinpoint priority health needs and concerns within our community.

Elements of St. Johns County's health assessment will include an in-depth analysis of available demographic data, health statistics, and indicators of access to health care for county residents. Additionally, community input on health care services and quality of life issues from focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews will be factored in. All the assessment data will be used to shape the St. Johns County Community Health Improvement Plan, which will guide health and social service providers in the county in their program development efforts over the next three to five years.

Susan Grich, Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida president and CEO, said, “We're trying to gather responses from as many people in the St. Johns community as we can for this health assessment. It's really important that everyone, especially those in vulnerable and underserved groups who may not typically have their voices heard, has an opportunity to share their thoughts.”

If you live in St. Johns County, you are encouraged to complete the survey. Local business owners, educators, and community-based organizations are also encouraged to share the survey with staff, partners, volunteers, family, and friends. The survey is also available in Spanish.

The survey will remain open until April 30, 2024. Survey responses are confi-

dential and anonymous.

Take the survey here: <https://forms.office.com/r/zey87dRkkS>

Chabad @ the Beaches to celebrate Passover

An uplifting Passover Seder experience filled with joy, tradition, and camaraderie will take place on the evening of Monday, April 22, and Tuesday, April 30.

“Join us for an evening brimming with the Mah NishTanah, [four questions], authentic hand-made matzah, four cups of wine, engaging dialogue, and a delectable five-course kosher for Passover feast,” said Rabbi Nochum Kurinsky, executive director of Chabad @ the Beaches.

The event will feature flavors of tradition as the dedicated team at Chabad @ the Beaches prepares a scrumptious Seder meal. From classic matzah ball soup to savory brisket, gefilte fish, and sweet macaroons, the menu promises to delight the taste buds and transport attendees to the heart of Jewish culinary heritage.

“Our Seder celebrations are not just about the food; they're about coming together as a community to celebrate freedom and faith,” said Rabbi Kurinsky. “This year's Seder will be filled with laughter, song, and heartfelt discussions as we reflect on the journey from slavery to liberation. Expect an evening brimming with warmth, acceptance, and meaningful connections.”

The Seders will be held on April 22 at 7 p.m. and April 30 at 8 p.m. (following prayer services) at Chabad @ the Beaches, located at 521 A1A N. in Ponte Vedra. Discounts are available for sponsors, and active Jewish military personnel are granted complimentary





Briefs cont. on pg. 10

THE TAILORED CLOSET

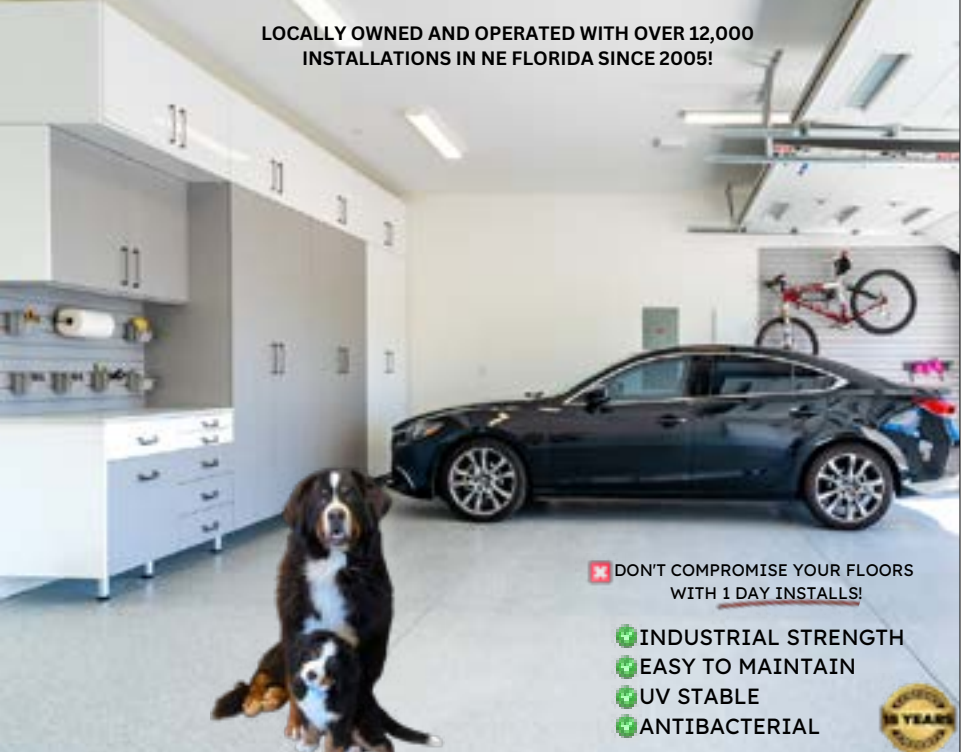


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Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewline.com

Dr. Ron Joseph

Dr. Ron Joseph's motivation for taking ice skating lessons when he was younger was pretty simple — beat a neighborhood kid in ice hockey. And he did, courtesy of his mother signing him up for skating lessons to learn to play hockey which he took alongside his younger sister, Vivian Joseph. Soon, the siblings, who lived in Chicago, went from skating lessons to being paired together for figure skating training sessions in Colorado Springs. Ron and Vivian appeared in their first ice show when they were nine and six years old, respectively. The pair typically trained two to four hours every day and competed for the very first time in 1957. "We started getting good at it," said Joseph, who also ran track in high school which complemented skating and helped him to later secure a track scholarship to Northwestern College. In 1961, Ron and Vivian represented the United States in the United States National Junior Championships. They became Bronze Medalists in the 1964 Olympic games in Innsbruck, the World Silver Medalist in Colorado Springs and the 1965 North American Champions in Rochester and Vancouver. Most recently, Ron and Vivian were inducted into the United States Figure Skating Hall of Fame, an honor 50 years in the making. Ron, who ultimately became a hand and shoulder surgeon in Arizona and Florida, is



Photo submitted by Krista Joseph
Ron Joseph with his sister Vivian, who were recently inducted into the United States Figure Skating Hall of Fame.

married to St. Johns County Commissioner Krista Joseph and together they have one daughter, Ali, 19. In November 2022, Ron, who had been an avid tennis player and paddle boarder, was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). He views the diagnosis as just another part of his journey, another opportunity to learn, live and love his life despite the challenges he now faces. "Every day is a blessing," said Ron, who is participating in an experimental study at Mayo Clinic assigned to ALS patients.

Q: What did it mean to you to get inducted into the United States Figure Skating Hall of Fame?

A: It is a huge honor, but in the perspective of what we have gone through and the road here, the journey is the most important part. It was nice that people finally remembered how good we were.

Q: What was it like to compete at the top level in figure skating?

A: We trained and lived in Europe. It was great, and we had some great friends. The opportunity to train with

all these wonderful people was amazing. The journey and the hard work really shape your life. We learned how to schedule, how to be flexible and when you get knocked down, you have to get back up.

Q: How did your parents influence your life?

A: My parents were immigrants from Stuttgart, Germany, who escaped the Nazis. They had an incredibly high work ethic. They said, "If you are going to do something, do it well." My dad worked two jobs, and my mom had a job too. My mom also traveled with us all the time. Their hard work and work ethic stuck with me.

Q: How did you first discover that you had ALS?

A: I was holding signs for Krista's campaign in March 2022, and I noticed that my arm was getting weak. I was playing a lot of tennis and paddle boarding, and I noticed something then too. I pretty much diagnosed what I had before going to the Mayo Clinic and receiving an official diagnosis.

Q: How has your approach to life changed since getting diagnosed with ALS?

A: It is funny how when you get some things taken away, the hyperactivity and the noise, it is amazing what comes to the top. What comes to the top is sunshine. You don't have any choices, so you don't get so focused on absolute minutia. You get to see through a lot of that. My family is getting me through this, and my faith is taking on a larger role (I converted to Catholicism last year). You have to maintain a goal every day. Every day I try to contribute something.

Relay for Life cont. from pg. 1

manager at the American Cancer Society. "Educating, advocating and increasing equal access to care depends on what we do right now. Events like Relay For Life provide an opportunity for communities to raise awareness and funds for life-saving programs and services like Road to Recovery and Hope Lodge."

The community is welcome to attend for food, games, and entertainment. The event kicks off at 4 p.m. with an Opening Ceremony that recognizes survivors and caregivers followed by a schedule of events and activities before our Lumina Ceremony begins at 8:30 p.m.

Longtime participant Marion Linda said, "We enjoy the opening ceremony where they kick off the event with the survivor lap. There's a lot of festivities throughout the evening including a survivor and caregiver dinner reception. We support American Cancer Society local events because of all the work the society does to provide programs, services, research and more to cancer patients and their families. We look forward to another successful event this year."

The American Cancer Society's signature fundraising event, Relay For Life is more than a walk. It is a volunteer-led movement that unites communities to celebrate cancer survivors, remember loved ones lost to cancer, and raise funds to improve the lives of people with cancer and their families.

"Relay is an opportunity to connect survivors and caregivers to others who understand the cancer journey and the importance of having hope," said Rodriguez. "Relay For Life provides this and more. It's a movement. It's something you don't fully understand until you experience it. I started Relaying in 2011 and it's been a part of my life ever since."

In Florida, more than 162,000 new cancer cases are expected to be diagnosed. Cancer continues to be the second most common cause of death among Americans after heart disease. Visit RelayForLife.org/FirstCoastFL or call (800) 227-2345 to sign up or learn more about Relay For Life.

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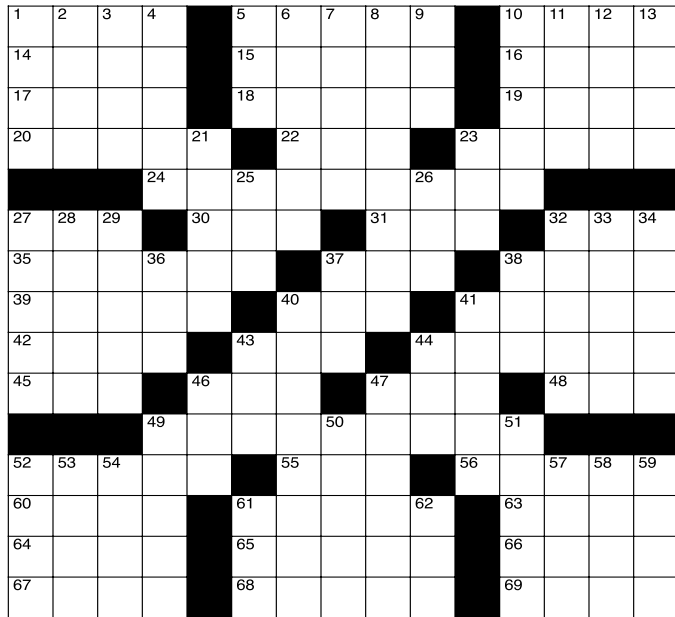
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. Excessively theatrical actors
5. Footwear
10. A way to disfigure
14. Exchange rate
15. Hawaiian wreaths
16. North-central Indian city
17. Bungle
18. Extremely angry
19. A short note of what's owed
20. Criminal organization
22. Mimic
23. Try to grab
24. U.S.-born individuals
27. Some are covert
30. Order of the British Empire
31. Don't know when yet
32. Payment (abbr.)
35. Winged angelic being
37. Variety of Chinese
38. A way to be anxious
39. Famed wrestler Hulk
40. Partner to cheese

41. Slang for sergeant
42. Canadian flyers
43. Actress Ryan
44. Highly unpleasant vapor
45. Body part
46. Halfway
47. Cool!
48. Consume
49. Salts
52. Upper bract of a floret of grass
55. Housepet
56. Cavalry-sword
60. Symbol of a nation
61. Frocks
63. Used to carry food
64. Portuguese folk song
65. Sharp mountain ridge
66. Ireland
67. Where golfers begin
68. Greek mythological sorceress
69. Fluid suspensions

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69. Fluid suspensions

LAWN & GARDEN WORD SEARCH

E P Y P F H I B O S Z R L E U C S B O B
 Z I H L D I Z N Y S S D G B I F U Z W G
 I N E D R A G D N T W Z P E D G N F L N
 L D A B Y P E T M I R S M D Z H L L Z I
 I Y L N M B C O W H H W E G R T I A D M
 T C T P T O C L S C S W D E H L G N T M
 R M H H N R P O L L I N A T O R H D P I
 E T Y I E D D U I L L N D L W C T S T R
 F C I A C E M P Y S I O E N U R P C M T
 W A F B S R P M O H A T Z Z W L H A B D
 Z C C I L M D F S R D B H F S Z T P W D
 Y O L C D O L H L U R N A G O I D I G F
 A S A O Y L O B W B A N M H U Y Y N S Z
 D D W M P I Z M B S I F F G D O Z G D N
 N E N P L M N I I F N G M N M W R U D C
 E E P O B R H E A N A W O U Z S E D W E
 M W D S O E W I E O G M S N G U O N S O
 A I Y T O W D G B R E W S S T C E S N I
 T W R R M T I C N A G Y Y H U R U C U T
 L G N B G I U T Z W G Y O D W R D T D A

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

WORDS

- AMEND
- BLOOMING
- BORDER
- COMPOST
- CUT
- DRAINAGE
- DROUGHT
- EDGE
- FERTILIZE
- GARDEN
- GREEN
- HEALTHY
- INSECTS
- LANDSCAPING
- LAWN
- MOSSY
- MULCH
- POLLINATOR
- PRUNE
- SCENT
- SHRUBS
- SUNLIGHT
- TRIMMING
- WEEDS

⊙ ** ☒ ⊕ ⊗ ~ Ⓜ Ⓝ Ⓞ Ⓟ Ⓠ Ⓡ Ⓢ Ⓣ Ⓤ Ⓥ Ⓦ Ⓧ Ⓨ Ⓩ ⓐ ⓑ ⓓ ⓔ ⓕ ⓖ ⓗ ⓘ ⓙ ⓚ ⓛ ⓭ ⓮ ⓯ ⓰ ⓱ ⓲ ⓳ ⓴ ⓵ ⓶ ⓷ ⓸ ⓹ ⓺ ⓻ ⓼ ⓽ ⓾ ⓿

CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to lawn and garden.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 8 = S)

- A. 5 2 23 9 13 25 8
Clue: Colorful plants
- B. 15 25 4 8 8
Clue: Lawn plant
- C. 2 4 22 16 8 17 4 24 13
Clue: Visual features on property
- D. 10 23 9 13 25
Clue: Cuts grass

Briefs cont. from pg. 8

admission. For more information, pricing and to register, visit www.chabad-beaches.com/Seder or call (904) 543-9301 or email Chabad@chabadbeaches.com.

Drives & Dinks: Vicar's Landing Foundation Charity Classic offers double the fun

The 18th annual Charity Classic, scheduled for Tuesday, April 9 at the Yards at Sawgrass Players Club, will offer two ways to enjoy a day of play while assisting seniors throughout St. Johns County.

Participants can choose to play in the Charity Classic golf tournament or the Charity Classic pickleball tournament. The events will run concurrently and registration includes food, drinks and

door prizes.

All funds raised at Drives & Dinks will be used in support of community charities serving St. Johns County seniors. Among this year's beneficiaries are Lend An Ear Outreach, which supplies hearing aids to seniors in St. Johns county with limited or no means, as well as Pie In The Sky and Meals On Wings, both of which battle senior hunger and food insecurity locally.

"For 18 years, the Charity Classic has reflected our profound dedication to making a positive impact for seniors throughout our county," said Bruce Vorsanger, Vicar's Landing chief development officer. "We're excited to invite golf lovers and pickleball enthusiasts to showcase their skills and help further our mission of service and compassion."

Visit the 2024 Charity Classic website,

<https://vicarslanding.com/golf-charity-home-page/> for more information.

Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime to meet April 20

"Living with Missingness: The Impact of Suffering with a Missing Person" is the theme of the Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime's April meeting, to be held on April 20 beginning at 10:15 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library.

When a loved one goes missing, the horror of not knowing what's happened can be paralyzing. April speaker, Charlene "Charlie" Shunick played a pivotal role in the search for her sister, "Mickey" Shunick. In May 2012, Mickey vanished while cycling home. Charlie Shunick spearheaded search efforts using numerous forms of communication. Her family suffered for months while clinging to hope Mickey would be found alive.

Tragically, this was not the case.

Charlie Shunick's experience searching for her sister inspired her to establish the Resource Association for Missing People, a non-profit organization (ramissingpeople.org). Shunick, along with her board and team, have assisted hundreds of loved ones with their missing person cases. She also recently started an educational and consulting business for Criminal Justice Professionals called Shunick Missing Persons (shunickmp.com). Her long-term goal is to continue to advocate for the missing, while increasing awareness and information about missing persons in the United States.

Visit <https://nefloridasistersincrime.org> to register for the April meeting or email floridasistersincrime@gmail.com for more information.

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PopHistory

By Scott A. Grant
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Redemption of Ralph Metcalfe

In the early days of the modern Olympics, the United States dominated the 100-meter dash. From 1896 until 1928, the US won all but two races and finished no worse than second. Then, in 1928, disaster struck, and we were swept from the podium. Canadian Percy Williams won. The silver went to an English runner with the improbable name of Jack London. London was of African descent and had been born in British Guyana before moving to London at an early age. He was the first runner of African descent to medal in the event and the only one ever to be born in South America. A German finished third.

The best American finisher was 17-year-old Frank Wykoff of California. Wykoff was the favorite and was bitterly disappointed by fourth place. He garnered a modicum of consolation when he led the US 4 x 100-meter relay team to the gold medal and an Olympic record. "Flying Frank" ran the first leg.

After the debacle in '28, the US Olympic Committee determined to

widen the pool of runners. At the 1932 games in Los Angeles, the US was represented by two of the fastest men who ever lived; both were African Americans: Eddie Tolan of Michigan and Ralph Metcalfe of Marquette. They could not have been more different. Tolan was 5'7" tall and ran with his glasses taped to his head. He had gone to the University of Michigan to play football and ended up running track. Metcalfe was 5'11" and looked like an athlete. It took him longer to reach full speed, but when he did, he was faster than anyone of his era.

In the 100-meter finals in Los Angeles, Tolan and Metcalfe ended the race in a photo finish. Both men ran an Olympic record of 10.36 seconds. Both men thought they had won. A rules oddity awarded the gold to Tolan. In the 200-meter race, Metcalfe was set to take his revenge. The extra distance gave him more time to run the fast-starting Tolan down — but officials set his starting blocks in the wrong place forcing him to run more than 202 meters in a 200-meter race. Metcalfe finished third. Tolan

won. Neither man ran in the relay. Frank Wykoff anchored the all-white relay team and won a second gold medal while setting a second Olympic record.

At the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Metcalfe was back to run the 100 and so was Frank Wykoff. Jesse Owens won. Metcalfe finished second and Wykoff again finished fourth. In the 200, Owens won. Mack Robinson, Jackie Robinson's older brother, finished second. After those races, it was determined to replace Robinson on the 100-meter relay with Wykoff. After all, Robinson "already had his medal." This created an all-white relay team that included two Jewish runners.

For reasons that caused a scandal at the time and are still debated today, a last second decision was made to replace the two Jewish runners with the two fastest men in the world, both African American. Owens ran the first leg; Metcalfe ran the second. It is impossible to watch Metcalfe run that race without gasping audibly. He blazes across the screen. Frank Wykoff

ran the final leg of the relay, bringing home his third gold medal in the event and his third Olympic record.

After the '32 games, Eddie Tolan went on tour with Bill "Bojangles" Robinson's vaudeville show. He gave Bojangles his 200-meter medal. After the '36 games, Jesse Owens did the same thing. Bojangles Robinson claimed to hold the world record for running backwards. The schtick was to have the fastest man running forward and backward on the same stage at the same time.

Ralph Metcalfe just kept running and in 1970, he finally won the big race capturing a seat in Congress representing Illinois' 1st District. Once there he founded the Congressional Black Caucus along with Shirley Chisholm and 11 others.

Scott A. Grant is a local author, historian, and money manager. He is fascinated by the 1936 Olympics and welcomes your comments at scottg@standfastic.com

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