

The CreekLine

APRIL 2024 Volume 24 Issue 4

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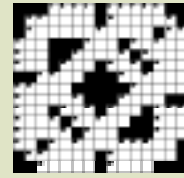
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Photos courtesy St. Johns Riverkeeper
Kayakers participate in a river cleanup in Black Creek.

Great St. Johns River Cleanup: A collaboration of cleanups throughout watershed

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The St. Johns Riverkeeper, local governments, nonprofits and businesses are partnering to organize the second annual Great St. Johns River Cleanup, a series of coordinated cleanups throughout the St. Johns River watershed between March 16 and April 25. Nearly 60 cleanup sites are planned in Duval, Clay, Putnam, Seminole, St. Johns and Volusia counties as part of The Great St. Johns River Cleanup.

St. Johns County's cleanup is a partnership between St. Johns

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Relay For Life set for April 13 at Nease

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.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 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



Photos courtesy Jaclyn Rodriguez
The Survivors' lap at Relay for Life is very meaningful.

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 Luminaria 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.



Longtime Relay for Life participants Marion Linda and husband Erin Linda.



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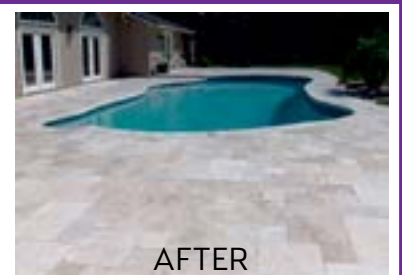
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St. Johns cont. from pg. 1

County Parks and Recreation and Hagan Coastal Outfitters. The waterway cleanup date is April 25 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Deep Creek soft launch and will be performed by kayak. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/muer2f5z> for information specifically about the Deep Creek cleanup and to sign up.

The collaboration of cleanup events aims to raise awareness about the harmful impacts of litter and debris on our waterways and communities and unite residents throughout the watershed in a collective effort to protect and restore St. Johns River and its tributaries.

The Great St. Johns River Cleanup brings together new and existing cleanup efforts with the goal of significantly increasing awareness, participation, and the amount of trash that is removed from the St. Johns and its tributaries. Each county and individual participating in the cleanup is connected by the same magnificent river, and each of

our efforts to help clean and restore the river has an impact that reaches far beyond our own neighborhoods.

“St. Johns Riverkeeper is excited to continue the Great St. Johns River Cleanup for its second year, as we expand our strategic partnerships throughout the St. Johns River Watershed and expect to make an even greater impact this year,” said Steph Morse, outreach specialist for St. Johns Riverkeeper. “In 2023, more than 1,300 volunteers collected nearly 1,500 bags of trash in our watershed — we can’t wait to see the impact our community makes together this year.”

Volunteers can find event dates and available cleanup locations for each county by visiting StJohnsRiverCleanup.com. New locations will continue to be added to this page and participating county websites as the events approach. Whether or not you can attend one of the official cleanup events near you, you can participate by picking up trash in your own neighborhood or local park.

African violet show and sale announced

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society will host its 31st annual Show and Sale on Friday, April 5 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Saturday, April 6 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. The show themed “Violets Light the Way” will be held at the San Jose Church of Christ, 6233 San Jose Blvd. This event is free and open to the public.

On display will be a colorful variety of African violets and other Gesneriads. This is an opportunity to see unusual varieties and colors: reds, bi-colors, and spotted or streaked called fantasy. Plants will be on sale, from show plants to mature blooming plants. Growers wanting to begin or expand their collection will find young plants, babies, and leaves. Available also will be hard-to-find supplies such as pots in various sizes, pre-mixed soil suitable for wick watering, and fertilizers.

Because they bloom year-round and are easy to grow, African violets have become the most popular houseplant. The society’s member experts will be on hand to answer questions. Is your treasured plant growing fewer or infrequent blooms? Is wick watering the best way to water a violet? How often should you fertilize? What type of fertilizer and how much? How much

light should they get? Are LED lights beneficial? How often should you report?

And what are gesneriads? They are cousins to the African violet and like the same growing conditions. Explore the episcias, streptocarpus, primulinas, alsobias, aeschynanthus, and many more. In recent years, Gesneriads have gained popularity among avid indoor gardeners.

The Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society was founded in the fall of 1992 for the purpose of creating and stimulating interest in African violets. It is committed to providing education on cultivation and propagation techniques. All club members share the joy of growing and sharing plants.

Visit JacksonvilleViolets.org for more information on club activities, and “How To” educational resources in print and video.



Photo courtesy Linda McQueen
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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Andres!



Breed:

Bernedoodle

Favorite Activity:

His walks with mom and dad

Favorite Treat:

Vanilla Chunky Cheeks

Favorite Friend:

Grandkids Lilly and Lucas

How did your BFF get his name?

He got his name after Spain World Cup

Champion, Andres Iniesta.

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.

Summer
Camp
& Activities
Guide
in this issue!
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Last month's Mystery Photo was the Watson office on County Road 210.

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A	G	I	O	H	A	K	U	S	A	G	R	A
M	U	F	F	I	R	A	T	E	C	H	I	T
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A. flowers B. grass C. landscape D. mower

Answers
to our
Puzzles
PG 14

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April

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 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 for more information.

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

2nd: Honeybee Quilters Guild will meet on Tuesday, April 2 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 presentation by JAX MQG on modern quilting. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit honeybeequilters.org for more information.

3rd: 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 April 3 from 11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday – Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

4th: 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 April 4 from 12:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday – Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

6th: Herb Appreciation Day will be celebrated on April 6 at 10 a.m. at 1548 Beluthahatchee Road. Attendees will receive complimentary herb tea, a herb guide and plant cutting. Text or call for hours: (386) 972-1891.

8th: ESOL Learn to Read, with partners at Learn to Read St. Johns, will be held on Monday, April 8. 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. Walkins will be welcome as space allows. Call 904-827-6960 or email Donna at dbrasch@sjcfl.us for more information.

8th: The Northwest St. Johns County United for Progress Club will meet on Monday, April 8 at 6:30 p.m. St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes will update club members on voting changes for 2024. For more information, visit www.nwstjohnsup.com or email nwsjcp@gmail.com.

9th: Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club will host its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, April 9 at 11 a.m. at St. Johns Golf and Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. This month's theme is "Spring Fashion Makeover." Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. Spring 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 April 2. Visit www.facebook.com/BTNC1 for food choices and updated

information.

13th: The Friends of Alpine Park meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, April 13) 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 for more information.

13th: The Bartram Trail Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, April 13) from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. The meeting will feature a discussion among members about how to organize genealogy. Email ginglish@comcast.net for more information. Visit www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClubGroup to send a request to join the club.

15th: The All Star Quilters Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, April 15 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. Sharon Crumbliss of Crumbliss Art will talk and show some of her creations. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit www.allstarquilters.org for more information.

16th: Happy Hookers crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on April 16 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 or call (904) 827-6960.

18th: William Bartram Scenic Highway Group will meet on Thursday, April 18 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 or call (904) 699-8475.

18th: Midnight in the Garden to benefit the Prevention Coalition of St. Johns County will be held on Thursday, April 18 from 5 p.m. – 10 p.m. at Tringali Barn. This interactive dinner murder-mystery dinner theater event will feature prizes, a raffle, a silent auction, bar and food. Dress code is favorite funeral attire. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/6fh3f6xh> for tickets and more information.

19th Adult Craft: Clothes Pin Dragonflies will be held on April 19 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. Crafters will create a clothespin dragonfly. Space is limited; register by calling (904) 827-6960.

20th: Dress a Girl Around the World at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will be held on Saturday, April 20 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.

26th: "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 Council on Aging (COA) River House, 179 Marine Street in St. Augustine, on Friday, April 26 from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday – Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

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



Photo courtesy St. Johns County Sheriff's Office
Brawl of the Badges 2024 participants.



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

Q: Can you share the names yet of the two new schools scheduled to open this fall?

A: Yes, at our School Board meeting on March 12, the board named the schools. The school in Shearwater, previously known as K-8 NN, will be called Trout Creek Academy. The school in Beacon Lakes, previously known as K-8 OO, will be named Lakeside Academy. These names were chosen from lists developed by each principal as a result of multiple community meetings. There were around six or seven name suggestions on each list and the names we chose were the most popular on each of the lists developed by the respective communities.

Q: What is the next step?

A: The principals will continue with community meetings to determine the colors and mascots for each school. As is our tradition, naming the schools is done by the school board, but the school colors and mascots are selected by the principal and community. This should be accomplished in the next few months.

Q: Were there any other items of note determined at the March 12 meeting?

A: We also approved our annual five year plan — and it has a high school on the list. It's planned for the latter years of the five year plan, but subject to being adjusted as circumstances change since we do revise this plan every year. Also in the five year plan are the RiverTown school, the school in Silverleaf, the next school in Nocatee, a new elementary school in the southern part of the county, and an expansion of South Woods Elementary. South Woods is the last of the schools to be expanded as a result of the class size amendment, which required smaller class sizes and

subsequently more classrooms.

Q: Is the district hiring at this time?

A: We are actively hiring for next year. We have to staff the two new schools as well as account for growth throughout the district. We will have an in-person job fair on April 27 at Nease High School where we will be hiring teachers and all positions. Interested applicants can also check on our website to see all the job opportunities and apply online even before the job fair. Click on Staff Recruitment on the main page of the district's website (www.stjohns.k12.fl.us).

Q: Is it too early to register for next year?

A: No, it is not too early. Registration for new students and kindergarteners has begun and we encourage parents to register as early as possible. Most of the registration can be done online by going to your zoned school's website. If you don't know which school you are zoned for, the district's website (www.stjohns.k12.fl.us) has a school finder that allows you to input your address and learn your zoned school.

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

A: When students and teachers returned from Spring Break, it marked the start of the fourth and final quarter of the school year. There will be a lot of celebrations in the weeks to come, including graduation. It's a fun time for students and teachers. The last day of school will be May 24.

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.

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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 if they have any questions.

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 or call me at (904) 827-5500.

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

Chabad@chabadbeaches.com.

Newcomers of North St. Johns to lunch at Epping Forest

Newcomers of North Saint Johns will hold its next member luncheon at Epping Forest Yacht Club, 1830 Epping Forest Drive on Tuesday, April 16 with doors opening at 10:30 a.m. Following lunch, Dan Cook, Epping Forest general manager, will present a program on the history of Epping Forest. The 58-acre estate, featuring beautiful gardens, luxurious riverfront mansion and yacht harbor, was built in the mid-1920s by successful industrialist Alfred I. DuPont.

"Newcomers of North St. Johns offers a wide variety of activities for you to get acquainted and have fun, including smaller lunch groups, Canasta, BUNCO, Book Club, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, holiday parties, walking club day trips and cultural events," said Co-President Judy Porter.

The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests. The meeting begins at 11:00 a.m. with luncheon service beginning at 11:30 a.m. All reservations must be received by April 9. Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information about the lunch and membership.

Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club to feature spring fashion makeover

The Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club will hold its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, April 9 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.

Get ready to celebrate spring with a fashion makeover. Emily Giddens, Dillard's Estee Lauder regional market specialist, will speak through a full anti-aging skincare routine with a live model and touch on a simple complexion and eye application for mature skin. All the ladies attending will be able to self demo with samples of the products at each of their place settings.

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 the first Tuesday of the month, April 2, 2024. Be sure to indicate your entrée choice on the check memo. Visit www.facebook.com/BTNC1 for food choices and updated information.

New head of cancer medicine at Baptist MD Anderson

Tomislav "Tom" Dragovich, MD, PhD, joined Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center as head of the Division of Cancer Medicine and medical oncologist-in-chief, effective March 11. He will also serve as medical director of the center's clinical research programs. His appointment follows a national search and extensive review process.

Dr. Dragovich brings more than two decades of experience in medical oncology and clinical research to the region, with significant expertise in gastrointestinal cancer, innovative clinical trials and cancer drug development.



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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Workshops available for business owners

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of North Florida (Florida SBDC at UNF) provides workshops and events to anyone starting or growing a business. Following are some upcoming events:

QuickBooks: Bank Fees and Reconciliation (Webinar): April 5, 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. No cost. Attendees will learn about Bank Feeds in QuickBooks Online, including understanding bank feeds, setting up bank feeds, navigating the banking center, working with bank feed transactions, and troubleshooting. Streamline your business and save time. Visit <https://www.unf.edu/sbdc/training-and-events.html> to sign up.

Networking for Small Business: April 16, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m., Jacksonville Public Library, Main Branch. Taught by the Small Business Development Center at UNF's networking aficionado, Christian Evangelista, this

training session presentation is on the importance of networking, the do's and don'ts, as well as the common mistakes made by newcomers and veterans alike. Attendees will learn how to hone their skills and gain the knowledge to develop their small business.

How to Startup Your Own Business: April 25, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m., UNF Herbert University Center. This workshop is presented by FSBDC at UNF business consultant Christian Evangelista, who will provide hands-on training for starting a business, including a comprehensive workbook with resources for starting a business in North Florida. The class will give an overview of the seven basic requirements for business STARTUP: Selecting an idea; Testing the market; Acquiring capital; Writing a plan; Turning for help; Understanding legal requirements; And putting it all together. The cost (\$20) includes a workbook and STARTUP kit for all Northeast Florida counties.

Registration open for 2024 Small Business Week Celebration

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

North Florida's small business leaders, champions and top lenders will be honored on May 10 at the University of North Florida as the U.S. Small Business Administration presents the Small Business Week Awards and Top Lender Awards.

In recognition of the small business community's contribution to the economy and society, the President of the United States designates one week each year as National Small Business Week. The U.S. SBA, in conjunction with the FSBDC at UNF, will host this special event to honor and present awards to lo-

cal entrepreneurs and those who support and advocate for small businesses.

The Small Business Week Luncheon and Award Ceremony will be held from 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at the UNF Herbert University Center. Keynote speaker Kristen Hadeed will present "Igniting Human Leadership." In this keynote, Hadeed will challenge the traditional leadership and business approaches that are no longer working, and she will share her vision of human leadership and why it is the answer going forward.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/5n79ykek> for more information and to register as a sponsor or purchase tickets.

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Friends of the Bookmobile embarking on countywide campaign

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

The Friends of the Bookmobile, St. Johns County is a brand new organization that seeks to promote knowledge of the bookmobile services, foster closer relations between the library system and community, and strengthen bookmobile programming. This 501c3 group is laser-focused on keeping the bookmobile service a thriving program and helping it grow, through membership, donations, volunteering, and advocacy.

The Bookmobile takes the library to people residing in underserved areas or those who can not travel to the physical library. This is a vital service in the rapidly growing St. Johns County. Every month the Bookmobile has 10 regularly scheduled stops in addition to schools and senior centers, including Silverleaf Ame-

nity Center, RiverTown Amenity Center, Publix at Murabella, Publix at County Road 210 West, Publix at Palencia Commons, and Flagler Health+ at No-catee. Visit <https://sjcpls.org/branches/bookmobile> to see the complete and current Bookmobile schedule.

Supporting the bookmobile increases the chances of getting a brick-and-mortar library in the busier areas of St. Johns County, as the use of the bookmobile provides hard data about the need for a library based on the use of the Bookmobile. All membership fees help to fund the needs and programs of the Bookmobile and are tax-deductible.

The organization is looking to grow/increase its membership. Email membership@sjc@gmail.com for more information or if you are interested in becoming a member.



Photo courtesy Friends of the Bookmobile, St. Johns County

The St. Johns County Bookmobile takes the library to people residing in underserved areas.

St. Johns CARES announces annual Pet Food Drive

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Not only are animal shelters in great need of pet food, but individuals seeking assistance at local food pantries are also concerned about their pets. Unfortunately some are forced to make very hard decisions to give up their furry companions or give part of their own meager food supplies to their pets. Senior citizens in particular are more likely to give up their own food to feed their pets, at the cost of their own nutritional needs.

St. Johns CARES, Inc. is holding its annual Pet Food Drive from April 1 to April 24. Numerous locations will serve as host donation collection sites, including local St. Johns County

Public Library branches, schools, fitness centers and other businesses and organizations. Donations will be distributed to six animal organizations in St. Johns County: Ayla's Acres, Feline Canopy of Care, S.A.F.E., St. Augustine Humane Society, Swamp Haven and Wags and Whiskers. Donations will also be shared with local food pantries and the Pie in the Sky organization that provides produce and canned goods to homebound elderly in St. Johns County.

Monetary donations to purchase pet food can be made at www.stjohnscares.org. Individuals wishing to hold a neighborhood pet food drive should contact president@st.johnscares.org.

Supporting each other: Womens Food Alliance makes the connection

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.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 director 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."

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 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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Photos courtesy Leigh Cort

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

Bartram Trail and Switzerland Point sweep Florida Federation of Colorguards circuit competition

By Rein Hofstra
mail@floridanewslines.com

Bartram Trail High School and Switzerland Point Middle School have emerged victorious, dominating all three divisions of the prestigious Florida Federation of Colorguards Circuit (FFCC) competition. The FFCC, renowned as a premier competitive outlet for winter color guard, indoor marching percussion, concert percussion teams, and winds, witnessed an outstanding display of talent and dedication from these exceptional teams.

Winter guard, the focal point of this competition, epitomizes the artistry of indoor color guard, blending the finesse of flagwork, saber handling, mock rifle precision, and interpre-

tive dance. With teams ranging in size from a few members to as many as 45, each led by a dedicated captain, the level of competition is nothing short of extraordinary.

In a remarkable feat at the recent event held on Feb. 17 at Flagler Palm Coast High School, the Bartram Trail Varsity, Junior Varsity, and Swiss Point Middle School teams clinched the coveted first-place titles in their respective divisions, amidst stiff competition from more than 30 teams hailing from Florida and Georgia. This



Photos courtesy Rein Hofstra

triumph underscores not only their exceptional skill, but also their unwavering commitment to excellence. Notably, Swiss Point Middle School stands out as the sole middle school team amidst a sea of high school competitors. Swiss Point teammates frequently transition to Bartram Trail, forging a unique bond among these three teams and solidifying a promising future for sustained excellence in the sport.

April designated as Water Conservation Month

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Highlighting its commitment to the preservation and sustainable use of Florida's water resources, the St. Johns River Water Management District's governing board has officially proclaimed April 2024 as Water Conservation Month. This annual recognition, now in its 24th year, serves as a reminder of the critical role water conservation plays, particularly during the dry month of April when water demands escalate due to springtime planting.

"During Water Conservation Month, let's focus on using water mindfully," said St. Johns River Water Management District water conservation coordinator, Deirdre Irwin. "Over half of home water usage is for outdoor irrigation. With recent rains, the necessity to water decreases. We encourage residents not just to enhance irrigation methods but also to show restraint — remember to turn off the sprinklers when they aren't necessary."

While ensuring outdoor water use is limited, it is also important to not overlook indoor water consumption. Minor water leaks contribute to nearly 1 trillion gallons of water wasted annually in U.S. homes, as reported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In an average household, these leaks accumulate to around 10,000 gallons of water wasted each year — equivalent to the amount needed for 270 loads of laundry.

The district's commitment to water conservation extends beyond Water Conservation Month. Daily efforts by district staff include promoting water conservation through comprehensive water supply planning, permitting processes, district cost-share programs, and effective communication and outreach initiatives.

Visit www.sjrwmd.com/waterconservation/savingwater or explore the Water Less campaign website at www.WaterLessFlorida.com for additional water-saving tips.

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Gardening

How to be 'Florida-Friendly' in the garden

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale
 mail@floridanewsline.com

I recently watched a webinar hosted by the Florida Wildflower Foundation discussing what it takes to define a plant as “native” and why it matters (<https://tinyurl.com/3zt7ah85>). It’s a complicated topic. I was surprised to learn that the lovely blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*) isn’t native to Florida, but is a more western wildflower.

What is probably more relevant to a backyard gardener is the concept of ‘Florida-Friendly.’ There are nine ‘principles’ (see <https://tinyurl.com/46bvmtas>), but basically it is a way to treat the land we tend, however small, in ways to conserve and protect water sources and wildlife, like the bees and butterflies that grace our gardens. This University of Florida scheme (<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>), can help us to choose and grow a wide variety of plants, design a landscape in which they can flourish, and enjoy the wildlife that will naturally be attracted to our yards. Luckily that blanket flower fits the bill. While much of the farming world still relies largely on potentially harmful pesticides and herbicides, individuals can go a long way in mitigating those harms by following Florida-Friendly principles in their own backyards.

If you use a landscaping company, the section of the Florida-Friendly website on hiring a Florida-Friendly professional (<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/hire-florida-friendly/>), could help you assess whether a company or individual is sufficiently knowledgeable to take care of your landscape the Florida-Friendly way. If you want to tread lightly on your

land, it’s important that all the people who work on it agree about what that really means.

As the clocks go forward, there are unmistakable signs of spring. Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohioensis*) is one native wildflower coming into its own. The subtle purple-blue three-petaled flowers have a fluffy center topped with yellow anthers and are irresistible to cruising honeybees. Native Darrow’s blueberries (*Vaccinium darrowii*) bloom early and attract a variety of small pollinators, while larger bumblebees enjoy the flower spikes of African Blue basil. This is a cultivated variety which, like many salvias, is very attractive to pollinators. My native cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*) is festooned around a large beautyberry shrub — it looks glorious, and bees love it. In a few weeks’ time when the flowers fade, I’ll trim back the cross vine and the beautyberry will begin flowering. The two began growing together more than 20 years ago, and I’ve loved the combination ever since.

Check out the gardening calendar for North Florida (<https://tinyurl.com/4mzdkysv>) for a reminder of things to do and plants you can add to your garden. We all find gaps in our beds and wonder what new ideas we can try, and it’s helpful to find advice from the experts. As well as timely tips, there are links to topics such as bulbs for the Florida garden.

Enjoy our delightful spring weather while it lasts. The hot and humid days of summer are on the horizon!

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Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson
editor@floridanewsline.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 married to St. Johns County Commissioner Krista Joseph and together they have one daughter, Ali,



Photo submitted by Krista Joseph

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

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.

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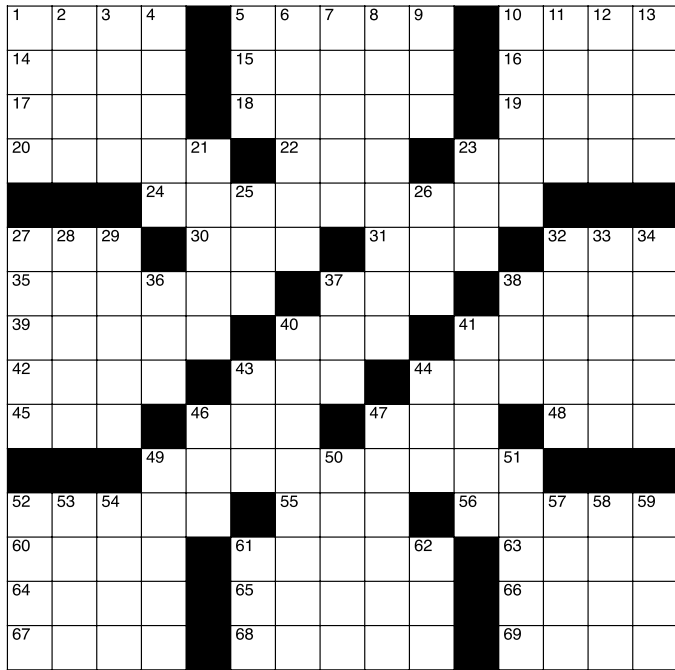
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Puzzles

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

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Excessively theatrical actors
- 5. Footwear
- 10. A way to disfigure
- 14. Exchange rate
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- 37. Variety of Chinese
- 38. A way to be anxious
- 39. Famed wrestler Hulk
- 40. Partner to cheese

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 S 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



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*

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Briefs cont. from pg. 8

He will expand the cancer medicine programs at Baptist Medical Center South and Baptist Medical Center Clay with an eye toward increasing access to innovative cancer care throughout the region's ever-growing community. His leadership will strengthen Baptist MD Anderson's ability to meet the evolving needs of the community while



Photo courtesy Baptist MD Anderson
Tomislav "Tom" Dragovich, MD, PhD.

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"Dr. Dragovich has dedicated two decades of his career to advancing our understanding of cancer biology," said Bill Putnam, MD, FACS, medical director of Baptist MD Anderson. "We are looking forward to sharing this expertise in clinical trials and cancer medicine with the Jacksonville community and beyond as part of our quest to offer tomorrow's cancer treatments, today."

Dr. Dragovich comes from Banner MD Anderson Cancer Center in Arizona, where he was one of the original founding oncologists and division chiefs of its cancer center. His most recent position was interim chief of cancer medicine and head of the clinical research division. He

received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Belgrade College of Medicine and completed his clinical training at the University of Chicago Medical Center. He also holds a PhD in Molecular Pharmacology from the University of Illinois, Chicago.

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.

Fishing

Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis
mail@floridanewslines.com

As I sit here and write this under the warmth of a spring afternoon following a cool morning and a successful fishing trip, I have such great optimism for the coming weeks and months on the water. I hope all of you feel the same. Spring just has an energy to it, you know? Not that the winter was bad, but green is my favorite color so I do enjoy the new leaves.

Unfortunately, April is probably the last month you'll want to spend time in the creeks looking for specks and bass. Not because they're not there anymore, but because there will be a lot more people on the water enjoying the warmer weather — which makes a creek fishing trip a little more dangerous and a lot less enjoyable. Blind curves and lack of courtesy will encourage you to seek less congested areas. If you do plan to spend any time in the creeks this month look for the less comfortable days, if we have any, since they can fend off the fair weather crowd.

I know you're probably wondering where the optimism went so here it is. As soon as the creeks start to get packed

with boaters the river fishing really starts ramping up. At an average of two to three miles wide in our area, the river is a great place to spread out and get some space to yourself. Redfish, sheepshead, seatrout, and even tarpon will be around.

As I mentioned last month redfish will really stand out this month as long as you can get the bait that they want. Blue crab will be on the top of their list with fresh dead shrimp behind that. Remember April is closed to shrimping in the river, so leave that net at home. Pull some shrimp out of the freezer or buy some until June 1. Focus on points, dock lines, and shell beds for the reds.

Another favorite I like to target this month is sheepshead. They'll be moving in from their spawning run and hungry for a smaller piece of crab, clam, or shrimp. They're going to be tight to structure, so seek out pilings somewhere. Wherever you're fishing for them you may want to sacrifice some bait as chum to get them fired up. Get out there and enjoy the river. Tight lines.

Summer Camp Activities Guide[®]



Summer camp options abound

By Newsline Staff
mail@floridanewline.com

Summer camp season will be here before parents know it. While children anxiously await the last day of school, adults know that it can be challenging to keep kids occupied and mentally stimulated when they aren't in the classroom. Although it may be alright to enjoy a few days lounging around and playing video games, too much sedentary behavior is not good for anyone, even children. Families turn to summer camp to provide children with activities to occupy their time when school is not in session.

Camps catering to a variety of interests are open to youngsters, so there's likely one out there to excite every child. Each year, more than 25 million children and adults take part in the camp experience, says the American Camp Association. Summer camp gives kids a chance to spread their wings and enjoy new adventures. When seeking camps, families can consider interests, proximity, cost, and other variables. Here are some of the different types of camps families can consider.

Day camp: Day camps are a popular choice. Day camps tend to be general recreation camps that offer an array of activities. Campers are dropped off (or bussed) in the morning, and arrive home early evening. These camps are readily accessible and run by various organizations. Some camps enable you to pay by the week, rather than committing to an entire season.

Sleep-away camp: Like the name implies, sleep-away camp hosts campers overnight, typically for several weeks. This may be children's first extended time away from home, and there's bound to be a few nerves that spring up. Round-the-clock activities and chances to bond with their peers can help kids overcome fears of being away from home.

Academic camp: Academic camps focus their attention on various subjects, putting like-minded children together. Academic summer programs ensure children's brains stay active, helping students avoid that dreaded "summer slide." Some of these camps mimic a school day so they are familiar to kids.



Summer camp options abound. It's only a matter of identifying a path for children and then seeking a camp that offers the desired program. Photo courtesy MetroCreative

Academic focus may vary from general academia to specific subjects like STEM to astronomy to the arts.

Scout camp: Boys and girls participating in scouting programs often have the option to attend summer camp. During camp, kids will have an opportunity to earn badges and advance their rank. Many scout districts have relationships with a specific scout campsite where troops from all over live and advance together for a week or so during the

summer.

Fitness and sports camps: Fitness-minded campers or those who play particular sports can investigate camps that focus on fitness and sports performance. These may be more rigorous than other types of camps since they involve lots of physical activity. Wilderness preparation camp is another type of camp that may fit into this category. It will highlight survival training and help mold active hikers and campers.

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Summer Camp Activities Guide[®]



When is the right time to look into summer camp?

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Summer camp provides children weeks of entertainment, camaraderie and opportunities to learn and grow. It also offers a welcome respite for parents and other caregivers from having to provide recreation for kids during summer vacation, especially if those kids will be attending a sleepaway camp.

Many children are emotionally ready to attend camp between the ages of eight and 10. Some need a little more time to mature. Parents may think they have plenty of time to investigate camps. Chances are if the weather has already warmed and summer vacation is on the horizon, then it might already be too late to get kids into most summer camps.

According to HealthyChildren.org, a division of the American Academy of Pediatrics, it is important to start researching summer camps as soon as possible. Many start booking as early as January

of the current term year. Furthermore, popular programs fill up quite fast.

Start by asking for recommendations from others. The difficulty with this approach is that many people are very protective of their camp choices, especially if the programs are particularly popular. Parents also should conduct an internet search of camps in the area and look at online reviews and ratings.

Find out if the camp is accredited by the American Camp Association. This will not guarantee a risk-free environment, but ACA accreditation is a better bet for providing a camp that is safe and nurturing.

Price also may be a factor in the camp decision. Camps are not all priced the same, so it may require doing some math to figure out what is the best value. Location also can be a consideration. Having to drive a long distance away for camp can be a deterrent to some people.



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Summer Camp Activities Guide[®]



Strategies to encourage kids to read more

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Many adults feel there's no better way to relax than curling up with a good book. Though a relaxing afternoon of reading may appeal to adults, kids could prove a little more reluctant to crack a book.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative

Reading benefits children in myriad ways. Parents can look to various strategies to foster a love of reading in their children.

Children have much to gain from reading and being read to. According to the Children's Bureau of Southern California, a nonprofit organization devoted to strengthening vulnerable children, their families and the communities where they live, reading aloud to children supports their cognitive development; improves their language skills; prepares them for academic success; increases their discipline and ability to concentrate; and improves their imagination and creativity. Many of those same benefits apply to kids who read on their own, which may be more appealing as kids advance through elementary school and aspire to become more independent.

Since children have so much to gain from cuddling up with a good book, parents can try these strategies to encourage kids to read more.

- Allow kids to read the same book. Parents of young readers or children learning to read undoubtedly know how much children like to read the same book over and over again. Though

that might not engage moms and dads, experts note that allowing kids to read the same books again and again is an effective way to foster a love of reading in children. Researchers have linked reading the same books again and again to greater vocabulary acquisition and improved reading comprehension, among other benefits. Kids are more likely to enjoy reading if they recognize more words and can better understand the stories, so parents can encourage kids to read the same books again and again.

- Take a book along when running errands or traveling. The Children's Book Review notes that books can be just as handy in cars as tablets and other devices kids use to watch movies while on

Reading strategies cont. on pg. 19

Chicken fingers make summer picnics fun

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Fried chicken long has been a popular picnic menu item, but other chicken dishes can fill in for this staple quite easily. For example, this recipe for "Sesame Chicken Fingers with Honey Dip" can be enjoyed by kids and adults on a picnic or even at casual events at home. This recipe, from "125 Best Chicken Recipes" (Robert Rose) by Rose Murray, features a sweet honey dip, but other dips can complement the meal as well.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative

Sesame Chicken Fingers with Honey Dip

Sesame Chicken Fingers with Honey Dip

Serves 4

1/3 cup light mayonnaise

3 tbsp. liquid honey

1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1/4 cup light mayonnaise

2 tbsp. Dijon mustard

2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1/3 cup dry bread crumbs

3 tbsp. sesame seeds

1 tsp. dried Italian herb seasoning

1 lb. skinless boneless chicken breasts cut into fingers, 2 inches long by 1/2-inch wide

1. Honey Dip: In a small bowl, stir

together the 1/3 cup mayonnaise, honey and 1 tablespoon lemon juice until well combined. Refrigerate if making ahead.

2. In a small bowl, combine the 1/4 cup mayonnaise, Dijon mustard and 2 tablespoons lemon juice.

3. On waxed paper or in a shallow bowl, combine the bread crumbs, sesame seeds and Italian seasoning.

4. Coat chicken with mayonnaise mixture, then with bread crumb mixture. Place on prepared cookie sheet. Bake in preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown and the chicken is no longer pink inside, turning once. Serve hot with the honey dip and potato wedges, if desired.

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Summer Camp Activities Guide[®]



Enhance staycations with themed fun days

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Staycations are an option for budget-conscious vacationers or people who simply do not want to travel too far from home due to mobility issues or other restrictions. Enhancing staycations with entertaining themes can improve the fun factor. While any themed day can be inspired by an active imagination, these ideas can get the creativity flowing.

- **Superhero day:** Embrace your favorite superhero by dressing up in his or her colors, donning a superhero T-shirt or watching an action-packed superhero movie.
- **Pajama day:** This is a fun theme for rainy days when Mother Nature keeps you indoors. Stay in your pajamas all day and enjoy a cozy, lazy day.
- **Alma mater day:** Parents and children can pull out their trusted college T-shirts, sweatshirts or other

school attire. Bake up some tasty treats in school colors and then find some old photos or look for highlights of your alma mater's sports teams online.

- **Throwback day:** Take a step back in time by playing games or engaging in activities from your youth. Teach youngsters about the toys you enjoyed or watch movies from the era in which you grew up.
- **Crazy hair day:** Embrace bed head, plug in the curling iron, double down on hair gel or pomade, or put those wacky coiffures into full effect.
- **Cultural day:** Tap into your personal heritage by researching your family tree and then preparing a meal that coordinates with your heritage.
- **Arts and crafts day:** Get crafty by tackling a creative project that the family will enjoy. Or engage in individual projects before comparing the final results collectively.

Reading strategies cont. on from. 18

the go. Though some children may get car sick when reading while a car is in motion, those who don't have plenty of time to read while in the backseat. On long road trips, promise a movie after kids have read for an hour. When running errands with the kids in tow, encourage them to read by keeping a couple of books or magazines in the backseat at all times.

- **Practice positive reinforcement with emerging readers.** Another way to encourage young readers to pick up a book more often is to praise their efforts even if they struggle with words. Patience can go a long way toward instilling a love of reading in children. If kids are struggling with a word or words, read the sentence aloud with them. Reading also has a tendency to pique readers' curiosity, so parents

can encourage kids to ask questions about the books they read and help them find answers to those questions if necessary.

- **Enroll kids in library reading programs.** Summer reading programs sponsored by local libraries have been found to be conducive to promoting reading in young children. In its report titled "The Role of Public Libraries in Children's Literacy Development," the Pennsylvania Library Association indicated that preschool and summer reading programs encourage children to spend significant amounts of time with books and also encourage parents to play a greater role in their children's literacy development. Participation in such programs is typically free of charge, so there's no reason why families cannot take advantage of these highly effective programs.



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Travel

Extremadura, Spain: A soon to be heralded tourist destination

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

Getting to the region of Extremadura in Spain takes a little extra effort — but travelers are rewarded with a wealth of Spanish history, cultural heritage, natural wonders (especially birds), exceptional cuisine, and the absence of crowds. A three-hour drive southwest of Madrid brought me to the medieval city of Cáceres. Passing through rolling countryside scattered with giant boulders and thousands of olive trees, I soon discovered a district primed for tourism and on the tip of being unveiled.

The Old Town of Cáceres (the "ce" is pronounced like "th" in "thin") is considered one of the best-preserved medieval cities in Europe, earning it UNESCO World Heritage site status. The sepia-toned walled historic center surrounds a stunning array of Roman, Islamic, Gothic, and Italian Renaissance architecture, and best of all, no modern embellishments.

I began by meandering along winding, narrow cobblestone paths, each turn bringing a picture-postcard view of a church, fortress, or civic building, most adorned with towers and steeples and many topped with stork nests or Spanish kestrels. Saintry statues filled wall niches and doorframes featured centuries-old family crests.

While strolling the 22 acres of the historic center hilltop, you'll pass the statue of patron saint San Pedro de Alcantara

in front of the Santa Maria Cathedral. The devoted stop to rub his bronze toes for blessings, while others do so for good luck. Then, take time to tour inside the cathedral to see the exquisitely carved wooden altar from the 15th century. Don't miss climbing the bell tower for one of the city's best panoramas or surmounting one of two towers on the popularly photographed Church of San Francisco Javier.

If Old Town looks like a scene from the hit drama "Game of Thrones," you are not imagining things. Filming sites included Arco de la Estrella, the arched main entrance to the historic center of Cáceres, as the fictional gate to King's Landing. When I went bird-watching at Los Barruecos Park, I saw the location used for the epic battleground where Daenerys Targaryen brought out her fire-breathing dragons. Extremadura is a bird lover's paradise with more than 360 species thriving in the area, but alas, no dragons.

One morning, I took a tour, gaining insider information from my guide, who stopped at the Convent of St. Paul (Poor Clare Nuns). He entered a side door, set coins on a secret turntable, and when the table spun back around, a box of cookies appeared. The cloistered nuns bake these, especially around Christmas and Easter. Holy Week brings a religious festival to the city, which I learned



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
View of Medieval Cecaeres.

about in the City Museum.

Cáceres became an ideal base for exploring the surrounding area, but touring outside the old town requires a car. I made exceptional trips to see ancient theater ruins in Merida and the golden splendor in Plasencia's New and Old Cathedral. I learned about Emperor Charles V's royal Monastery of San Jeronimo de Yuste.

One of the most surprising and well-hidden finds in Cáceres was Atrio, a three-Michelin-star restaurant, and its sister restaurant, Torre de Sande Eatery. Tapas (small plates) are famous in Spain, but dining happens very late by American standards. Extremadura's highlights

include Iberico ham from pigs that feast on sweet acorns and fabulous cheeses, especially Torta del Casar. I stayed at the lovely NH Collection Caceres Palacio de Oquendo, a converted 16th-century palace steps outside Cáceres' medieval walls. I also stayed in two paradors, historic buildings converted into hotels, in Spain.

Extremadura offers a wealth of tourism options that are beyond the norm and will soon be at the top of one of those must-see destination lists. Go soon before it gets crowded.

Visit www.bylandersea.com to read more of local travel writer Debi Lander's stories and travel tips.

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