



Ponte Vedra seeks local stories to honor veterans

Florida NewsLine Staff
editor@floridanewslines.com

Ponte Vedra is honoring Veterans Day (Nov. 11), and we want to highlight the service, sacrifice and stories of our military veterans right here in our community.

We're looking for:

- Local veteran trailblazers — business owners, community leaders, or anyone making a difference after their service.
- Multigenerational military families keeping traditions of service alive.
- Stories from veterans who made St. Johns County home after their service.
- Veterans involved in local organizations, volunteer work, or mentoring.
- Young veterans and their families sharing what service means to them.

Know a veteran we should spotlight? Want to share your own story?

Email us at editor@floridanewslines.com by Monday, Oct. 27 for a chance to be featured.

Rare but Real

Local man's breast cancer journey inspires mission to educate others

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewslines.com

When Bill Carter felt a lump on his chest on New Year's Day 2024, he almost brushed it off. But being married to Susan, an oncology nurse for more than 30 years, changed everything.

"If I wasn't married to Susan, I would have blew that off and just went on about my business," said Carter. "Being married to her for 50 years and hearing all her stories about patients, I knew I needed to show her this lump."

Susan Carter immediately recognized the danger. The lump felt "spiculated" — spiky rather than smooth — a characteristic often associated with malignancy.



Photo courtesy Susan and Bill Carter
Susan and Bill Carter.

"When I felt Bill's lump, it was like my heart skipped a beat," Susan said. "The word spiculated came to mind

and I thought, we need to move on this."

Rare but Real cont. on pg. 2

A fighter's guide to cancer: 23 years later

By Renay Daigle

"It's positive," the doctor said.

How could something so life-changingly negative be labeled "positive?" I had breast cancer. And I was six months pregnant.

I was 32 years old, didn't smoke, exercised regularly, ate right and had no family history of the disease. I was stunned. I was beyond overwhelmed. But I was not going down without a fight. I was determined to get my baby here safely and raise her.

But it was indeed a fight. The next two years included four chemo treatments, six surgeries, 30 radiation treatments and countless tests. I also had a three-year-old daughter and infant to care for as well as a new consulting business.

That was 23 years ago. This spring, I proudly watched the daughter I was pregnant with graduate from the University of Florida. That new business evolved into an advertising and public relations agency, and we just celebrated its 25th anniversary.



Photo courtesy Renay Daigle
John and Renay Daigle pose for a photo in 2002 with their daughter Hannah, shortly after her breast cancer diagnosis while six months pregnant.

DAIGLE 25 YEARS CREATIVE
ADVERTISING | PUBLIC RELATIONS | DESIGN

WE PROUDLY STAND WITH FIGHTERS AND SURVIVORS

**You are not alone.
Keep fighting.**

Our Breast Cancer Awareness Insert is Sponsored By Daigle Creative.

A fighter's guide cont. on pg. 2

Rare but Real cont. from pg. 1

Within five weeks, Carter had undergone mammography, biopsy and a mastectomy. The experience opened his eyes to challenges women face during breast cancer screening.

"When they put me in that vice-type thing and cranked it down, it was hurting like hell," Carter recalled of his mammogram. "I have so much more appreciation for women that go through that now than I did before, because I know the pain now."

Carter's surgeon told him he was treating an unusual case. Men represent only 2% of all breast cancer patients, and the surgeon had never treated a 75-year-old male patient with the disease.

"He'd been doing this surgery for over 20 years and said he had never had a male patient," Carter said. "He said of the ones he knows of, male breast cancer patients are between 30 and 40 years old."

According to the American Cancer Society, 2,800 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2025, and 510 men will die from the disease. One in 726 men carry a lifetime risk of developing breast cancer.

Carter's cancer was caught between stage one and two. His recovery was remarkably smooth — he took no pain medication after surgery and felt

minimal discomfort.

"Two days after I had the surgery, I told the doctor, 'Did this really just happen to me?' I couldn't feel any pain," he said.

The experience sparked what Carter believes is a divine calling to educate other men about breast cancer risks. Three weeks after surgery, he dreamed of speaking to groups of men about his experience.

"It's like Jesus is guiding me to do this," Carter said. "I really believe I'm on a mission. If I could just get across to one person and it saved his life, I would be doing what I'm supposed to do."

"Men need to check themselves like women do and take it seriously if they find a lump," Carter emphasized. "I promise you 95% of all men would not take it seriously. They would find a lump and think it's not a big deal, but it's serious."

With encouragement from his son, Carter wrote a book about his life experiences, including his cancer journey. The book, "100% Bill, Stories by Aron William (Bill) Carter," written with a ghostwriter and available on Amazon, chronicles Carter's path from a troubled youth in Jacksonville's housing projects to police officer and cancer survivor.

"I just told a story," Carter said

modestly about his book. "I tried to be as honest as I could. I didn't try to hide anything or glorify anything. I just told it how it was."

Susan Carter, drawing on her decades of oncology nursing experience, emphasized the broader message of their journey: "It is a wicked disease, all cancer is, but if people are aware and informed, it can save lives."

Carter will speak about "Triumphant testimony of overcoming male breast cancer" on Saturday, Oct. 25, at noon via Zoom (Meeting ID: 882 5732 2929, Passcode: 339243). The event, themed "The impact of men's health on the family and community," is hosted by P.M.D.C. Word of God. Those interested in learning more about his story or arranging speaking engagements can contact him at abc paving@gmail.com.



Photo courtesy Susan and Bill Carter
Bill Carter wears a "Breast Cancer Survivor" t-shirt as part of his mission to educate men about breast cancer risks.

A fighter's guide cont. from pg. 1

Yet I didn't write this to report a happy ending. This is a love note to the people just beginning their fights against this cruel disease.

I hope it helps simply to know I was in your shoes, and I'm still here more than two decades later.

You can do this. Fight. While there are no assurances you'll win, make it your job to get up each day and try. I hope these few things I learned help in some small way:

Screw the statistics and survival rates — it never hurts to hope.

Be as positive as possible — even if it

doesn't change the outcome, you're more pleasant to be around.

That said, it's okay for you to feel sorry for yourself sometimes — just make it a short wade instead of a wallow.

Let people help you and tell them what you really need. It's not only for you; they need to feel less helpless.

Break things down into smaller sections. Don't look at the many things you have to endure until you're reviewing all you've accomplished.

Take every opportunity to be with people you love and to do things that make you happy.

Whatever it takes, find your way forward.



Renay Daigle poses with her family in a recent photo, more than two decades after her breast cancer diagnosis.

Personalized financial advice to help achieve your goals

Ameriprise Financial

Not FDIC or NCUA Insured | No Financial Institution Guarantee | May Lose Value
Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards Inc. owns the certification marks CFP®, CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® and CFP (with plaque design) in the U.S. Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC. Member FINRA and SIPC. © 2022 Ameriprise Financial, Inc. All rights reserved.

Chris Thompson
CFP® ; CMFA® ; CRPC®
PRIVATE WEALTH ADVISOR
Managing Director
904.380.2290
Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC
818 A1A North, Suite 301
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
chris.thompson@ampf.com
ameripriseadvisors.com/chris.thompson
St Johns County resident since 1993

Grand Re-Opening Celebration

Discover the New Starling at Ponte Vedra

Starling at Ponte Vedra has been completely reimagined – inside and out. Join us on October 29th (4 to 7 p.m.) as we unveil our stunning renovations and celebrate the future of senior living in our community.

From refreshed common spaces and dining areas to thoughtfully updated residences, every detail has been designed with comfort, style, and connection in mind.

Come see the transformation, tour our beautiful community, and meet the team dedicated to making Starling at Ponte Vedra feel like home.

STARLING AT PONTE VEDRA
RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

ADDRESS: 405 Solana Road
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

PHONE: (904) 822-4536

WEBSITE: StarlingatPonteVedra.com

ALF#: 12734

450 State Road 13 North
Suite 106 PMB 101
St. Johns, FL 32259
(904) 886-4919
www.FloridaNewsLine.com

Publisher

Mark Pettus

Publisher@FloridaNewsLine.com

Editor

Tracy Dishman

Editor@FloridaNewsLine.com

Bookkeeper

Emily Whitehead

Accounting@FloridaNewsLine.com

Social Media

SocialMedia@FloridaNewsLine.com

Advertising Sales

Haley Cook

haley.cook@newslinedigital.com

Ponte Vedra NewsLine community newspaper is a free monthly publication delivered to all addresses in Zip Codes 32081 and 32082. Submission of articles and photographs are received by mail or email, although email to editor@FloridaNewsLine.com is preferred. The writers' opinions do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Florida NewsLine. Advertising Rates are available by request. Florida NewsLine is not responsible for advertisement content or accuracy of information provided by its advertisers. Nor does Florida NewsLine endorse any of the products or services included in this publication. Florida NewsLine reserves the right to refuse advertisement or copy from any advertiser. All rights are reserved and no portion of this publication may be copied without the express written consent of the publisher. ©2025.



BFF

Breed:
English golden retriever

Favorite activity:
Going to the Seabrook dog park

Favorite food:
Salmon skin

Favorite friends:
His kitty roommates, Winnie and Roo

How did your BFF get their name:
His name means Gift from God, and that is what he is.

Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Theodore!

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 Mandarin NewsLine. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in Mandarin NewsLine! Email editor@floridanewsline.com to enter your pet.

Table of Contents

4 Community Calendar

6 & 7 Cancer Awareness

8 Puzzles

9 The Good Earth

9 Jimmy's Fishing Report

10 Get to Know...Pete Duffy

Support Local Journalism

Our team at Florida NewsLine covers the issues, sports, and events that shape our lives. We focus on facts, not opinions, because we believe unbiased, fact-based reporting empowers you to cast an informed vote and be a better neighbor. All NewsLine content is free, but the work we do is only possible with your support.

Help us continue delivering quality journalism, and enjoy some exclusive benefits along the way.

Become a Member!

Get Special Membership Perks.

Answers to our Puzzles PG 8

A message of gratitude from the editor

As we conclude our special October edition dedicated to Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I extend my heartfelt thanks to every reader who shared their story with us.

Eight years ago, I lost my mother to breast cancer. Through that devastating experience, I learned about this relentless disease firsthand. It ignited a passion in me for spreading awareness and information that can save lives – because knowledge truly is power in the fight against cancer.

The response to our invitation was overwhelming. We received submissions from survivors, family members and caregivers. From Bill and Ron's mission to educate men about breast cancer risks to the women who shared their paths through diagnosis and recovery, these stories illuminate the strength that emerges from the most challenging circumstances.

Your courage in sharing deeply personal journeys has created something meaningful. Each story reminded us why this work matters – not just in October, but every day. Whether you shared triumph or loss, your narrative contributed to a community of support that extends far beyond these pages.

Thank you for trusting us with your most personal experiences. Your willingness to share creates awareness that can save lives.

With deep appreciation for your courage,

Tracy Dishman, editor

Hurry in for Fall Savings

20% OFF

One regularly priced item

Valid in-store at the participating stores listed. Coupon not valid for Seed/Bird Food, Camera Feeders, Optics, Gift Cards, DSC Memberships, or Sale Items. Cannot be combined with other coupons/discounts. Offer expires 10/31/25.

ONE COUPON PER CUSTOMER

St Johns
450 SR13 at Racetrack Rd (next to Publix)
904.230.3242
wbu.com/jacksonville

Jax Beach
4138 Third Street South (between Trader Joes & Staples)
904.246.6832
wbu.com/jacksonvillebeach

World Golf Village
180 Capulet Drive #5 (At Murabella)
904.209.5754
wbu.com/staugustine

October

Community Calendar

What's Happening in Ponte Vedra

To submit items for the Community Calendar, email editor@floridanewslines.com.

Oct. 1
Coastal Friends Luncheon

Coastal Friends monthly luncheon will be held Wednesday, Oct. 1, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Parkway, Ponte Vedra Beach. Guest speaker Dr. David L. Sheffler, chairman of the Department of History at UNF, will speak about medieval history and heretics. Cost is \$25. Reservations required by Sept. 26. Contact bart-shar@comcast.net. Open to members, guests and the community.

Oct. 7
First Coast Essential Tremor: Meet, Greet & Educate

First Coast Essential Tremor: Meet, Greet & Educate will be held Tuesday, Oct. 7, at 11 a.m. at Baptist HealthPlace at Nocatee, 400 Colonnade Drive, #130, Ponte Vedra. Learn about tremor-reducing devices. All are welcome. RSVP to Jan Kary at jkary@verizon.net or (202) 438-6750.

Oct. 7
Vicar's Landing Boutique Sale

The Vicar's Landing Boutique Sale will be held Tuesday, Oct. 7, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 1000 Vicar's Landing Way. Browse Halloween, fall and holiday items, art, jewelry, knick-knacks and antiques. The public is welcome. Cash or checks only. Call Beverly Webb at (904) 315-2610.

Oct. 10
First Coast Opera Fanfare!

First Coast Opera Fanfare! will be held Friday, Oct. 10, from 6 to 9 p.m. at Celebration Hall at St. Anastasia, 5205 A1A S., St. Augustine. Musical selections performed by University of Florida Opera Department members, plus dinner. Tickets are \$50-\$150. Visit www.firstcoastopera.com/fanfare or call (904) 417-5555.

Oct. 10
Food Truck Friday

Food Truck Friday will be held Friday, Oct. 10, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field, 400 Nocatee Center Way, Ponte Vedra. Open to the public.

Oct. 11
Yappy Hour

Yappy Hour will be held Saturday, Oct. 11, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field, 400 Nocatee Center Way, Ponte Vedra.

Oct. 10-11
Fall Plant Sale

St. Johns County Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale will be held Friday and Saturday, Oct. 10-11, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the St. Johns County Extension Office, 3125 Agricultural Center Drive, St. Augustine. Features landscape plants, houseplants and vegetable seedlings. Garden tours offered. Visit sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/stjohns/.

Oct. 12-31
Great Pumpkin Patch

The Great Pumpkin Patch at Lord of Life Lutheran Church will be open Oct. 12-31 at 276 N. Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach. More than 2,000 pumpkins, mini pumpkins and gourds available, plus homemade jams, jellies, pickles, cookies and pumpkin pies. Hours: Monday-Friday, 1 p.m. to dusk; Saturday, 9 a.m. to dusk; Sunday, 11 a.m. to dusk. Special hours Monday, Oct. 13, 10 a.m. to dusk. Call (904) 716-8747.

Oct. 16
Beer and Bingo

Beer and Bingo will be held Wednesday, Oct. 16, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Blue Water Bar & Grill, Nocatee. Ages 21 and up.

Oct. 17
Haunted House Preview Night

Haunted House Preview Night will be held

Thursday, Oct. 17, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Spray Waterpark, Nocatee.

Oct. 18
Nocatee Farmers Market: Halloween Harvest

Nocatee Farmers Market: Halloween Harvest will be held Friday, Oct. 18, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field, 400 Nocatee Center Way, Ponte Vedra.

Oct. 20
Political Landscape Discussion

Former candidate for US House and US Senate Josh Weil will share lessons learned from his races and reflections on the political landscape for 2026 on Monday, Oct. 20, at 6 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. Optional chat and chew at 5:30 p.m. For more information, email PVDemClub@gmail.com.

Oct. 22
Affordable Housing Town Hall

The Peoples' Town Hall addressing Housing for the Workforce in St. Johns County will be held Wednesday, Oct. 22, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Center for Spiritual Living, 1795 Old Moultrie Rd., St. Augustine. Speakers from local housing and business organizations. Free to attend but advance registration required at <https://www.mobilize.us/indivisiblesjc/event/837902/>.

Oct. 22
Unwined Wednesday

Unwined Wednesday will be held Wednesday, Oct. 22, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Splash Waterpark Adult Pool, Nocatee.

Oct. 24-25
Noc-So-Scary Family Halloween Party

Noc-So-Scary Family Halloween Party will be held Thursday and Friday, Oct. 24-25, at Nocatee Station Field and Spray Waterpark, 400 Nocatee Center Way, Ponte Vedra. Registration required.

Oct. 25
Ponte Vedra Writers Group

Ponte Vedra Writers Group will meet Saturday, Oct. 25, at 11 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. Author Holly Bebernitz will present "Writing a Series: If a Little Bit's Good, a Lot's Better." Free and open to the public.

Oct. 24-25
Haunted House

Haunted House will be held Thursday, Oct. 31, from 8 to 11 p.m. at Spray Waterpark, Nocatee. Ages 18 and up.

Ongoing Activities
Council on Aging interest groups

Council on Aging offers interest groups at the COA Center at UF Health Nocatee. Meetings are free and self-guided. Advance registration required; email pbrunell@Stjohnscoa.com or call (904) 814-9407. Tuesday: Open Card Play, 1-4 p.m.; Caregiver Support Group, 1-2:30 p.m. Wednesday: Mah Jongg Meet-up, 1-3 p.m.

Palm Valley Market

Palm Valley Market will be held at Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Blvd., every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The market offers organic produce, pasture-raised meats, local honey, baked goods and local crafts. Email info@PalmValleyMarket.com.

Ponte Vedra Beach Ruck Club

The Ponte Vedra Beach Ruck Club (aka Beach Patrol Ruck Club) offers a free beach ruck every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. Meet on the top floor of the parking garage at Christ Episcopal Church, 400 San Juan Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach. Rucking is carrying weight in a backpack while walking. Everyone is invited and you can walk without any weight. The rucks are 3 to 3.5 miles long. Come get some exercise, meet new people and enjoy the beach.








MUDROOM/ENTRY WAY



LAUNDRY



HOME OFFICE



PANTRY



GARAGE CABINETS



FLOOR COATINGS

20 YEARS

ANNIVERSARY

With over 13,000 Installations since 2005



Request a FREE Consultation (904) 645-0885

www.tailoredcloset.com

www.premiergarage.com

•CUSTOM CLOSETS

•GARAGE CABINETS

•FLOOR COATINGS



Q&A with St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller Brandon J. Patty

Q. This year marks 204 years since the St. Johns County clerk’s office was established. Can you tell us about the origins of the office?

A. Our history goes back to 1821, just months after Florida became a U.S. territory. Gov. Andrew Jackson established the first clerk’s office in St. Augustine, operating from the historic Governor’s House. That same year, Florida’s first property deed was recorded by our office on Sept. 13, 1821.

Q. How did record-keeping evolve over the years?

A. Records were originally copied by hand, but technology slowly transformed the process. The first typed deed appeared in 1901, and by 1926, clerks were using photographic copy technology. Later came microfilm, microfiche and eventually computer systems, which make searching records much faster today. Each change was made with the goal of making records more accurate, secure and accessible to the public.

Q. Why are records so important?

A. They are integral to our way of life. Think about it: Without accurate

court and official records, how would one prove they own their house? Or how would a dispute be resolved in the courts? A great historic example of records being used in everyday life is the branding books we maintain. These books contain a rancher’s unique brand, which was used to prove ownership of their livestock. We take this responsibility and the public’s trust very seriously by ensuring records are accurate, stored securely and accessible to the public.

Q. Where can residents learn more about these records and the history of your office?

A. I invite everyone to watch a special video celebrating the 204-year history of the clerk’s office, which shows how far we’ve come. You can view it at stjohnsclerk.com/history.

For questions about records or services we provide, our Customer Care Call Center is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (904) 819-3600 and by email at clerk@stjohnsclerk.com. I can also be reached directly on my cellphone at (904) 599-8688 or by email at BPatty@stjohnsclerk.com.

High school dance teams build bridge on the gridiron

By Lisa Farese
mail@floridanewslines.com

While the “Battle of the Bridge” is a well-known showdown on the gridiron in our community, with the Ponte Vedra and Nease High School football teams going head to head, a lesser known eight-year tradition is one of camaraderie and collaboration. The dance teams of these two rival schools, the Ponte Vedra Splash and the Pantherettes, come together each year to perform at the halftime show. They practice together the week prior and perform as one on the field come game day.

In addition, this year, the 49 girls who joined forces from both teams launched a community project at Starling Assisted Living in Ponte Vedra, where they hosted an ice cream sundae bar and performed for the residents in honor of the ensuing matchup.

The teams enjoyed the joint venture so much that they plan to continue their service by offering a dance or exercise class once a month on Saturdays at one of the area Starling locations — making this matchup a tradition of community over competition.



Photos courtesy Lisa Farese

The Ponte Vedra and Nease High School dance teams hosted a joint community service project at Starling Assisted Living in Ponte Vedra on Aug. 20, ahead of the rival football matchup.



The Ponte Vedra Splash and Pantherettes have performed together at halftime during the “Battle of the Bridge” game for the past eight years.



Q&A with St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

In mid-September, 93,000 signature letters were sent to registered St. Johns County voters who had not updated their signature within the past five years. The letters were also sent as a reminder to voters who have renewed or replaced their Florida driver’s licenses within the past year that their identification number may have changed.

As expected, after receiving these letters, our office was flooded with calls and our social media filled with questions from residents. I have gathered the most common questions I was asked in hopes of answering some of your questions as well.

Q: Is this letter a scam?

No, this letter is from the St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections office. I wanted to remind voters who have not updated their signature within the past five years that they should keep their signatures up to date. These voters were sent a letter, a Florida voter registration form, and a postage-paid return envelope.

Q: I didn’t get a letter, but my spouse did. Where is mine?

If you did not get a letter, that means you HAVE updated your signature within the past five years, and no action is necessary.

Q: If I do not return the registration form, will I be kicked off the voter rolls?

No! Your voter record will not be changed if you do not send back the provided registration form. This is just a reminder to voters that their signature should be kept up to date, and an opportunity to do so.

Q: I vote in every election and sign the signature pad. Why isn’t my signature updated?

When voting in person, your signature

from the signature pad does not replace your main signature on file, which is taken from your voter registration application or DMV -- depending on where/how you registered or updated your information.

When signing the signature pad, many voters do not sign exactly how they normally would. The signature pad signatures from early voting and Election Day are uploaded and stored in our system and can be utilized if needed. It is best to update your signature every few years using a Florida voter registration application.

Q: What does my driver’s license number have to do with voting?

To register to vote in Florida, voters are required to provide either their Florida driver’s license number, Florida identification card number, or the last four digits of their Social Security number.

The elections office used this letter as an opportunity to remind voters who submitted their Florida driver’s license number when registered that if they renewed or replaced their license in the past year, that number may have changed. If it has changed, it will need to be updated with our office as well.

Q: If I renew or replace my Florida driver’s license right before an election, does that mean I need to fill out an application before going to vote?

When updating or renewing your Florida driver’s license with the DMV, you will be asked if you would like to update your voter registration information. If you say yes, your information will automatically be updated with the elections office!

Still have questions? Call the elections office Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 904-823-2238. My staff and I look forward to hearing from you

Rotary Club donates \$5,000 to Jay Fund

By Jennifer Logue

“Voice of the Jaguars” Brian Sexton made his annual visit to the Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach on Sept. 4, when he shared his pigskin predictions for the upcoming football season.

Joining him was legendary football coach Tom Coughlin, who along with Sexton, accepted a \$5,000 donation

from the club for the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund.

The funds came from the club’s annual Mineral City Celebration gala, which supports numerous local charities. Sexton was honored at this year’s gala as the 2025 Rock of the Community and selected The Tom Coughlin Jay Fund as one of the event’s primary beneficiaries.



Photo courtesy Ponte Vedra Beach Rotary Club

From left, Tom Coughlin, Rotary Club Past President Beverly Flanagan, Brian Sexton and Club President Chris Eckols celebrate a \$5,000 donation to The Tom Coughlin Jay Fund during the Sept. 4 meeting of the Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach.



From patient to volunteer: Finding purpose after cancer



By Cathy Barnwell

I was diagnosed with bilateral breast cancer Nov. 4, 2015. I had just retired from working for JEA for more than 30 years and was getting

into retirement — traveling, volunteering at a food bank, my church and with preschoolers for Reading Pals.

After initially hearing the diagnosis, I felt like I was the only person in the world who had cancer. It was a very frightening time. After a couple of

weeks of a pity party, I realized that my job during this journey was to bring my body to appointments and to do what the doctors and medical staff told me to do. I understood that the only thing I could control during treatment was my attitude.

I had an unfounded fear that I would not be able to volunteer while undergoing treatment. I was the Session Clerk at my church and my pastor assured me if I felt like I could handle the job to keep on doing it. I didn't do as much physical work at the food bank as I had done in the past, but was

able to help. I found keeping as busy as I could kept my mind off of me.

I got through the "long" chemo March 10, 2016, and had my surgery April 12, 2016. I got finished with Herceptin Dec. 22, 2016. While I was going through chemo, I came to the realization that I needed to give back to people who are dealing with breast cancer. M.D. Anderson was open and I now volunteer a day a week in their infusion department.

While there, I visit with patients who want or need to talk, bring them

things to drink if they want and offer lunch and snacks. I just listen when people want to talk. I have been blessed by some of the questions asked of me and the relief on some of their faces when they realize how far I'm out from my chemo and surgery. I love it when some of my favorites light up when they see me. It is gratifying to get a smile or laugh from people going through treatment.

I'm grateful to be here and able to contribute to bringing a little light into my corner of the world.

Handwritten hope in dark moments



By Anonymous

At her second appointment after her initial breast cancer diagnosis, a local woman received a care package from her oncology team

containing personal care items, emergency guidelines, medical resources and frequently asked questions to help navigate the disease and upcoming treatment.

"You can likely imagine how devastating facing this type of news is and the contents of the package highlighted the sobering reality of the horror yet to come," she wrote in an email to the editor.

Yet also tucked inside was a handwritten note by a mother who had also been diagnosed with breast cancer. The note contained words of encouragement for strength, hope and peace, along with small colored drawings likely crafted by a child.

"I must share that I burst into tears as all of this was beyond overwhelming," the woman recalled. "But as I slowly caught my breath, the words hit home and my appreciation

for this small act of kindness was intense."

The experience introduced her to Girls Love Mail, an organization that connects women fighting cancer with handwritten letters of support from strangers worldwide. The nonprofit provides guidelines for letter writing that ensure consistency and encouragement.

"Yes, kind words even from a stranger can be impactful during sad times in life," she noted. She plans to write her own letters to newly diagnosed patients through Girls Love Mail.

Anyone can participate in writing notes of support and encouragement regardless of their health status or personal connection to a breast cancer patient.

"Thank you for including a breast cancer segment for breast cancer awareness in October," the woman wrote to the editor. "I know the topic has become commonplace and maybe tiresome for many people, but for the newly diagnosed, it is a whole other story."

For more information about Girls Love Mail, visit girlslovemail.com.

A blue dot in a sea of pink



By Ron Rapaport

I'm Ron Rapaport, a Ponte Vedra Beach resident who was diagnosed in 2019 with male breast cancer and diagnosed again in 2022 with it.

For many that do not know it, men have breasts too and can get breast cancer, although it is only 1% of all breast cancer cases. Approximately 2,800 men in the U.S. are diagnosed annually, and about 510 men die from the disease.

The problem for men with breast cancer is that in many cases it is diagnosed late, ending in a diagnosis in the latter stages of the disease, making the survival rate in stage 4 at 25% for 5 years as opposed to 93% in stages 0, 1, 2 and 73% in stage 3.

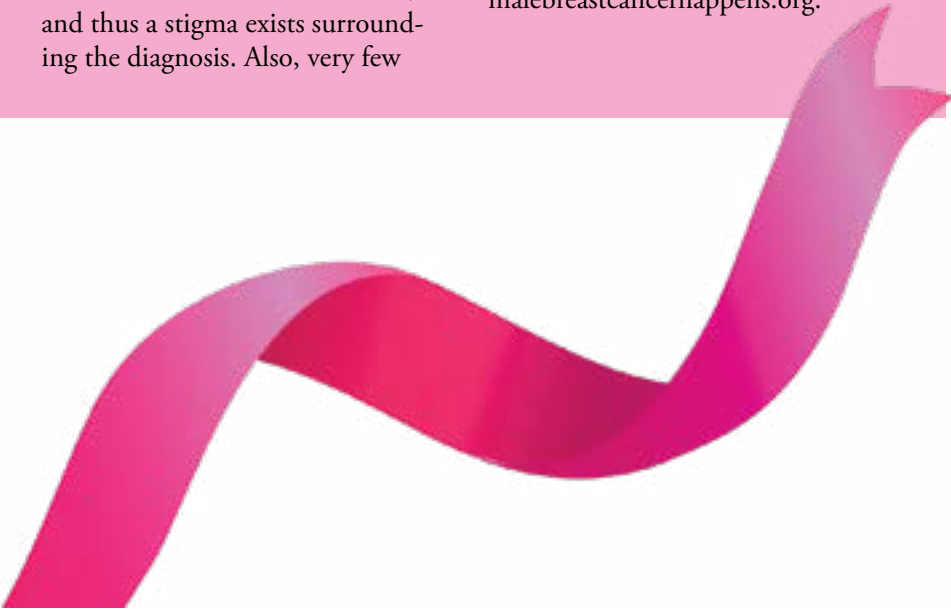
Many men simply do not know the disease exists, and many men view the disease as a "women's disease," and thus a stigma exists surrounding the diagnosis. Also, very few

physicians bother to take the time to check men's breast health when examining them.

My passion now is to alert the world that male breast cancer exists through my advocacy work as the Global Lead Advocate for male-breastcancerhappens.org, a nonprofit advocacy group bringing awareness to the disease and offering life saving resources on their website such as self-breast exam cards on how to do monthly breast exam checks. I lead a monthly men's support group with the disease for them to share their knowledge and experience with each other.

I also host my worldwide podcast "It's a Wrap With Rap" showcasing people overcoming life's adversities and have been interviewed on many podcasts advocating for male breast cancer awareness.

For more information, please go to malebreastcancerhappens.org.





Following granny's legacy through cancer



By "CC" Cox

My husband and I survived my breast cancer surgery in October 2020 together. A successful lumpectomy showed clear parameters — no apparent additional carcinoma. We continued through the next three years grateful for each day, with annual 3-D mammograms showing all clear readings.

Life felt like living in a special cocoon since five years of clear tests is the standard for being considered cancer free. Then things changed in January 2024.

My story is enhanced by my grand-

mother, Helen, known as Granny. More than 40 years ago, she discovered a lump but delayed her mammogram until after Thanksgiving, Christmas and the new year. She didn't want to inconvenience anyone.

That delay cost her dearly. Her cancer was so advanced that instead of a single breast removal, she needed a radical double mastectomy. After six months of chemotherapy and radiation, doctors told her she had six months to live.

But Granny was independent and never good at taking orders. She taught me the most valuable lesson: we all face finite time on earth, so never take the gift of a day for granted. She

lived graciously with gusto for life.

Granny took a 2,000-mile driving trip to study watercolor painting in Vermont, packed her colorful scarves, and painted 72 watercolor paintings. She exceeded the doctor's six-month prediction by three years.

Since we had been cancer clear for several years, I almost postponed my January 2024 mammogram to summer. Then I heard Granny whisper, "Do it earlier rather than later." Results arrived in 24 hours — the cancer had returned.

My husband and I elected to be proactive with a double mastectomy. Following my oncologist's advice to

"live your life," we celebrated with a five-week Amtrak rail trip at ages 70 and 79.

Thank you Granny for nudging me — do your test now, don't delay. Stay positive, stay informed and always say thank you.

Editor's note: CC Cox's story is filled with so many inspiring details about both her grandmother's courageous battle and her own journey with breast cancer that I couldn't bear to cut them all for this print edition. I have published her complete, heartfelt story about the lessons she learned from her beloved Granny at www.FloridaNewsLine.com.

Testimony of God's goodness



By Michele McKee

Originally written June 2022

Today marks three months since I had surgery to remove breast cancer. On March 8, 2022, I had a routine mammogram — though it had been three years since my previous one. I was behind on routine health screenings since COVID.

A few days later I received a call that my mammogram was abnormal and I needed a biopsy. While traveling home from visiting family, I received the results. When I heard "invasive lobular carcinoma," I was surprised and sad. I had no reason to think I had cancer.

The following days were a flurry of activity with surgeon and oncology appointments. At the first visit, the surgeon ordered imaging and blood work urgently, saying surgery needed to be done within two weeks. My husband, Dave, and I left that appointment sobered and dumbfounded.

The first few days I experienced sorrow, fear and worry about how this would affect my family. Yet I was also grateful the cancer was seen on the mammogram, since this type often can't be felt and isn't always visible. Two spots were seen on ultrasound, with possible others on MRI. After

surgery, my oncologist found three lesions in my left breast and tissue changes in my right breast that could have been precancerous.

On the second surgeon visit, there was less urgency. Since two of our kids were graduating high school in May, I asked if surgery could wait until after graduation. All doctors agreed to this delay. I began hormone blocker medication to slow cancer growth.

I decided on bilateral mastectomy with reconstruction, scheduled for June 6, 2022, requiring four to six weeks recovery.

During recovery, there was little I could do for myself. I wasn't expecting the pain and inability to get up from sitting or lying down. I used a walker the first week home. My husband and daughters helped whenever needed.

The recovery became a time of slowing down and spiritual refreshing through reading, including John Piper's "Providence," relating God's care to my cancer journey.

Editor's note: Michele McKee's story beautifully captures both the medical realities of her breast cancer journey and the community support that carried her through treatment. I have published her complete story, including details about her church family's incredible care, at www.FloridaNewsLine.com.

Dreams deferred but not forgotten



By Jane Fero

Nancy Turner, a retired middle school teacher, was diagnosed with a particularly malignant form of breast cancer. She underwent lumpectomy, mammography and chemotherapy, plus physical therapy. Her dream was to travel the world and to visit and photograph all 50 states. The demanding cancer treatments put a two-year hold on any travel plans, but courageously she returned to community activities and travel as treatment allowed.

She has visited Northern Europe, Britain, Hawaii and other countries even though lymphedema swelling requires an elastic sleeve and glove, even in the Florida heat. At night

she uses an inflatable pressurized full arm sleeve.

Nancy helps with her granddaughter who attends Hallows Cove school and lives with her father. She sews for her and watches her when Dad is working. She sews gift bags for the Jacksonville group "Dress a Girl Around the World."

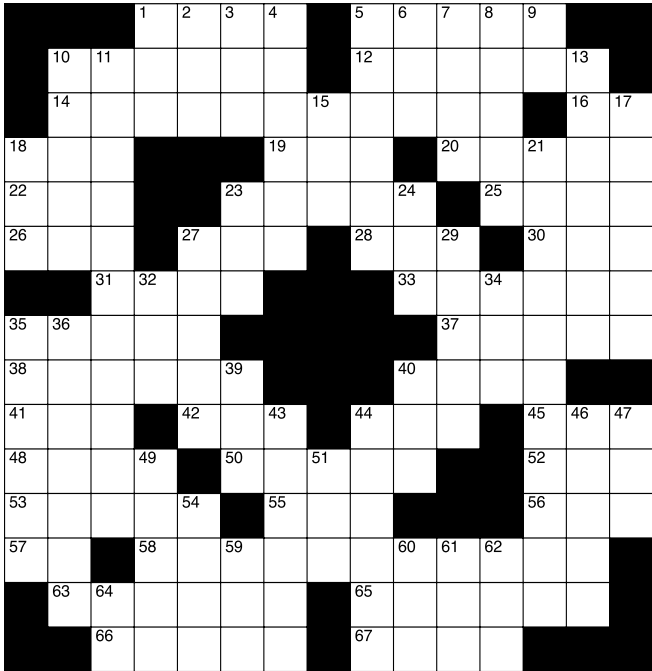
She is a willing driver for disabled community friends for shopping and medical appointments.

Nancy intends to visit Colorado this fall. She has only two states left to visit. Nancy is a wonderful friend and a brave example to others battling breast cancer. She has a collection of mounted photographs to complete. She also intends to take more cruises.



Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Native American people of CA
- 5. Long periods of time (Brit.)
- 10. Classroom tool
- 12. Rods
- 14. One who renews
- 16. They start the alphabet
- 18. Periodical (slang)
- 19. Smooth singer Cole
- 20. Dorsal sclerites in insects
- 22. One from Utah
- 23. The world of the dead
- 25. Singer Redding
- 26. Mafia head
- 27. Wrongly
- 28. Unhappy
- 30. Anger
- 31. Dark olive black
- 33. Places to sit and eat
- 35. Made a mistake
- 37. Damp
- 38. Banned fuel type
- 40. Actor Damon
- 41. What thespians do
- 42. A polite address for a woman
- 44. Disallow
- 45. Swiss river
- 48. A banana has one
- 50. Afrikaans
- 52. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 53. Agave
- 55. Journalist Tarbell
- 56. One-time tech leader
- 57. Incidentally (abbr.)
- 58. Intestinal bacterium
- 63. Loose sheats around the spinal co
- 65. Accompanies nook
- 66. Vogue
- 67. Highly excited

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Witch
- 2. Utilize
- 3. Writing utensil
- 4. Where rockers work
- 5. Becomes less intense
- 6. Consume
- 7. Type of catfish
- 8. "Horsetown, U.S.A."
- 9. Atomic #50
- 10. The Muse of lyric poetry
- 11. Brings back to life
- 13. Humorous critiques
- 15. Cool!
- 17. Worst
- 18. Wet dirt
- 21. Useful
- 23. Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- 24. High schoolers' test
- 27. Internet device
- 29. City in India
- 32. A place to rest
- 34. Chat responder
- 35. A way to move on
- 36. What consumers are given
- 39. Digital audiotape
- 40. More (Spanish)
- 43. Disfigured
- 44. White (Spanish)
- 46. Church building
- 47. Georgia rockers
- 49. Surgeon's tool
- 51. "Much __ about nothing"
- 54. Make by braiding
- 59. Local area network
- 60. Unit of work
- 61. Indigenous person of Thailand
- 62. Liquefied natural gas
- 64. Distance to top



More time with friends. More ways to stay active. More moments to enjoy the lifestyle you've earned. For 35 years, Fleet Landing in **Atlantic Beach** has opened the door to what matters most for seniors in Northeast Florida. Now, with the addition of Fleet Landing at **Nocatee**, we are opening even more doors. Discover an elevated lifestyle, meaningful connections, and the peace of mind only a Life Plan Community can provide.

Visit FleetLanding.com or call 904.944.7636 to learn more.

FLEET LANDING

Community Marketplace
Call to advertise (904) 886-4919

PRESSURE WASHING SERVICE

PROOF IS IN THE WORK

SERVICES

- EXTERIOR CLEANING
- EXTERIOR PAINTING & RESTORATION
- HOT WASH & SOFT WASH
- ROOF CLEANING
- POOL ENCLOSURES
- DOCKS & WALKWAY

CALL US TODAY: 904-622-3000
www.powwashjax.com

The Tankless Bros

TANKLESS WATER HEATER FLUSHES

Local - Insured - Upfront Pricing

Only 1 Service Offered = No Upcharges or Sales Pitches

904-792-3487 / www.tanklessbros.com

We offer
Fictitious Name Advertisement
Call Linda 904-607-5062

AUTOS/MISC

Donate Your Car to Veterans Today! Help and Support our Veterans. Fast - FREE pick up. 100% tax deductible. Call 800-245-0398

MISCELLANEOUS

Old guitars wanted! Gibson, Fender, Martin, Etc. 1930's to 1980's. Top dollar paid. Call 866-433-8277

Reach millions of homes nationwide with one easy, affordable buy in the ADS Network! For more information www.communitypublishers.com/category/all-products SunSetter. America's #1 awning! Instant shade at the touch of a button. Transform your

deck or patio into an outdoor oasis. Up to 10-year limited warranty. Call now and save \$350! 855-914-1148

We buy houses for cash as is! No repairs or fuss. Any condition. Easy 3-step process: Call, get cash offer, get paid. Get your fair cash offer today. Liz Buys Houses: 844-877-5833

Do Not Run In AL

Portable oxygen concentrator may be covered by Medicare! Reclaim independence & mobility w/ the compact design & long-lasting battery. Inogen One free info kit! 877-305-1535

Consumer Cellular - same reliable, nation-

Job Finder October:

STATE FARM INSURANCE IN MANDARIN is looking for Sales/Customer Service. Full time Salary + Incentives. Florida Insurance license preferred send resume to jim@jimregister.com www.jimregister.com

Starling owns and operates several luxury senior living communities throughout the state of Florida. We are always looking to hire talented folks to join our team. Visit www.StarlingLiving.com/careers for more information!

wide coverage as large carriers. No long-term contract or hidden fees, free activation. All plans unlimited talk & text starting at just \$20/mo. 877-751-0866

Become a published author. We want to read your book! Dorrance Publishing trusted since 1920. Consultation, production, promotion & distribution. Free author's guide 877-729-4998 or

dorranceinfo.com/ads

Do Not Run In AK, AZ, ID, MT, ND, NM, NV, SD

No cleaning gutters guaranteed! LeafFilter most advanced gutter protection, backed by a no-clog guarantee & lifetime warranty. 833-610-1936 schedule free inspection & estimate. Get 75% off install & \$250 bonus discount! Limited time. Restrictions apply, see rep for warranty & details.

Replace your roof w/ the best looking & longest lasting material steel from Erie Metal Roofs! 3 styles/ multiple colors available. Guaranteed to last a lifetime! Limited time offer up to 50% off install + additional 10% off install military, health & 1st responders. 833-370-1234



BATH REMODEL

Safety. Style. Stress-Free Installation.

CALL NOW 866.753.9521

SPECIAL OFFER

Waiving All Installation Costs!

Add'l terms apply. Offer subject to change and vary by dealer. Expires 9/28/25.





TRUST THE NATION'S #1 ROOFING CONTRACTOR
Award-Winning Roofing and Customer Service
Erie Roofing Since 1976

LIMITED TIME OFFER

50% OFF Installation

FREE ESTIMATE SCHEDULE TODAY!

Call 1.833.370.1234

CALL TODAY! 1.833.370.1234

New orders only. Does not include material costs. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Minimum purchase required. Other restrictions may apply. This is an advertisement placed on behalf of Erie Construction Mid-West, Inc ("Erie"). Offer terms and conditions may apply and the offer may not be available in your area. If you call the number provided, you consent to being contacted by telephone, SMS text message, email, pre-recorded messages by Erie or its affiliates and service providers using automated technologies notwithstanding if you are on a DO NOT CALL list or register. Please review our Privacy Policy and Terms of Use on homeservicescompliance.com. All rights reserved. License numbers available at erielicenses.com

The Good Earth: Fall color and care

The first day of fall — the autumnal equinox — arrived on Monday, Sept. 22. With it comes a welcome drop in temperature. As plants slow their growth, we begin to enjoy not only the relief of cooler weather, but also the excitement of planting bright, colorful winter annuals.

Some favorites that thrive in cooler temperatures include alyssum, baby's breath, calendula, geranium, pansy, petunia, snapdragon, verbena and viola.

If you are looking to add a tree that offers beautiful fall color, consider bald cypress, one of the earliest to show seasonal change. Other good options are Florida maple, black gum, crepe myrtles and sweetgum.

Ever wonder why leaves change color? It's not just about chilly nights. The real trigger is the shortening of the days, which means less sunlight. This shift reduces the amount of chlorophyll in the leaves, leading to chemical changes that reveal the brilliant reds, oranges, and yellows we associate with autumn.

So, as the days grow shorter and cooler, take time to enjoy the natural beauty of the season — and maybe add a few new fall favorites to your garden.

October to-do list

As lawns and gardens begin to slow their growth and prepare for dormancy, October is the perfect month to get ahead on maintenance. Here are a few tips to keep your lawn and garden healthy through fall and ready to thrive in spring:

Lawn care: Apply pre-emergence herbicides before winter weeds



Connie Doyle, Master Gardener UF IFAS

appear. Best applied when nighttime temperatures are 55 - 60 degrees for four to five days.

Early October is the last time to fertilize the lawn. Use a fertilizer with little or no phosphorus (unless a soil test indicates otherwise). A controlled-

release nitrogen fertilizer will give longer-lasting results. Avoid weed and feed fertilizer for best results.

General garden cleanup: Remove old, dead, or diseased plants and branches.

Clean up weeds.

Enrich the soil with organic matter and mulch to retain moisture.

Prepare for potential frost or freezes with row covers or frost blankets.

Plant spotlight: American beautyberry

Callicarpa americana is a native Florida shrub that thrives in zones 7a to 10b. It does best in partial shade with well-drained soil that is acidic to slightly alkaline. Known for its striking purple berries, it adds beauty and wildlife interest to fall gardens.

Remember: There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments.

Connie Doyle writes The Good Earth, a gardening column inspired by a lifelong passion for plants, nature, and the peaceful rhythm of the garden. With more time in retirement, she has been inspired to take that passion to the next level — learning, growing, and sharing with others in our community by way of earning her Master Gardener Certification. Connie can be reached by email to mail@floridanewslines.com.



Fall fishing peaks in October

By Jimmy Tomazinis
mail@floridanewslines.com



Jimmy Tomazinis

Hello again. I hope all of you are having a wonderful start to this season. We have reached the peak of our fall transition, fishing-wise. After October, temperatures drop pretty quickly through November, and soon enough we are back to winter fishing for a few months. This is not a bad thing, just how our seasons unfold each year. It also adds a tremendous amount of variety to our fishing areas, which is good.

Take advantage of the shrimp while they're still here. They should be big, but less numerous than they have been. I like outgoing tides the best since I think the shrimp move better when the tide is going the same direction that they're going.

Black drum are a good bet this month. They'll congregate around bridge pilings and along drop-offs looking for shrimp, clams, and crab. They also bite really well at night.

Stripers are another standout since they love the water temperatures dropping. Live shrimp would be my bait of choice. Fish them on jigs or fish-finder rigs around bridges or deeper docks.

Redfish are also around, but you might have to go all the way up against the bulkheads or the few grass edges we have since the water is so high. This time of year I find myself fishing the opposite ends of docks. A lot of the bait is moving closer to the bank, so the bigger fish follow them there. Just be careful of old pilings or debris if you push up that way. Flounder can also be found up

against the banks.

Tarpon are still here, but they'll be leaving soon enough. Once the water gets under 70 degrees they'll be heading for warmer waters. A mullet or large live shrimp around bridges or bigger docks might connect you

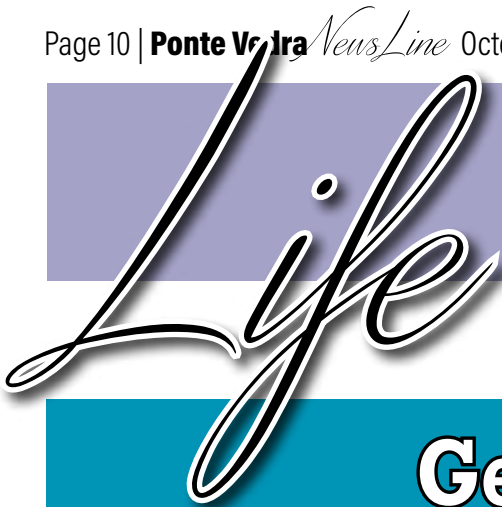
to one of these thrilling fish for a few moments if you're lucky.

I also want to mention the great surf fishing we have this time of year. Pompano, whiting, and almost everything else is a possibility in the surf right now. Fresh shrimp, clams, and live sand fleas will have you covered for the most part, but a mullet will catch bigger or toothier fish if that's what you're after.

I hope you're as excited as I am to get back out on the water. I will see you out there.

Tight lines.

Jimmy Tomazinis is a Jacksonville area native who has fished the St. Johns River his entire life. His passion for fish led him to study coastal biology at the University of North Florida. He has since participated in multiple fishery studies in Northeast Florida, continues to implement fish habitat and water quality improvement projects, fishes as much as he can, and has a monthly podcast called North Florida Fishing and Outdoors where the fishing conversation continues. Jimmy can be reached by email to mail@floridanewslines.com



travel • pantry raiders • gardening
fishing • entertainment • puzzles

Get to Know . . . Pete Duffy

By Maggie FitzRoy
mail@floridanewsline.com

Pete Duffy discovered his love for music as a young child. That proved to be an unexpected blessing later in life when he slowly began to lose his eyesight due to a progressive hereditary condition that eventually caused him to become blind.

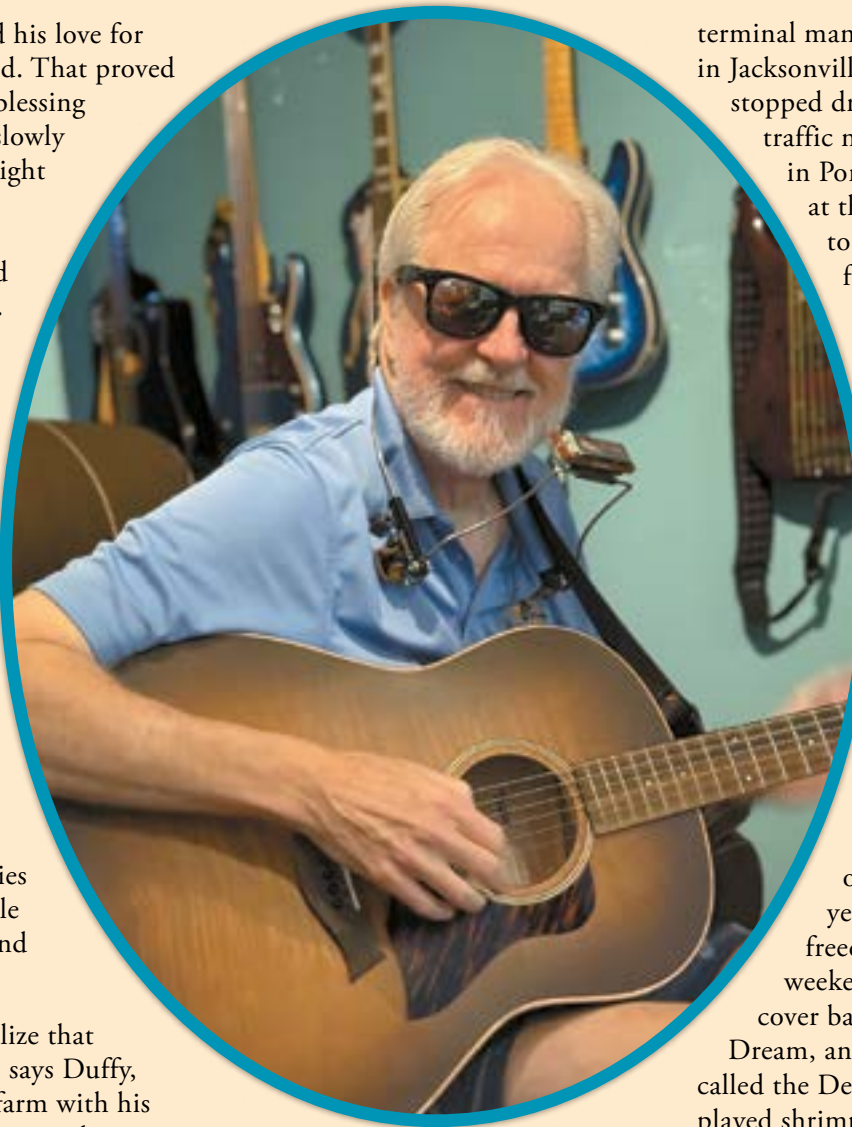
A talented musician who plays electric bass guitar and acoustic guitar, the Palm Valley resident has played in many bands and has performed in duets and as a solo artist for much of his life. In retirement, he says performing is a creative passion that gives him opportunities to connect with people and find fellowship and friendship.

“I’ve also come to realize that music is my therapy,” says Duffy, who lives on a small farm with his wife, Lea, several horses, and two dogs. “It was not easy losing my sight. It can be a challenge.”

But when you play music with other people, scientific studies prove that the feel-good chemicals — serotonin and endorphins — in your body go up, he says. “Looking back on it, music is what got me through.”

Q: What condition caused you to lose your eyesight?

A: It’s called cone-rod dystrophy. It’s a retinal disorder that effects the rods and cones in the eyes, which are the



light receptors. It’s a gradual, slow degeneration. I stopped driving in 1996, several years after moving to Jacksonville.

Q: Where did you move from?

A: I moved down here from Baltimore. I grew up in Fairfax, Virginia and then worked in the port of Baltimore for steamship companies. I worked my way up to assistant terminal manager there, then took a job as a

terminal manager for a company in Jacksonville in 1991. When I stopped driving, I took a job as a traffic manager for a company in Ponte Vedra, where I lived at the time. It allowed me to ride my bike to work at first, then later I walked.

Q: When did you start playing in bands?

A: The job in Ponte Vedra was 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. so I was able to take up bass again. I’d played bass in high school but as a single dad raising my son and working in the steamship business — which required demanding, erratic hours — I laid off music for twenty years. Then when I was freed up on nights and weekends, I played with a cover band called Vagabond’s Dream, and in a blues band called the Delta Dave Band. We played shrimp festivals and around town and had a standing gig at the Jacksonville Landing.

Q: What other bands did you play with?

A: I was recruited by a band called The Company. It was a seven-piece band that included a three-piece horn section. I was still a novice, and they were all life-long musicians and very talented. I learned a lot playing with them for eight years. We played Chicago, ‘60s stuff, Elvis show stuff, a little bit of jazz. They could all read sheet music, but I learned everything

by ear, by memory. I’m blessed to have a good memory.

Q: Who did you play with next?

A: I met Kenny Holliday, a Rod Stewart tribute artist living in Sawgrass, and he wanted to do a duo with cover songs. He was a great entertainer, always smiling, and I learned a lot from him, including to always project positive energy and engage with the audience. Kenny would be smiling no matter what might be going wrong with the equipment or the sound. I know that even though I can’t see the crowd, that they are looking at me. Kenny and I played for five years, until he went to play for cruise ships. It was a lot of fun.

Q: What band do you play with now?

A: The Rip Currents. It’s a four-piece instrumental band created and led by local musician Mike Huffman. We play surf music, instrumental classic rock, and classic rock in the tradition of The Ventures. We perform once a month at James Weldon Park in Jacksonville and at festivals and private events. I also play with the Jaywalkers, a classic rock and jam band. I also do pick up gigs, and five years ago bought my first acoustic guitar. Now I am focused on playing that — and singing — Dylan, Neil Young, folk rock. I’ve memorized thousands of songs. Now I’m memorizing lyrics. It’s good for the brain.

Get to Know . . .

Interested in being featured? Email Tracy Dishman at
editor@FloridaNewsLine.com

AFFORDABLE WATER
CONDITIONING • SOFTENING • PURIFICATION

Residential Commercial

Family Owned and Operated since 1989

CLEAN WATER FOR YOUR HOME

Affordable Water solutions for your home with the best customer service in the industry.

- Water Softeners & Filtration Systems
- Service on most makes and models
- Delivery of Salt & Potassium for your system

Call today **904-262-0197** for your Complimentary Water Test & Analysis.

License #W-32

30 YEARS

3760 Kori Road • www.affordablewaterjax.com

Planet Granite Countertops

Free Estimate for Kitchen, Baths and Outdoor Kitchen countertops

Installing countertops since 2007.

Contact Today:
Sam Martin 904-483-6153
planetgranite@aol.com

Food alliance fosters friendship, networking

By Maggie FitzRoy
mail@floridanewslines.com

Marie Milton wanted to buy an Airbnb-type vacation home in historic St. Augustine — and when she saw the three-story Victorian style home at 102 Bridge St. in Lincolnville, she fell in love with its potential.

To transform it into the “jewel” she knew it could be, she extensively renovated the building and named it the

Three Stories Inn. New paint, new wallpaper, new furniture, “new everything, including every utensil,” she told fellow food and hospitality career women at a September Women’s Food Alliance Leadership Team meeting there.

“It’s a three-story building, with three units, and every stay has a story,” she said. Once the home of Thomas Jefferson’s great granddaughter, Maria Jefferson Eppes Shine, “I wanted you to feel like you could write your own story when you stay here. Like time stands still.”

Milton, who lives in Nocatee, is one of 12 members of the food alliance’s leadership team and reflects the career and cultural diversity of the team and the Women’s Food Alliance (WFA) as a whole. She is of Asian descent, with parents from South Korea and Guam, and her inn sits above a French Bistro restaurant, La Nouvelle. She enjoys the support she gets from other members of the alliance despite the diversity of backgrounds and careers.

“It’s the friendships,” she said. “People think it’s all about selling your business, but you quickly learn it’s all about friendships and fellowship.”



Photos by Maggie FitzRoy

The Women's Food Alliance Leadership Team meets in September at the Three Stories Inn in St. Augustine.

Founded by Leigh Cort in 2013 with eight members, WFA now has 170 members from throughout the First Coast. They all have careers that are in some way related to the food and hospitality industries and enjoy the networking opportunities they get from attending monthly gatherings at area restaurants.

The leadership team also meets separately once a month and the September gathering gave them an opportunity to know Milton better, tour her inn, and enjoy catered hors d’oeuvres, drinks, and desserts as they socialized.

One of the members at the meeting owned a Cuban restaurant, another was a branding and marketing consultant. One owned a bakery in Jacksonville, another was a sales representative for a

produce company, and one owned several Tropical Smoothie restaurants with her husband.

They also hail from different areas of the country. Cort began her career in New York City. Kelly Mabry, owner of the Tropical Smoothies, grew up in Fruit Cove. Maryrose LaCavera started her Peace Pie ice cream sandwich business at the Jersey Shore. Chelsy Johnson, who’s in restaurant operations, grew up in Iowa.

“Women’s Food Alliance allows you to get out of your comfort zone and see what other women are doing in our industry,” Cort said. “There is a warmth and trust and comfort among members. We all bring our own magic to the organization.”



Leigh Cort, Founder and President of the Women's Food Alliance, leads a meeting of the organization's Leadership Team.

ENJOY
SPECIAL
SALES

Sawgrass Village

A UNIQUE BLEND OF
UPSCALE SHOPPING,
DINING, AND WELLNESS.

UNLOCK YOUR FALL STYLE
VISIT THIS PONTE VEDRA BEACH GEM

WWW.SAWGRASSVILLAGEPVB.COM

VICAR'S
LANDING
Live Exceptionally!



Vicar's Landing at Sawgrass



Vicar's Landing at Oak Bridge

You've Earned It. Now Enjoy It.



Discover a double dose of luxury retirement living at our two premiere neighborhoods in beautiful Ponte Vedra Beach.

Come home to our elegant residences, matchless amenities, and warm community. From gourmet dining, fitness centers, culture, and continuing education to on-site care for every stage of aging, Vicar's Landing will enrich your mind, body, and soul.

Reach out today, and let us show you just how golden these years can be.



Life Choice Community™

904.285.6000 | VicarsLanding.com