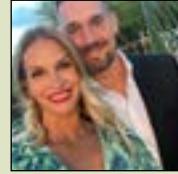




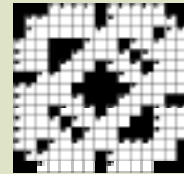
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Christian Whitehurst



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Get to Know...  
Brittany Cooney



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Puzzles



Photos courtesy St. Johns County Parks and Recreation

## Bartram Living History Fest coming soon!

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

The Bartram Living History Fest, previously known as Bartram Bash, will be held on Saturday, May 11 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Alpine Groves Park, on State Road 13 in Switzerland. This year's event corresponds with the 250th anniversary of William Bartram's visit to Florida.

Attendees will be able to experience Florida through different historical time periods from 1740 to the present, all while enjoying the beautiful Alpine Groves Park. Scheduled activities include tours of the historic Harris- Bennett Farmhouse conducted by Friends of Alpine Park as well as crafts for kids.

Presenters include historic reenactors representing William Bartram

Bartram Living cont. on pg. 13

## New Sunday hours at Bartram Trail Branch Library

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

As of April 7, four branch locations of the St. Johns County Public Library System, including the Bartram Trail Branch, have had library service hours expanded to include Sundays from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. Other branches now open seven days a week are the Main Branch, Ponte Vedra Beach Branch, and the Southeast Branch. Additionally, the Anastasia Island and Hastings branches are now open from 10 a.m. — 6 p.m. on Mondays.

These enhanced services to residents and visitors are due to the approval of additional staffing by the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners for the fiscal year 2024 budget.

“Our community has been patiently waiting for us to open on Sundays



Photos by Martie Thompson

The Bartram Trail Branch Library is now open on Sundays from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

and add Monday hours at the Anastasia Island and Hastings branches since we reduced services during

the 2008 recession,” said Library

New library hours cont. on pg. 2

## New fire stations coming to St. Johns County

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

At its meeting on April 16, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved a five-year public safety plan, which includes four new fire stations. The earliest one slated for completion, at the end of 2026, will be located in Flagler Estates, southwest of St. Augustine. The remaining three of the four stations are slated for the northern part of the county. All of the stations will include a substation for use by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office.

Station 22 is to be located in the Silverleaf community with estimated

New fire stations cont. on pg. 2



Photos courtesy St. Johns County Fire Rescue

Very early conceptual rendering of the proposed Station 23 in the Beachwalk area.

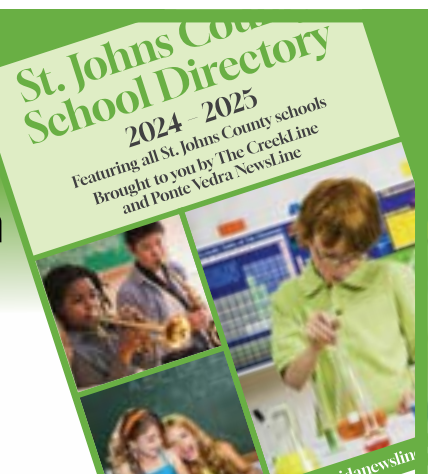


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**New library hours** cont. from pg. 1

Director Debra Rhodes Gibson. “We’re thrilled to have the support of the Board of County Commissioners to extend hours and make it more convenient for families, professionals, and those with less flexible schedules to visit the library.”

In addition to bestsellers, movies, audiobooks, and magazines St. Johns County residents who sign up for a library card receive 24/7 access to the library’s e-library for downloading e-books, reading “The New York Times” or “Wall Street Journal” digital editions, streaming movies and music, and researching for work or school projects.



Inside the Bartram Trail Branch Library.

The Bartram Trail Branch Library is now open Monday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.; Wednesday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

For more information about St. Johns County Public Library branches or the library’s resources and programs, visit [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org), email [sjcpls@tblc.libanswers.com](mailto:sjcpls@tblc.libanswers.com), or stop by any branch or bookmobile.



Something for everyone at the Bartram Trail Branch Library.

**New fire stations** cont. from pg. 1

completion at the end of 2027. The station is set to include an advanced life support engine, an aerial apparatus, a water tanker and an ambulance. Thirty-three additional firefighters will be needed to staff this station and the station is expected to cost approximately \$18.2 million.

The next station, scheduled for completion at the end of 2028, will be located in the Beachwalk/Twin Creeks area and is projected to cost \$9.9 million. Station 23 will house an advanced life support engine, an advanced life support ladder, an ambulance, and necessitate 30 additional firefighters.

Finally, Station 24 is projected for the Longleaf Pine/Roberts Road area with an anticipated cost of \$10.8 million.

The completion date is estimated to be the end of 2030. This station will have an advanced life support engine, an ambulance, and 21 additional firefighters.

County officials plan to use money the county already has to build these facilities, along with state and possibly federal dollars. Officials expect these new stations to help lower home insurance rates for people in the area.

The approved five-year public safety plan also includes a new Regional Fire Training Facility, a Medical Examiner’s Office that will serve St. Johns, Putnam, and Flagler counties, and a new headquarters for the St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office, to be located near the agency’s current training center off State Road 16 and Interstate 95.



Current Station 5, which the new Station 22 in Silverleaf will be modeled after.

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# BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

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**Favorite Activity:**

Playing with his orange wishbone

**Favorite treat:**

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**Favorite friend:**

Our family

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

Because he's a true southern gentledog!

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 Guide

in this issue!

Pages 10 - 12

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## Answers to our Puzzles PG 14

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# May

## Community Calendar

### What's Happening in St. Johns

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

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

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

**4th: Spring Jam** at River of Life United Methodist Church, 2600 Race Track Road, will be held on Saturday, May 4 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Attendees should bring a non-perishable food item for donation to local food banks as admission. Guest star lineup includes Kevin Mark Music at 10 a.m.; Benn & The Girl at 11a.m.; Michael Murphy at 12 p.m.; and Peyton Lescher Music at 1 p.m.

**7th: Happy Hookers** crochet group will meet at the Bartram Trail Branch Library on May 7 and May 21 from 5:30 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. The group crochets or knits blankets for cancer patients at area hospitals. All skill levels are welcome. Visit [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org) or call (904) 827-6960.

**7th: Honeybee Quilters** Guild will meet on Tuesday, May 7 at 6:30 p.m. at Mandarin Presbyterian Church in the Woody Room (left-side far door) at 11844 Mandarin Road. The guild's traditional "Ugly" Auction of member provided sewing related items (not

magazines) will be held. Bring a checkbook for your new treasures. Wearing masks is optional. New members/guests welcome. Visit [honeybeequilters.org](http://honeybeequilters.org) for more information.

**8th: 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 May 8 from 11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**8th -11th: Bartram** Trail Friends of the Library Book Sale will be held at the Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd., May 8 - 11.

**9th: 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 May 9 from 12:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**11th: The Friends of Alpine** Park will offer Harris-Bennett Farmhouse tours as part of the Bartram Living History Fest, to be held at Alpine Groves Park, 2060 State Road 13, on May 11 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Email [friendsofalpinegrovespark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofalpinegrovespark@gmail.com) for more information.

**11th: The Bartram** Trail Genealogy Club meets the second Saturday of each month (this month, May 11) from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. Staff from the Bartram Trail Library will present the new St. Johns County Library Catalog system and its available resources for genealogy. There will be time for open discussion and Great Finds and Brick Walls. Email [ginglish@comcast.net](mailto:ginglish@comcast.net) for more information.

Visit [www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClub-Group](http://www.facebook.com/groups/BTGenClub-Group) to send a request to join the club.

**13th: ESOL Learn to Read**, with partners at Learn to Read St. Johns, will be held on Monday, May 13. The beginner class is from 3:15 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. and the intermediate and/or conversation class is from 4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Register at [www.sjcpls.org](http://www.sjcpls.org). Walkins will be welcome as space allows. Call 904-827-6960 or email Donna at [dbraasch@sjcfl.us](mailto:dbraasch@sjcfl.us) for more information.

**13th: The Northwest** St. Johns County United for Progress Club will celebrate its seventh birthday on Monday, May 13 at 6:30 p.m. Special guest speaker will be State Representative Angie Nixon. For more information, visit [www.nwstjohnsup.com](http://www.nwstjohnsup.com) or email [nwsjcp@gmail.com](mailto:nwsjcp@gmail.com).

**14th: Bartram Trail** Newcomers' and Women's Club will host its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, May 14 at 11 a.m. at Club Continental, 2143 Astor Street in Orange Park. This month's theme is "Heritage Day." 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 May 2. Visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](http://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) for food choices and updated information.

**15th: Empowering** Conversations with Rev. Yvonne McAndrew will be held on May 15 from 7 p.m. - 8 p.m. at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road. Come for an hour of insight and connection. Cost: optional. Call (904) 287-1505 or email [UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com](mailto:UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com) for more information.

**16th: William Bartram** Scenic Highway Group will meet on Thursday, May 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](mailto:alabbat@comcast.net) or call (904) 699-8475.

**20th: The All Star Quilters** Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. for socializing prior to the 10 a.m. meeting on Monday, May 20 at First Christian Church, 11924 San Jose Blvd. Sandy Fitzpatrick of Hissyfitz Designs will be sharing her machine applique expertise. Sew and Tell is always a feature. Guests are welcome. Visit [www.allstarquilters.org](http://www.allstarquilters.org) for more information.

**24th: "How to Avoid** Becoming Victim to Predatory Lending" 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, May 24 from 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Call (904) 209-3655 (Monday - Thursday) or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org) for more information.

**25th: Dress a Girl** Around the World at the Bartram Trail Branch Library will be held on Saturday, May 25 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.

**31st: Armand** and Angelina Musical Comedy Show 2.0, will be presented May 31 at 7 p.m. at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road. Join us for an evening of music and laughter. Tickets are \$40 or \$30 before May 24. Visit [unityinjax.com](http://unityinjax.com) to purchase tickets. Call (904) 287-1505 or email [UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com](mailto:UCCLoffice2777@gmail.com) for more information.

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**with St. Johns County Commissioner Christian Whitehurst, District 1**

**Q: Can you give us an update on the progress by Parks and Rec with regard to refurbishing the Switzerland Community Center?**

A: According to staff as of April 17, they are progressing through the structural analysis and future visioning for the site. The draft structural reports and current condition assessments are being developed. Additionally, they have submitted a request to the SJC Development Review Committee to confirm the site opportunities and constraints that we will utilize in conceptual site planning. Departments that have provided feedback so far are: Planning and Zoning, Environmental; Cultural and Historical; Department of Health; Fire Services; and Utilities. There are Land Development Code requirements (Northwest Sector Overlay District compliance, development setbacks, landscape buffers, parking requirements, sewer connectivity, fire hydrant and suppression systems, etc.) for this site which we must work through. The intent is to bring a presentation / discussion to the Northwest Tower Committee and Bartram Scenic Highway groups upon completion.

**Q: Can you share information about the new fire stations that were recently approved by the Board of County Commissioners?**

A: We approved the funding mechanism to build four new fire stations over the next six years, three of which are in the northern part of the county. Each will have an SJSO substation attached. We are using impact fees and state funds to finance the construction.

**Q: Also, there are new parks coming soon?**

A: Yes, we also approved a \$123 million regional park plan to build four brand new parks and do a complete overhaul of Davis Park in No-catee. Of interest to readers of The CreekLine:

Greenbriar Road, 30 acres to include baseball, softball and pickleball courts.

Shearwater to include basketball and pickleball courts

Across from Shearwater, a Sportsplex with eight multipurpose fields which can be used for football, soccer, lacrosse and even baseball and softball. One cool feature will be a stadium field with a track around it. This will be the first in the county that's not at a school and will be open to the public.

All four parks are fast tracked and

scheduled to be open by the end of 2026, using impact fees from developers as well as state funds.

**Q: How were you able to fund these worthwhile and much needed projects without the sales tax proposed a couple of years ago or funds from property taxes?**

A: Our budget director, Jesse Dunn, along with County Administrator Joy Andrews and Public Works Director Greg Caldwell came together and did everything in their power to creatively fund these projects. We have two bonds totalling \$170 million, while the proposed sales tax was projected to provide \$500 million. So, these projects do not represent a replacement for the sales tax projects, but we feel like we addressed the most critical needs.

**Q: Can you give insight on the county's purchase of the World Golf Village sites?**

A: The plan is for us to find a good use for the community. We heard loud and clear from neighbors that they didn't want a theme park (actually had been proposed) or multifamily housing on this site. We want to have control over the property and if we let the current owners sell the sites piecemeal, some of these undesirable uses might have happened. I think it's a great site for a library and that is being investigated. Basically, we thought it better to wait for the right use at this point. The IMAX theater will remain open.

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

A: The county just kicked off its "Enjoy, Don't Destroy" anti-vandalism campaign. We spend tens of thousands of dollars cleaning up vandalism perpetrated by members of our community, often kids. The message is: this has a high cost, is not funny, and has a serious impact on your tax dollars.

And in exciting news, West Augustine was ranked first in the state for placement of the state's Black History Museum, which will be all state-funded. We are going to Tallahassee on Friday, April 19 for a meeting and then the final decision for placement will be made this summer.

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

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

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

**Q: Since May is Mental Health Awareness Month, can you share some background on what SJSO is doing to support its employees?**

A: Mental health is personal to me and our agency and it's something we address every day. There are 57.8 million adults aged 18 and older in the US who experience mental illness each year. Additionally, on average 22 veterans die by suicide daily. I ask myself, how do we provide better service to St. Johns County? And that is to make sure that

our employees are mentally, physically, and spiritually fit and make sure that all services are available to all of our employees.

**Q: What are some of the offerings of SJSO's mental health initiative?**

A: We have a number of things. First, I added a licensed clinical psychologist to our staff. She has 20 years of experience and is a Navy veteran and she is available to all of our employees, not just our deputies. Also, we partner with K9s for Warriors. We brought in two

dogs, Simba and Sandy, who completed the program and are certified as station dogs. They work outside the agency, too, as well as providing therapy and wellness for our employees. We also have a robust peer to peer team and we are sharing what we do with agencies across the state.

**Q: How do you address wellness?**

A: For physical wellness, we offer memberships in gyms and have some gyms located on our properties. We offer things like boxing and yoga. Faith-based wellness is important and we have chaplains on staff. For financial wellness, we have financial advisors on staff. We have multiple community partners, including UF Health, Care Connect+ and EPIC. We recently partnered with Lakeview Health for bed space if needed.

**Q: Can you tell us about the Cordico app?**

A: This is a brand new, confidential app for all of our employees and their families as well as our retirees. It was set up specifically for SJSO and includes options like finding a therapist, self assessment, career wellness, family wellness, financial wellness, faith-based

wellness, leadership, nutrition, peer to peer support, sleep deprivation and trauma. The app allows the user to get confidential information or immediate help if needed in each of these areas. We are trying to be open minded and innovative in our approach to mental health and wellness. We check out other agencies and what they are doing to see if we can duplicate and even make it better for our men and women.

**Q: Do you have anything else to share in this area?**

A: Mental health is as important to me as physical health and is a top priority at SJSO.

If a citizen is suffering from a mental health crisis, they can call 988 to receive help. Additional resources are available through the local chapter of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), (904) 827-7404 or [www.namivfsj.org](http://www.namivfsj.org).

**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@sjsj.org](mailto:sheriff@sjsj.org) or call me at (904) 824-8304. Also, our website, [www.sjsj.org](http://www.sjsj.org) has a wealth of resources.

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

**Q: What is the number one item you want to communicate to readers this month?**

A: It's time to register kindergarten and new students for the next school year. It's very important that we know how many students are coming so that we can know how much staff to hire. To register, you can contact your zoned school or go online to begin the registration process. If you don't know which school you are zoned for, the district's website ([www.stjohns.k12.fl.us](http://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 any school administrator updates to share?**

A: Long time Nease principal Lisa Kunze is retiring at the end of this school year and Superintendent Forson has named her replacement: Gina Fonseca, currently the principal of Freedom Crossing Academy. Her roots are in high school, so she's well prepared for this shift and I know she will do a great job. Replacing her as principal at Freedom Crossing Academy will be Melissa Lime, who is currently the vice principal of middle school at Freedom Crossing.

In other news, Bethany Mitidieri is the interim principal at Cunningham Creek Elementary since the school's previous principal, Katie O'Connell, was named

principal of the new school, Trout Creek Academy.

**Q: What is the latest information on the new schools?**

A: Mascots have been chosen by the principals with input from the school community. Trout Creek Academy has chosen the Terrapins as their mascot, and Lakeside Academy has chosen Sasquatch as theirs. Construction is well on the way to completion for these two schools that will open this fall. Also, we are making great progress on the River-Town school. Soon, residents will begin to see vertical construction on that site.

In addition, in April the school board approved the design and borrowed the money for new schools to be built in Nocatee and Silverleaf. We will put these schools out to bid very soon.

**Q: What else do you have to share with District 1?**

A: Graduation season is upon us! Graduations begin May 17, with Bartram Trail and Creekside high schools each having their ceremonies on May 18. We are excited to launch a new class of young adults.

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

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



**with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes**

**Q: Have all processes been completed for the 2024 Presidential Preference Primary Election?**

A: Yes, our final process was the Post-Election Audit completed on Friday, April 4. The Post-Election Audit was completed with 99.996 percent accuracy.

**Q: Was this Post-Election Audit any different than the audits conducted in the past?**

A: Yes. This Post-Election Audit was the first audit conducted in St. Johns County using our new Clear Ballot Clear Audit System. We are very pleased with the system and grateful to have an additional avenue to provide confidence in verified trusted election results in St. Johns County.

**Q: What is the Clear Ballot Clear Audit System?**

A: The Clear Ballot Clear Audit System was approved by the Florida Division of Elections in June 2023 for conducting post-election audits. The system provides an independent audit of voting results separate from the tabulation machines, which gives voters added confidence in the transparency of St. Johns County elections.

**Q: How does the new audit system work?**

A: All voted ballots are scanned into the ClearAudit system. During the canvassing of vote-by-mail ballots, voted ballots are tabulated and then scanned in the audit system. During early voting, voted ballots are scanned in the audit system the following day. Voted ballots cast on Election Day are scanned into the audit system the day after the election.

All scanning events are noted on the St. Johns County Canvassing Board schedule and are open to the public — any person is welcome to attend.

**Q: Do you share information about the Post-Election Audit?**

A: The St. Johns County Canvassing Board schedule, forms, notices, and more can be found on our website, [www.votesjc.gov](http://www.votesjc.gov).

**Q: Why was the audit 99.996% accurate?**

A: There was a poll worker error due to a ballot jam on Election Day in which one ballot was run through the DS200 scanner twice. The error will be addressed in our next session of Poll Worker Training for the 2024 Primary Election in August. This was the only discrepancy encountered during the election.

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

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## with St. Johns County Clerk of Circuit Court and Comptroller Brandon Patty

### Q: Why is jury duty considered a civic duty?

A: The Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to a trial by jury. To have a jury though requires jurors, who are selected from their respective counties for the most part. In other words, St. Johns County citizens for St. Johns County cases. The justice system cannot fully operate without jurors so, like paying taxes, citizens can be compelled to act to complete their civic duty to the country and county.

### Q: What is the role of the clerk's office in jury management?

A: Our office manages the summoning and organizing of prospective jurors reporting for jury duty. Each month, we issue more than 500 jury summonses to residents using information provided by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

Upon receiving the notice, those being summoned are welcome to check in online and submit any excusal or deferral requests. The process essentially starts with a larger pool before whittling down to a panel consisting of potentially six

to 12 selected jurors. After a circuit or county judge qualifies 50 – 100 prospective jurors, they are sent to the courtroom for voir dire, which is questioning by the judge and lawyers. Throughout this, our office works hard to ensure the process is efficient, effective, and not unduly burdensome.

### Q: What message would you like to convey to residents summoned?

A: I would like to encourage residents to view it as an opportunity to serve their community and fellow citizens. When serving on a jury, you are effectively the judicial branch of government, deciding the facts of a case brought forth by the state or a fellow citizen. It's a big deal and a vitally important component of the American way of life.

### Q: What is the best way for residents to contact you?

A: Residents can call my office at (904) 819-3601 or my cell at (904) 599-8688. My email address is [BPatty@stjohnsclerk.com](mailto:BPatty@stjohnsclerk.com). Most questions can be answered by visiting our website, [www.stjohnsclerk.com](http://www.stjohnsclerk.com), which is most commonly used to pay traffic citations or search court records.

## Council on Aging annual meeting reviews year and envisions future

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

Nonprofit organization St. Johns County Council on Aging (COA) held its annual meeting of the COA board of directors on Thursday, March 21 at COA's River House in St. Augustine. Members of the public attended the meeting with the board of directors and COA staff.

New members who had joined the board over the course of the previous year, Linda Ducat, Sheriff Robert Hardwick, Roger Kline, and Casey Van Rysdam, were introduced. Dr. Todd Batenhorst presented the slate of nominated officers for the coming year. Elected were President Steve Harrison, Vice President Michele Carmines, Secretary Len Tucker, and Treasurer Casey Van Rysdam.

COA Executive Director Becky Yanni reported increases in services and programs across the board in 2023. Notably, participation at COA's senior centers increased 53 percent and River House lifelong learning program participation increased 76 percent. Sunshine Center adult day care participation increased 11

percent and participation in COA's Integrative Memory Enhancement Program increased 60 percent. Nutrition services, including home-delivered Meals on Wheels and congregate meals, increased by 11 percent.

Yanni detailed plans to provide greater safety and accessibility to COA's Coastal Community Center in St. Augustine. The Shelter and Shade project will result in an elevated, covered, and safer bus pull-through entry to the center. The phased renovation plans include sidewalks that will make pedestrian traffic from nearby neighborhoods easier and safer to traverse. Remaining funding required for the project is being sought from members of the community.

"We look forward to working closely with our partners — our donors, funders, volunteers, and all COA champions — to continue providing the quality programs and services our community's elders so need and deserve," Yanni said.

Contact COA's Amy Robinson at (904) 209-3700 or [arobinson@coasjc.org](mailto:arobinson@coasjc.org) or visit [www.coasjc.org](http://www.coasjc.org) for more information.



Photo courtesy Council on Aging Council on Aging board of directors 2024.



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# ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

## Strategies to protect your goals from consistent inflation

By Chris Thompson, CFP®, CMFA®, CRPC®

If you're like most investors, you've noticed the impact of higher inflation in recent years, whether at the gas pump or the grocery store. American investors are experiencing the effects of prolonged inflation for the first time since the early 1980s. As a result, many are concerned about how inflation levels will impact their ability to reach their long-term financial goals. While it may not be possible to avoid the effects of inflation altogether, there are several strategies investors can utilize to mitigate the impact of inflation on their financial plan. Here are three investment considerations that may help address inflation concerns and better prepare your goals for long-term success.

1: Keep your money invested. When the inflation rate soared in 2022, stock and bond markets declined. Some investors responded by pulling money out of the market. This can be counterproductive as investors too often miss much of a market's recovery gain before they put

their money back to work. For example, the U.S. stock market (as measured by the Standard & Poor's 500 stock index, an unmanaged index of stocks often used as a benchmark of market performance), declined 25 percent between January and October 2022. But by the end of 2023, the S&P 500 regained nearly all of the ground lost in the bear market (S&P Dow Jones Indices). It is normal for markets to go through ups and downs. Investors that stay the course and keep their money invested commonly see their investments make up gains that were lost in a sudden downturn. While it may be tempting to remove yourself from the market during volatile periods, it could be helpful to stay invested at a level that reflects your risk tolerance.

2: If time is on your side, take advantage of stocks. Over time, stocks have historically outpaced inflation, an important consideration as you try to build wealth to achieve your ultimate financial goals with more confidence. This doesn't mean that year-in, year-out, stocks will

keep you ahead of inflation. 2022 is a good example of a year when stocks declined as inflation rose. But if you have time to let your money work for you, stocks have historically outpaced the rise in living costs. According to data collected since 1871, stocks have grown faster than inflation for holding periods of 20 years or more (NBER, Bloomberg, American Enterprise Investment Services, Inc.). Investors who can ride the highs and lows of markets are often better suited to keep up, if not pass, the rate of inflation.

3: For short-term money, seek higher yields. You may have money set aside for short-term needs, such as your emergency fund or to cover upcoming expenses. In these times of elevated inflation, you'll want to find ways to earn more competitive yields on your short-term savings. Search out options such as money market funds, CDs, short-term U.S. Treasury securities and other savings vehicles that offer yields that may keep pace with inflation. Utilizing these tools may allow you to stay more liquid

with your investments while hedging against the impacts of inflation.

Whether an economic cycle brings conventional or elevated inflation it should be considered as a factor of your long-term financial plan. A financial advisor can help develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses the inflation environment today and over the long term.

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

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## Orthodontic practice has new owner

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

Dr. Craig Hadgis is the new solo owner of the local orthodontic practice that he joined in 2018. The new name of the practice is Smiles by Dr. Craig Hadgis, Orthodontist.

“I am proud to be able to continue to serve the orthodontic needs of the local community with the changeover of our practice, and continue to treat patients of all ages, children, teens and adults,” said Dr. Hadgis. “My family and I have strong ties to the local community and we are very grateful to be able to make a difference in the lives of our patients by helping create a healthy and beautiful smile to last a lifetime.”

Dr. Hadgis has more than a decade of experience in the orthodontic field including

digitally planned orthodontics, Invisalign, Damon, Insignia and Light-Force appliance systems. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering and Masters degree in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Michigan. Dr. Hadgis received his Doctorate of Dental Surgery and post DDS degree in Advanced Education in General Dentistry from the University of Detroit Mercy. He earned his Orthodontic Speciality Certification from the School of Orthodontics at Jacksonville University.

Dr. Hadgis is certified by the American Board of Orthodontics and has served as president and treasurer of the St. Augustine Dental Society for the past five years. He is a member of the American Board of Orthodontics, College of Diplomates of the American Board of

Orthodontics, and American Association of Orthodontists. In addition, Dr. Hadgis is also a member of the World Federation of Orthodontists, Southern Association of Orthodontists, Florida Association of Orthodontists, the American Dental Association, Florida Dental Association, the Northeast District Dental Association and the Jacksonville Dental Society.



Photo courtesy Dr. Craig Hadgis  
 Dr. Craig Hadgis

Smiles by Dr. Craig Hadgis, Orthodontist offers a full range of orthodontic treatments at its offices in St. Johns and St. Augustine. Visit <https://www.dr.craighadgisortho.com/> for more information.

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# Summer Camp Activities Guide<sup>®</sup>



## Tasty meal gets kids cooking in the kitchen

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewline.com

Getting children to try new foods is not always easy. Kids have a tendency to be picky when it comes to the foods they eat, and many youngsters are reluctant to try all but the most familiar foods. Dining on different foods helps to develop the palate and also ensures that children are being exposed to an array of nutrients and vitamins that are essential for growing bodies.

One way to help children be more receptive to new foods is to involve them when choosing the menu and preparing meals. A youngster who went shopping, picked out foods and assisted in the kitchen may be more eager to try the

final product than one who has not.

Mexican-inspired dishes may be one way to put new foods on the dinner table. "Cheddar Beef Enchiladas" from "Casseroles, Slow Cooker & Soups" by Taste of Home editors (RDA Enthusiast Brands) features familiar ingredients combined with some more exotic flavors. Enchiladas can appeal to picky eaters.

### Cheddar Beef Enchiladas

Yield: 2 casseroles (5 to 6 enchiladas each)

1 pound ground beef

1 envelope taco seasoning

1 cup water

2 cups cooked rice

1 can (16 oz.) refried beans

2 cups shredded cheddar cheese, divided

10 to 12 flour tortillas (8 inches), warmed

1 jar (16 oz.) salsa

1 can condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted

In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in taco seasoning and water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Stir in rice. Cook and stir until liquid is evaporated.

Spread about 2 tablespoons of refried beans, ¼ cup of the beef mixture and 1 tablespoon cheese down the center of each tortilla; roll up. Place seam-side down in two greased 13x9x2-inch baking dishes.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative  
Cheddar Beef Enchiladas are a meal that can be prepared and enjoyed by the entire family. Featuring familiar ingredients presented in a new way, they can satisfy even the pickiest of eaters.

Combine salsa and soup; pour down the center of the enchiladas. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake one casserole, uncovered, at 350 F for 20 to 25 minutes or until heated through and cheese is melted. Cover and freeze remaining casserole for up to 3 months.

To use frozen casserole: Thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Cover and bake at 350 for 30 minutes. Uncover; bake 5 to 10 minutes longer, or until heated through and cheese is melted.

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# Summer Camp Activities Guide<sup>®</sup>



## 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's already 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. Even though summer weather may be furthest from one's mind in the middle of winter, this

is the time when summer camp decisions must be made.

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. They may not be inclined to give up the secrets to their good thing, especially if that means kids will have to compete for limited spots. 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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  - For children 3 yrs (as of 9/1/23) to 6th grade\*
- Afternoon Camp Options 12:30 PM - 5:00 PM | \$100
  - Basketball Camp 2nd-5th grade\*
  - Arts, Crafts, and Fun Camp | 1st - 5th grade\*
  - Mission: Delta 12 2 Preview age details below

Volunteers are 7th graders to adults

**Camp Details for Weeks 2-7**

- For Kindergarten to 6th grade\*
  - 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM \$210 per week
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# Summer Camp Activities Guide<sup>®</sup>



## Pool safety essentials to live by

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

A backyard pool can be a wonderful summer oasis. Swimming immediately cools people off on hot and humid days, and even provides thorough exercise that works many different muscles in the body. And summer revelers know that swimming and splashing in the pool is an entertaining activity for people of all ages.

Though pools are great summer spaces, one downside of pool usage is the potential for drowning. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that, every year in the United States, there are an estimated 3,960 fatal unintentional drownings — an average of 11 drowning deaths per day. In addition, around 8,080 nonfatal drownings occur. It's important to note that many of these incidents are unrelated to pool usage, as boating and even bathtub accidents contribute to drowning as well. But a 2020 review of 2,213 unintentional immersion deaths and other water-related injury deaths in Canada by the Canadian Red Cross found that immersion deaths were most likely to occur when

swimming and wading. Children aged one to four, males, and people with seizure disorders or other medical conditions like autism are among those at a higher risk for drowning.

Pools are fun, but it's a great responsibility to keep all swimmers safe. The following are some pool safety measures to put into effect.

- Keep water sanitary. Make sure pool water is chemically balanced so that it is comfortable to swim in and will not harbor any pathogens that can make swimmers ill. The pool equipment company Pahlen says the ideal water pH is 7.4 because that is the same as the pH in human eyes and mucous membranes, and it also supports good chlorine disinfection. The free chlorine content of a pool can range from 0.5 to 1.6 to keep it sanitary. A quality testing kit can help pool owners balance water.
- Learn your local ordinances. Local ordinances will spell out which precautionary measures are required by law for people who have a backyard pool. These often include a fenced yard, a fence around in ground pools that is at least



Photo courtesy MetroCreative

Pools are fun, but it's a great responsibility to keep all swimmers safe.

four feet high, self-latching gates, and/or pool ladders that can be locked or closed when the pool isn't in use.

- Rely on non-slip surfaces. The pool environment can be wet and slippery. Utilizing materials like non-slip deck surfaces or rougher concrete finishes around pools can help reduce some slips and falls. The pool resource Poolonomics says people should be instructed to avoid running near or around the pool.
- Inspect water returns and drains. PoolSafety.gov warns that hair, limbs, jewelry, or bathing suits can get stuck in a drain or suction opening in a pool

or spa. Broken or missing drain covers should be replaced immediately and no swimming should occur until the issue is remedied.

- Install other barriers. Barriers, alarms and pool covers can save lives and prevent access to pool water when the pool area is not in use.
- Learn how to swim and perform CPR. Families can take swimming lessons to become better swimmers. Learning how to perform CPR on adults and children can save lives. Courses are available at many hospitals and community centers or through the Red Cross.

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## Get to Know ...

By Martie Thompson  
editor@floridanewslines.com

### Brittany Cooney

Brittany Cooney grew up in NW St. Johns County, and after some “hopping around” has found herself back here to raise her own children with husband Mike Cooney. Brittany moved at a young age with her family, the Sorensons of Firehouse Subs fame, to Julington Creek. She attended Julington Creek Elementary, Fruit Cove Middle and Bartram Trail High School, where she was on the basketball, track, and dance teams. She graduated from the University of Central Florida with a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies — in her case, statistics and psychology. After stints living overseas and in New York City, she returned to St. Johns. She and Mike are owners of Ember & Iron, a live fire restaurant on County Road 210. Their second restaurant, Gemma Fish + Oyster in San Marco, opened in December. Brittany and Mike are parents to six children, including a six-week-old daughter and one child from a previous relationship of Mike’s.

**Q: How did you decide on your Interdisciplinary Studies major at UCF?**

A: Initially I was an education major and I lived in Spain, teaching English, for four months while I was in college. I loved the nurturing nature of the school system there, but when I returned home I found the schools are so different here. I switched degrees at that point. I would say the end goal is a doctorate in psychology ... but that won’t be anytime soon.

**Get to Know ...**

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



Photo courtesy Brittany Cooney  
Brittany and Mike Cooney

**Q: Where did you live after college?**

A: I hopped around a lot. I went to Paris for a while as I had a love for fashion and went there to take some classes. Then I moved to New York City to pursue a career in fashion. I had a really cool job where I helped style people in penthouses who had nothing but Gucci in their closets.

**Q: How did you get into the restaurant business? And did you ever work at a Firehouse Subs?**

A: Despite it being my family’s business, I only worked for about a week at a Firehouse Subs location. Then I was a server and a bartender in college. But it wasn’t until I worked in New York City and lived over a bakery that I worked in a kitchen and came full circle in the restaurant business.

**Q: How did you find your way back to St. Johns County?**

A: Before I went to New York City, I worked as a bartender at Julington Creek Fish Camp. This is where I met

Mike, who was the executive chef there. We started dating about a month before I was due to move to New York City. I lived there for about a year, but I missed him, so I moved back. Nine months later we had our first child and a year after that, in 2018, we were married.

**Q: What was the idea behind opening Ember & Iron and then Gemma Fish + Oyster?**

A: First we thought we wanted to open an ice cream shop. We did all the research ... and then some-

one said to us, “You have a Five Star chef [my husband Mike], why don’t you open a restaurant?” So we came up with the idea of a live fire restaurant since Mike has always loved fire cooking. We wanted to open nearby our house because we want to feed our neighbors. I love our location; it feels like home every time I step inside.

Ember & Iron had been open about nine months when a leasing agent for a new shopping center in San Marco came in for dinner. He told us our concept would be great at his shopping center, but we had an idea for a new concept instead: “worldly seafood.” We now have an Australian chef and a sous chef from Guam at Gemma.

**Q: Do you have any free time?**

A: Not really! I am 50/50 partners with Chef Mike in both restaurants. I oversee the front of house and the operation of the business. I spend as much time as possible with my children during the day and then I’m at the restaurant at night. I’m very busy, but I love it.

**Bartram Living** cont. from pg. 1

and Lone Wolf.

“In planning the event for this year we wanted to rebrand it so that it focused on a more complete story of the property,” said Kelly Ussia, Supervisor of Outdoor Recreation for St. Johns County Parks and Recreation. “This year will incorporate additional interpretation to add the history of the Fatio family and the property’s agricultural history.”

Attendees will be able to catch shuttles from Hickory Creek Elementary. Shuttles will transport attendees to and from Alpine Groves Park starting at 9:30 a.m. and will run until 1:30 p.m. Alpine Groves Park is located at 2060 State Road 13.

Contact Kelly Ussia at kussia@sjcfl.us for more information.

**Q&A with Vicky Oakes** cont. from pg. 7

**Q: What’s next for St. Johns County voters?**

A: The next election will be the 2024 Primary Election on Aug. 20, 2024. Many federal, state, and local offices will be on the ballot, and some races may even be decided in this Primary Election.

More information will be provided as we approach the election, so stay connected by following the Elections Office on Facebook, X, LinkedIn, and Instagram, by visiting our website at www.votesjc.gov, and by subscribing to our monthly newsletter.

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

A: Readers can email me at voakes@votesjc.gov or call me at (904) 823-2238.

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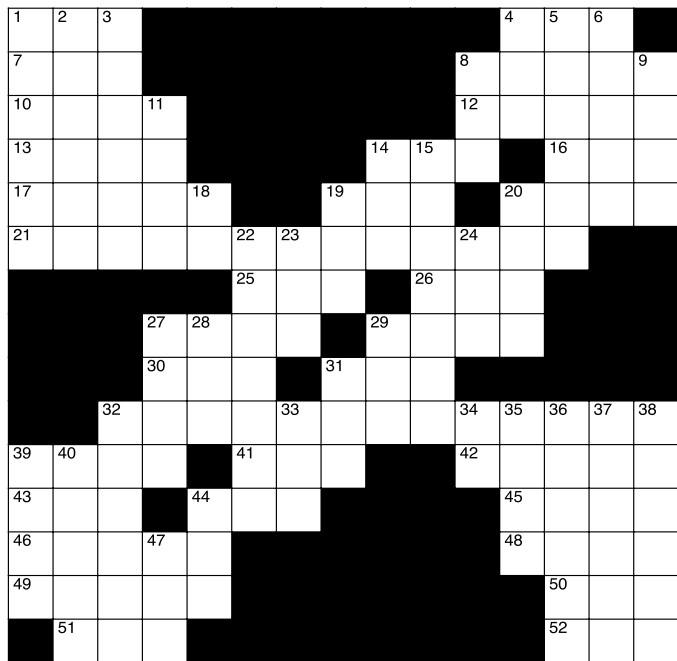
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# Puzzles

Answers on page 3  
Provided by MetroCreative



### CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Fashion accessory
- 4. Engine additive
- 7. Small, faint constellation
- 8. Gives a job
- 10. Self-righteous person
- 12. Caucasian language
- 13. Surinam toad
- 14. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- 16. Former French coin
- 17. Levels the score
- 19. What stage performers do
- 20. Egyptian Sun god
- 21. Localities
- 25. Spherical body
- 26. Licensed for Wall Street
- 27. Perfect

- 29. It's on many people's heads
- 30. Boxing's GOAT
- 31. Photo
- 32. Popular HBO show
- 39. Popular music awards show
- 41. Pouch
- 42. Lake in Botswana
- 43. Unruly group
- 44. One-fourth
- 45. Very eager
- 46. Edward \_\_\_, author and writer
- 48. Flying insect
- 49. Dragged forcibly
- 50. Thus far
- 51. Not just "play"
- 52. Commercials

### CLUES DOWN

- 1. Occur
- 2. Show up
- 3. Capital of Taiwan
- 4. Brother or sister
- 5. Secret get-togethers
- 6. Type of tea
- 8. Where the action is
- 9. Cast out
- 11. Crime group
- 14. Type of vessel (abbr.)
- 15. Accept and handle
- 18. Sacrifice hit
- 19. One who buys and sells securities simultaneously
- 20. Month
- 22. Most thin
- 23. Naturally occurring material
- 24. Luke's mentor \_\_\_-Wan
- 27. Postmodernist Austrian "Ho
- 28. Aquatic salamander
- 29. Baseball stat
- 31. Beginning military rank
- 32. Talk rapidly and unintelligibly
- 33. Paddle
- 34. Caregiver (abbr.)
- 35. Old Irish alphabet
- 36. Japanese city
- 37. In a way, acted
- 38. Things to see
- 39. Nursemaid
- 40. Type of tooth
- 44. To be demonstrated
- 47. Defunct European group

## ALL IN BLOOM WORD SEARCH

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

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

### WORDS

- ANEMONE
- ASTER
- AZALEA
- BEGONIA
- BLOOM
- CARNATION
- CHRYSANTHEMUM
- DAFFODIL
- DAHLIA
- DAISY
- DANDELION
- HYDRANGEA
- IRIS
- LAVENDER
- LILY
- MARIGOLD
- ORCHID
- PEONY
- POPPY
- ROSE
- SNAPDRAGON
- SUNFLOWER
- TULIP
- ZINNIA

☉ \*\* ☐ ☑ ☒ ☓ ☔ ☕ ☖ ☗ ☘ ☙ ☚ ☛ ☜ ☝ ☞ ☟ ☠ ☡ ☢ ☣ ☤ ☥ ☦ ☧ ☨ ☩ ☪ ☫ ☬ ☭ ☮ ☯ ☰ ☱ ☲ ☳ ☴ ☵ ☶ ☷ ☸ ☹ ☺ ☻ ☼ ☽ ☾ ☿ ♀ ♁ ♂ ♃ ♄ ♅ ♆ ♇ ♈ ♉ ♊ ♋ ♌ ♍ ♎ ♏ ♐ ♑ ♒ ♓ ♔ ♕ ♖ ♗ ♘ ♙ ♚ ♛ ♜ ♝ ♞ ♟ ♠ ♡ ♢ ♣ ♤ ♥ ♦ ♧ ♨ ♩ ♪ ♫ ♬ ♭ ♮ ♯ ♮ ♯ ♮ ♯ ♮ ♯

## CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to flowers.  
Each number corresponds to a letter.  
(Hint: 14 = N)

- A. **23 18 26 15 6**  
Clue: Flower part
- B. **9 6 11 11 20 5 14 12**  
Clue: Producing flowers
- C. **25 15 2 20 26 8**  
Clue: Pleasant heat
- D. **17 22 14 17 8 5 14 18**  
Clue: Light from sun

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**Briefs**

**ElderSource seeks St. Johns County representation for Advisory Council**

ElderSource, a nonprofit organization that works to empower elders, adults with disabilities and their caregivers in order to age with dignity and independence, is seeking volunteer members to its Advisory Council, specifically seniors who reside in St. Johns County.

Duties for an Advisory Council member are to report on the needs of elderly and emerging issues in their respective counties; review and comment on the agency's Area Plan; study legislative issues and advocate on behalf of the elderly; assist in promoting the mission, programs and activities of the agency; and to educate the public about the needs and the contributions of the elderly.

"Our Advisory Council members are an important asset to our organization," said Linda Levin, CEO of ElderSource. "They are an active voice we need to hear in order for us to stay in touch on senior issues affecting the communities in which they live."

Meetings are held the third Thursday of every other month from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. and conducted virtually using the Zoom platform.

For more information about how to become an ElderSource Advisory Council member, please call 904.391.6600 or email [Sherry.Holmes@MyElderSource.org](mailto:Sherry.Holmes@MyElderSource.org).

**Newcomers of North St. Johns**

**announces May luncheon**

Newcomers of North Saint Johns will host its May luncheon on Tuesday, May 21 beginning at 11 a.m. at St. Johns Golf & Country Club, 205 St. Johns Golf Drive. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. The luncheon event will include the installation of the club's board of directors for 2024 - 2025.

During lunch, accomplished pianist Matt Hall will entertain members. For the past 30 years, he has provided outstanding musical entertainment in various cities around the country.

Newcomers of North Saint Johns offers a wide variety of activities, including smaller lunch groups, Bunco, Canasta, wine socials, golf, Mah Jongg, a walking group, holiday parties, day trips and cultural events. Learn more about Newcomers of North Saint Johns by visiting <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org>.

The cost for the luncheon and program is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests. All reservations and payments must be received by May 14, 2024.,

Visit <https://newcomersofnorthstjohns.org> for more information about the luncheon and membership.

**Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club announces "Heritage Day" luncheon**

The Bartram Trail Newcomers' and Women's Club will hold its meeting and luncheon on Tuesday, May 14 at 11 a.m. at Club Continental on the River, 2143 Astor Street in Orange Park.

Doors will open at 10:30 a.m.

The May program will be the installation of the club's officers and to thank the board members of 2023 - 2024 and welcome in the new board members for 2024 - 2025. For "Heritage Day," attendees are asked to dress to represent the country of their origin or in patriot attire, with winners receiving recognition. Robbie Trice, a solo musician who combines live acoustic guitar and vocals with custom backing tracks, creating a full band sound with a playlist like "Coming to America" music as well as music from other countries, will provide entertainment.

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 Thursday of the month, May 2, 2024.

Be sure to indicate your entrée choice on the check memo; visit [www.facebook.com/BTNC1](http://www.facebook.com/BTNC1) to see pictures of meetings and download a membership form.

**"A Police Wife's Survival Guide" to be presented to crime writers**

Wives of law enforcement and first responders live in continual stress. Just ask Vikki Downey, the May speaker at the Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime meeting on May 4 at 10:15 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. They must be supportive, understanding and stoic. They must protect their children from fears they have themselves. They

must navigate their place in the world and educate friends and family about safety matters.

For 25 years, Vikki Downey navigated the challenging role of being a police wife, despite having no law enforcement background in her family. Her husband John started his journey as a police officer at the age of 29. While John Downey pursued his career, Vikki Downey taught school while raising their children. She has dedicated her life to empowering fellow police spouses, often through personal support, but also helping them supplement family income.

This will be a hybrid meeting. Register for this meeting at <https://nefloridasistersincrime.org>. Contact [floridasistersincrime@gmail.com](mailto:floridasistersincrime@gmail.com) for more information. Bring your coffee and bring a friend; the group welcomes misters and sisters.

**Let us know what you would like to read in The CreekLine! editor@floridanewsline.com**

# JCE hosts "Goodies with Grands

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Spread over two early mornings, Julington Creek Elementary students welcomed their grandparents and special loved ones to Goodies with Grands the first week in March. Guests were treated to donuts and fruit, as well as coffee and hot chocolate provided by Cup Runneth Over Café, a local coffee truck. In addition to breakfast, there was a fun donut-themed photo station, a slideshow with hundreds of pictures submitted by JCE families, and printed table

topics to keep conversation flowing.

Grandparents traveled from all parts of Florida, as well as Indiana, Montana, Virginia and North Carolina. A terrific group of volunteers, as well as school administrators and staff, were on hand to facilitate these special breakfasts.

This was the first JCE event specifically for grandparents in many years, and it was a meaningful opportunity for students and their loved ones to have some time together before beginning their day.



Photos submitted by Julington Creek Elementary

# Bartram Trail Winterguard finishes successful season with national fifth place finish

By Cindy Kee  
mail@floridanewsline.com

In mid-April, the Bartram Trail Winterguard team attended the WGI (World Guard International) Championships in Dayton, Ohio. Bartram was ranked 41st in the Scholastic A division going into the championships, and ended up placing fifth in the nation. There were more than 15,000 performers, 40 states and four countries represented at championships. Bartram was, once again, the only Florida team to make it to finals for their division.



Photos courtesy Cindy Kee

This is the first Winterguard team in Bartram Trail High School history to place in the top five and only the third team to make it to finals (first was in 2007) at WGI Championships. The team also earned the highest score in school history. As a result of all their success this season, the varsity team will be promoted to Open class next season.

Gold Medal Championship title for the Shaktai Division for the State of Florida for 2024 in Daytona Beach. Bartram Trail also placed in the top three at every local competition this season and at the WGI regional competitions in Orlando and Stuart.

At the end of March, Bartram Trail earned a back-to-back Scholastic A

The Bartram Trail program is under the direction of Rick Krystofiak, who has been with Bartram Trail Guard for more than 10 years.

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## Record crowd enjoyed Rotary Pub Crawl

By Rotarian Al Kalter  
mail@floridanewsline.com

Not even a brief but intense rainstorm could interfere with the fun and celebration of the 2024 Bartram Trail Rotary Pub Crawl on March 23. This year saw record attendance, and the revenues generated will fuel local and international service projects for the upcoming year.

out our generous sponsors, the businesses who graciously hosted us, and all the folks who came out to have fun. It reminds me how much good we can do when we all come together!"

Businesses in Bartram Walk graciously hosted more than 100 people at each stop, providing not just beverages but also their time and space. Without their support, this event wouldn't have been the success it was. Participating businesses were Moon Dog Pie House, Julington Creek Fish House & Oyster Co., Bono's Pit Bar-B-Q, La Nopalera Julington Creek, and Iggy's Grill and Bar. The Poppin Box generously gifted each attendee a voucher for beer cheese popcorn.

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

"This year's Pub Crawl was a resounding success thanks to the incredible support from the community," said Molly Paxton, president elect of Bartram Trail Rotary who also served as Pub Crawl chairperson. "We had the highest turnout ever this year, and I was honored to be a part of this cornerstone of our fundraising efforts. We couldn't have done it with-



Photo courtesy Al Kalter  
Check-in table for the Pub Crawl.



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# Travel

## I'm big on Little Rock, Arkansas

By Debi Lander  
mail@floridanewline.com

I wasn't sure what to expect from a visit to Arkansas, but I'm now big on Little Rock. The vibrant and clean capital city offered visitors many activities and interesting sites.

First up, I was curious about how the city got its name. Seems it derived from a rock formation along the river, named le petit rocher (little rock) by the French explorer Bénard de la Harpe in 1722 to distinguish it from a larger cliff across the river. Well, so much for that story.

My hotel overlooked the Arkansas River, which is crossed by six bridges and has a meandering 11-block riverwalk along its shore (a total 15.7 miles loop.) I soon encountered the fantastic Vogel Schwartz Sculpture Garden, which features more than 80 whimsical and thought-provoking metal works.

A tour of the National Park Historic Central High Site included an impassioned slide show presentation from a National Park ranger that had some of the participants in tears. The riveting story of the Little Rock Nine's integration struggle captured our hearts. In September 1957, nine 15-year-old black students met the stringent requirements to attend Central High, yet were barred from entering. It took presidential intervention with federal troops and the National Guard to

silence the mob and rebellion. While not Little Rock's proudest memory, the event remains an important step in U. S. civil rights history. The group also walked around the exterior high school grounds as students still attend Central High. The tour finished at the Arkansas Capitol Building nearby. Here, life-sized statues of the nine students grace the lawn and act as a reminder of the past. If time permits, capitol buildings are always excellent.

On a lighter note, I toured the Esse Purse Museum, one of only two purse museums in the world. The handbags and their typical contents were displayed in chronological order as well as by category such as animal skin bags, evening bags, and totes. The little museum offered a fascinating glimpse into women's fashion through the years.

A quick breeze through the newly redesigned and renovated Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts revealed its use as a public gathering area and museum. The entire structure, an architectural gem, cleverly uses space and entry is free. The glass-walled living room has become a favorite spot where locals come to work or read. The displayed art is chosen from the AMFA Foundation's 14,000-object collection.

No visit to Little Rock is complete without seeing the William J. Clinton



Photos courtesy Debi Lander  
The Arkansas River in Little Rock.

Presidential Library Museum. The facility houses a year-by-year display of events during Clinton's tenure, backed up by 80 million documents stored in the adjoining archives. Visitors can browse presidential memorabilia and family photos, learn about state dinner protocol, see examples of garments worn, and what gifts are given and received. My favorite part of the library museum is the replica of the Cabinet Room and the Oval Office, as they were during Clinton's presidency. Sometimes, folks can even sit behind the presidential desk for a photo.

You can't travel to a city and not taste

the local fare. I was especially delighted with the cheese dip at Dizzy's Gypsy Bistro. Seems that cheese dip is very popular in Little Rock and the creamy concoction at Dizzy's has won the World Championship Cheese Dip title more than once. I loved how it didn't harden or clump up and yet was not stringy.

If you get a chance to visit Little Rock, it may not rock your world, but I believe you will find something of interest.

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



Little Rock Nine statues.



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# The Pantry Raiders

## Move over crab; shrimp cakes are crisp and tasty

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewsl.com

Seafood is a healthy addition to any diet. Seafood, whether it's fish, mollusks or crustaceans, tends to be lower in calories and saturated fat than meat- or poultry-based protein sources, and it may be rich in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Shrimp can be cooked in various ways, but grounding shrimp into patties gives an interesting spin. Try "Shrimp Cakes with Honey Lemon Aioli" from "30-Minute Meal Prep" (Sourcebooks) by Robin Miller.

### Shrimp Cakes with Honey Lemon Aioli

Serves 4

- 1 lb. cooked shrimp, tails removed
- ¼ cup panko breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup diced red bell pepper
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh chives, plus more for serving
- 1 large egg
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 tbsp. olive oil

For the Honey Lemon Aioli:

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. honey
- 1 tsp. grated fresh lemon zest

1. Place the shrimp in a food processor, and pulse on and off until coarsely chopped. Add the breadcrumbs, bell pepper, chives, egg, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon black pepper, and pulse on and off until blended; you should be able to squeeze a small amount of the mixture and it will hold its shape.
2. Form the mixture into four patties, each about 1-inch thick.
3. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shrimp patties, and cook for 4 to 5 minutes per side, until golden brown and cooked through.
4. To make the aioli, whisk together all the ingredients until blended. Season to taste with salt and black pepper.
5. Spoon the lemon aioli over the shrimp cakes, and top with fresh chives.

Note: The shrimp cakes can be assembled and refrigerated for up to 24 hours before cooking. The aioli can be prepared up to 24 hours in advance. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

# Gardening

Summer in the time of  
climate change

By Master Gardener Volunteer Lesley Arrandale  
mail@floridanewsl.com

Moving into the summer months, it's worth keeping a close eye on the weather. So far, predictions are for more and stronger hurricanes as we move into a La Nina situation. Storms during La Nina conditions generally have a greater impact in the Gulf of Mexico and the western Caribbean Sea, both of which are close to home. More immediately, NOAA has temperature and rainfall prediction models, which can be found here: <https://www.cpc.ncep.gov>.

Weather is such a fundamental consideration when gardening, but we are also faced with increasingly warm temperatures overall. You may recall, the climate zone boundaries here in Duval County have been revised, so this is a reminder to review the recommended planting zones for anything you are hoping to plant. It's worth looking at more southerly planting advice and rule out more northerly plants.

If you understand your own microclimate that will also be helpful. Windbreaks on the north side of your property can protect tender plants from winter winds, while summer sun will bake unshaded areas. So, it's fairly straightforward to imagine how the plants you grow will be impacted by their position in your yard.

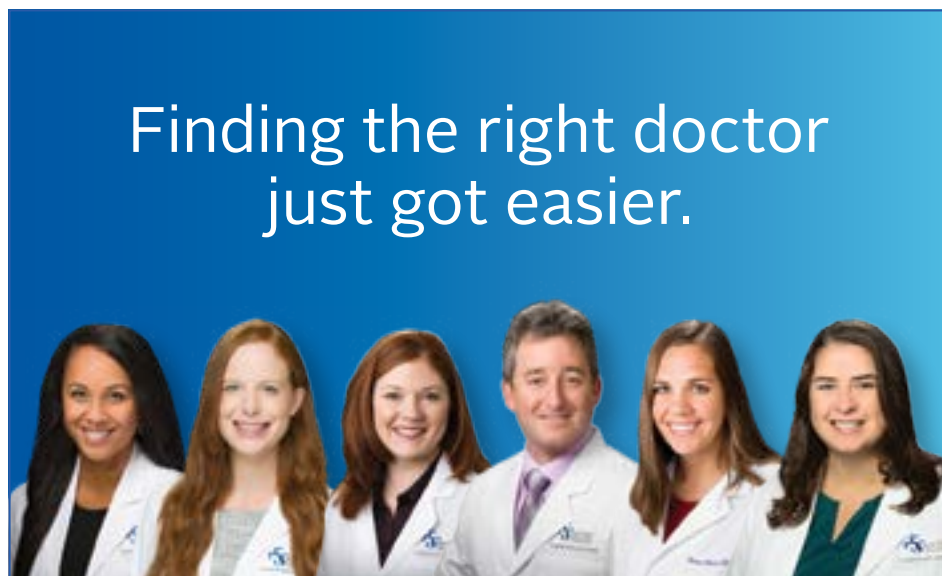
I recently — hopefully! — worked out how to tackle a problem area in my yard. The back of my two-story house faces roughly north-northeast, so during the winter months a fairly wide strip of ground is in deep shade. As spring progresses, the sun moves so that this area gets more and more sun. But when looking at plant labels the recommendations for light are that the plant likes sun, part sun, shade or whatever, without referring to winter light levels. So I've decided I'm going to try a bed of mostly deciduous flowering perennials, and maybe a few small shrubs and clumping grasses, that need full sun to

thrive. That will be the light in summer. With luck the low light in winter won't adversely affect them, but I'll have to wait until this time next year to find out.

It's been a joy to see the spring burst of activity all around us, from the greening up of our deciduous trees, shrubs, and perennials, to the "evergreen" oaks finally dropping their old leaves for the new ones to grow in immediately behind them. (As a transplant, I'm still amused by this apparent "autumn in spring!") Leaves can make valuable mulch, either by composting for later use or by shredding them using a mower to use in the near term.

Of course, weeds are the inevitable problem as temperatures rise. Spreading mulch two to three inches thick can help prevent them germinating, but there's little recourse if you choose to avoid herbicides other than old-fashioned weeding. Tackle them while small, especially if you're dealing with tree seedlings like golden rain trees and Carolina cherry laurel. Know your weeds' roots and make sure that if they're deep and sturdy they need to come out. Small annual weeds can probably be raked over and left to dry on the soil surface. Anything that's going to seed needs to be bagged and disposed of.

I haven't been growing vegetables recently but have been missing the pleasure of picking my own produce. I'll be trying a new approach, probably in the fall, growing in fabric pots. Meanwhile, native plants have been my focus, aiming to support the insects and other creatures that support our soil health and ultimately our own. It's these interrelationships that are so important in our attempts to nurture the natural world. I hope you are taking part to bolster the environment for our descendants. They will surely thank you.



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# Fishing

## Jimmy's Fishing Report

By Jimmy Tomazinis  
mail@floridanewslines.com

And here we are in the slow simmer before the rolling boil of the summer. The river changes a lot in April, May, and June. As the average temperatures rise and the rains remain on a weekly basis, the salinity slowly creeps up — usually peaking in June. Our frequent afternoon thunderstorms tend to bring an end to this. Until then, knowing how salty the river is can help you find marine species this time of year, especially trout.

Spotted seatrout are a lot more sensitive to salinity than redbfish, so they will be pushed up and down the river as it fluctuates. For instance, you might catch them south of the Buckman one day, but if we get rain or the wind blows from the south, they'll most likely be pushed north of the Buckman by freshwater working its way out of the river. Keep this in mind if you're suddenly not finding them around. They may just be a short boat ride to the north where the salinity is more favorable.

Redfish will be all over the river this month and hungry for about any bait you throw at them. We've got to

make it one more month until we can put live river shrimp on the menu, but crab, mullet, and croakers have you covered until then. I do great on artificials like bucktails if you want to keep it simple. Docks and shell bars are great places to look for them.

On the same docks there's bound to be good numbers of sheepshead that will take clams or crab. I've yet to find an artificial for them. Give each dock or whatever structure you're fishing a good 15 minutes before moving because they can be slow to find your bait at first, but they'll sniff it out eventually. A little chumming goes a long way too.

If you haven't had your fill of surf fishing for whiting and pompano yet, this will be your last good month until the fall so keep that in mind. Look for clear water and invest in high quality bait. It can mean the difference between catching fish or not most days.

That's all I have for this month so get out there and go fish when you can. Tight lines.

# Operation Dry Water to educate boaters on dangers of impaired boating

By NewsLine Staff  
mail@floridanewslines.com

As part of a nationwide effort to educate recreational boaters about the dangers of boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7, 7th District, will join the annual Operation Dry Water campaign. The mission of Operation Dry Water is to reduce the number of alcohol and drug-related incidents and fatalities on the waters of the United States.

Operation Dry Water weekend, July 4 – 6, marks a national effort dedicated to intensified recreational boater outreach, education, and coordinated enforcement against boating under the influence. Alcohol use continues to be the leading known contributing factor in recreational boater deaths and a leading contributor to boating incidents. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7, 7th District urges all boaters to prioritize safety by choosing to boat sober throughout the year. The use of both legal and illegal drugs impairs judgment and reaction time, posing significant risks while on the water.

During Operation Dry Water weekend, boating safety advocates, volunteers, and law enforcement personnel will collaborate to educate boaters on safe boating practices at marinas and on the water in every U.S. state and territory. Participating law enforcement agencies will also work to identify and remove dangerous and impaired operators. In 2023, law enforcement officers across the nation removed 717 impaired operators from our nation's waterways during Operation Dry Water weekend.

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 14-7, 7th District emphasizes the importance of boating sober, wearing a life jacket, and being courteous to others on the water. Choose to boat sober this coming July 4th weekend to ensure everyone's safety on our nation's waterways.

Boaters can learn more about boating under the influence by visiting mysafeboating.com or operationdrywater.org. Operation Dry Water is coordinated nationally by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard.

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