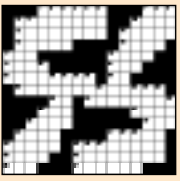


 page 3 BFF Best Furry Friend	 page 4 Community Calendar	 page 8-9 Hometown Herost	 page 10 Puzzles
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MetroCreative

Affordable tips for a memorable Thanksgiving

By Brent Lister, President and CEO, First Florida Credit Union

The holiday season is right around the corner, and this year many households are wondering how to keep a Thanksgiving feast on the table without breaking their budget. Food prices are expected to rise another 3% in 2025, with groceries alone up 2.4%, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. That means even the classics like turkey, stuffing and pie may come with a bigger price tag.

Still, there's no need to stretch yourself thin to create an extravagant spread. Small, intentional changes can make for a memorable yet affordable celebration.

As First Florida Credit Union suggests for everyday grocery shopping,

Thanksgiving cont. on pg. 2

Bridge, Battle, Baseball

At 101, veteran Bill Spates shares World War II lessons with a new generation

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewslines.com

At 101 years old, Bill Spates has vivid memories of his service in World War II—building pontoon bridges under enemy fire and learning leadership lessons from Gen. George Patton.

But these days, the Brooklyn native who now lives in St. Johns is better known by a different name: Uncle Bill.

Spates earned that nickname at Field of Dreams, where he's become a fixture at the youth baseball games, sharing his love of the sport and his remarkable history with a new generation. His daughter, Mary Anne Russell, helps translate his stories, acting as a clear voice for his incredible experiences.

"I could drive," Spates said, recalling how he joined the Army Corps of Engineers in 1943 at age 19. "All you guys drive a road grader? I could drive."

His skill led him on a path from basic training in Texas to England, then across France, Belgium, and finally Germany with the 291st Engineers, Company C. His unit's mission was critical: constructing and maintaining the bridges that would allow Allied forces to advance.

Building Bridges Under Fire

One of Spates's most significant assignments came at Remagen, where his unit was tasked with building a pontoon bridge across the Rhine River near a captured German bridge.

"We had to build a pontoon bridge right across," Spates recalled. "And when all the captured fell down, we had to run out and just hit at the pontoon bridge so they wouldn't drop."

Russell explained the harrowing scene: Patton's army needed to cross, and when the existing bridge collapsed, Spates's unit had to quickly dismantle their backup pontoon bridge to prevent it from being destroyed by the falling debris, then rapidly reassemble it for the troops to cross into Germany. The entire operation took less than a day.

"Bless the day," Spates said of the swift work. For this action, his unit received a citation for holding their position and completing the critical bridge construction.

Later, during the Battle of the Bulge, Spates was one of six soldiers assigned to guard and maintain a strategic bridge, with orders to mine it if necessary to prevent it from falling into



Photo courtesy Bill Spates
Bill Spates poses for a photo during his service with the Army Corps of Engineers in Europe during World War II. Spates joined the service in 1943 at age 19.

German hands. The six were eventually relieved by an entire battalion.

From Brooklyn to the Front Lines

He recalled a memorable leadership lesson from Gen. Patton that stuck with him. "He said you take a piece of spaghetti, okay, you can't push it, but you can take the pen and pull it,"

Bridge cont. on pg. 2

Mandarin chaplain's 30-year prayer answered through service to veterans

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewslines.com

When Larry Vollink prayed for God to place him in one church for 30 years, he never imagined his prayer would be answered in a way that would take him from Michigan to the halls of Congress and eventually to Mandarin, where he now calls home.

A graduate of South High School in Grand Rapids—the same school attended by President Gerald Ford and singer Al Green—Vollink has been a preacher for 50 years. As a young minister, he found himself moving between churches every few years, a pattern that troubled him deeply.



Larry Vollink

"I was a young preacher, and I had been at three different churches in 10 years," Vollink recalled. "I prayed, 'Lord, just please let me be in one church. I don't like going to all these churches every two or three years.'"

Veterans cont. on pg. 2



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Veterans cont. from pg. 1

Shortly after that prayer, Vollink joined the Army in 1980, beginning a journey that would span three decades of ministry to veterans.

During his 20 years of active duty service, Vollink served as an Army chaplain before retiring in 2001. But his calling to serve veterans was far from over. He became chaplain for the American Legion in Michigan, a role he held for another 20 years.

"While I was doing some of these things, I got asked to join the American Legion," Vollink said. "Being in Michigan, I got to be the chaplain there, and I stayed doing that for like 20 years."

His dedication didn't go unnoticed. During President Obama's administration, Vollink was appointed National Chaplain for the American Legion.

"Being a national chaplain, you get to do a lot of different things," he explained. "You get to say the prayer in the Congress and the Senate. You get to lay the wreath. You get to do a lot of different things with being a chaplain. So I had a lot of beautiful privileges."

In addition to his chaplain duties, Vollink worked for 10 years at the Veterans Administration in Michigan. He also served as Michigan Wing Chaplain for Civil Air Patrol, overseeing eight to ten chaplains across the state.

After giving 30 years to the American Legion, Vollink decided it was time to retire and move to Florida to be closer to his family. He now lives in Mandarin with his wife, Vicki, and attends Christ Church. He continues to wear his military hat proudly around the community.

It wasn't until years later that a pastor friend helped Vollink realize the significance of his long-ago prayer.

"I went back to that church and told them about my prayer I prayed about 30 years ago," Vollink said. "My friend, Pastor Fred, told me, 'Larry, let me tell you something. God really did answer your prayer because your ministry has always been to veterans.'"

That realization became the title of Vollink's chapter in a book about Michigan veterans: "And the Lord Answered His Prayer."

"My church was being a chaplain for 30 years with veterans," Vollink said. "God answered my prayer. He sure did."



Photo courtesy Larry Vollink
Larry Vollink in his Civil Air Patrol uniform. He served as Michigan Wing Chaplain overseeing eight to ten chaplains across the state.

Bridge cont. from pg. 1

Spates shared, referring to Patton's philosophy that you lead troops by pulling them forward, not pushing them.

A Life After War

Spates was on leave in Luxembourg when he heard that the war in Europe had ended. He was slated to ship out to the Pacific theater next, a deployment he was relieved to avoid when President Harry Truman ordered the dropping of the second atomic bomb on Japan. "If Harry had to order a second bomb, we would have been all the way over to Japan," Spates said, adding simply: "I hate bugs."

Discharged in December 1945, he was home for Christmas. Spates married his wife, Ann, in August 1948; they were married for 59 years before her passing in 2007.

After the war, he worked for a company that refurbished printing presses before joining the U.S. Postal Service in 1959. He worked there for 27 years, with his military service counting toward his retirement, giving him 30 years of credited service when he retired in 1986.

The couple raised three children in Poughkeepsie, including son Dick, who served with the Marines in Vietnam.

Uncle Bill and Field of Dreams

Spates and Mary Anne Russell moved to St. Johns last November. One of his longtime passions is youth baseball, which he prefers over the professional league.

When Russell's realtor suggested they check out Field of Dreams, they instantly loved watching the Little Leaguers.

George Vancore, the lead umpire, quickly struck up a friendship with the veteran and began calling him "Uncle Bill." Vancore often recognizes Spates over the microphone, thanking him for his service.

"Dad absolutely loves going to the games," Russell said. "He loves to tease them. He loves to have a hot dog."

Spates remains active, having played softball until he was 80, only stopping when he found the co-ed games too rough.

These days, Uncle Bill can be found at Field of Dreams, watching the next generation play the game he loves, sharing his remarkable history with anyone who asks, and, at 101, reminding everyone that there's always a reason to keep moving forward.



Photos courtesy Bill Spates
Bill Spates celebrates his 100th birthday. Spates, now 101, remains active and is known as "Uncle Bill" at the local Field of Dreams youth baseball park.



Allied soldiers rapidly construct a pontoon bridge across a European river. Spates's 291st Engineers, Company C, performed this critical, high-pressure work at locations like Remagen to keep troops moving forward.

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BFF

Breed:
Tabby cat

Favorite Activity:
Lounging in the sun

Favorite Food:
Salmon cat treats

Favorite Friends:
My humans, Tracy and Zach

How did your BFF get their name:
Cali is named after a character in a favorite show of my humans.

Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Cali!

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.

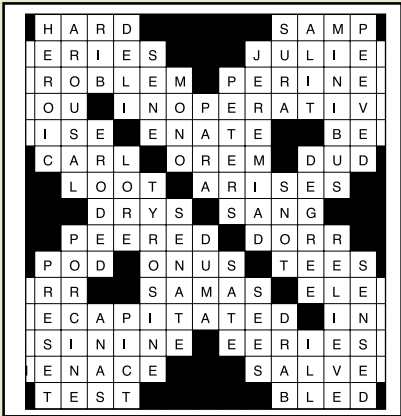
Table of Contents

4 Community Calendar

8&9 Hometown Heroes

10 Puzzles

12 & 13 Senior NewsLine



Answers to our Puzzles PG 8

CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Answers: A. slippery B. shower C. bars D. eyesight



A message of gratitude from the editor

As we honor Veterans Day this November, I want to express my deepest appreciation to the veterans who answered our call to share their stories with our community.

Service takes many forms, and the response we received demonstrates the remarkable diversity of experiences within our veteran community. From those who served in peacetime to combat veterans, from enlisted sailors to commanding officers, each story reflects the dedication that defines military service.

The stories you'll read in these pages go beyond the uniform. They reveal what happens after the salute — the challenges of transition, the drive to continue serving in new ways, and the determination to tackle projects that others might deem impossible.

These narratives remind us that Veterans Day isn't just about thanking someone for their service — though that matters deeply. It's about recognizing that the values forged in military service continue to strengthen our community long after the uniform comes off.

To every veteran who shared their story: your willingness to open up about your experiences helps bridge the gap between military and civilian life. You've given our community something invaluable — a deeper understanding of service and sacrifice.

Thank you for your service, then and now.

With gratitude and respect,

Tracy Dishman, editor

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November

October

Community Calendar

What's Happening in St. Johns

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

Nov. 1 - Dec. 3
St. Johns CARES Giving Tree Initiative

The 19th annual Giving Tree Initiative will run from Nov. 1 to Dec. 3. Wishes from clients of 40 nonprofit organizations in St. Johns County serving the elderly, veterans, homeless, abused, children and animals are printed on holiday wish tags. Donation boxes with posters will be displayed at participating businesses, schools and organizations throughout the county. Donations are sorted and provided to nonprofit organizations for the holidays. Monetary donations can be made to purchase wish items that are not donated. Visit www.stjohnscares.org for a list of host sites or email president@stjohnscares.org for more information.

Nov. 5 - 8
Bartram Trail Friends of the Library quarterly bargain sale

Bartram Trail Friends of the Library will hold its Quarterly Bargain Sale Wednesday through Saturday, Nov. 5 - 8, at Bartram Trail Branch Library. All items will be a suggested donation of \$1 per item, with bag sale pricing on Saturday. Bags will be \$5 for current members and \$10 for nonmembers. New memberships and renewals are valid through December 2026. Proceeds fund library programs, books, furniture and equipment.

Nov. 8
St. Johns Adopt-A-Road litter pickup

Volunteers ages 8 and older are invited to participate in the St. Johns Adopt-A-Road Litter Pickup Saturday, Nov. 8, at 11 a.m. at Silverleaf Commons Mall parking lot, 70 Silver Forest Drive, St. Augustine. Rain date is Sunday, Nov. 9, at 3 p.m. Participants are encouraged to wear vibrant, patriotic T-shirts and will receive a community service hours letter. Sponsored by Victory Lutheran Church. Call 904-642-8900 for more information.

Nov. 8
Bartram Trail Genealogy Club

The Bartram Trail Genealogy Club meets Saturday, Nov. 8, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Bartram Trail Branch Library. This month's topic will be discussions of AirTable.com and Roots Magic 11 led by club members. Open to the public of all levels of genealogical experience. Email ginglish@comcast.net for more information.

Nov. 13
St. Johns County Federation of Republican Women meeting

St. Johns County Federation of Republican Women will meet Thursday, Nov. 13, at 6:30 p.m. at Looper's Lounge at the Caddy Shack restaurant. The guest speaker will be Superintendent Dr. Brennan Asplen of St. Johns County School District.

Nov. 18
Newcomers of North St. Johns luncheon

Newcomers of North St. Johns will hold its November luncheon Tuesday, Nov. 18, at 11 a.m. at Bella Vista Italian Restaurant, 483 State Road 13, Suite 10, St. Johns. The event features a family-style Italian lunch and bingo games with prizes. A food drive will benefit Celebration Lutheran Church's Christ's Cupboard Food Pantry; members are encouraged to bring nonperishable items. Cost is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests. Reservations must be received by Nov. 13. Visit newcomersofnorthstjohns.org for more information.

Nov. 22 - ongoing
Bartram Trail Friends of the Library Holiday Book Sale

Bartram Trail Friends of the Library will hold its annual Holiday Book Sale Fundraiser starting Saturday, Nov. 22, at Bartram Trail Branch Library. The sale, which runs through the new year, features thousands of giftable quality books, games, puzzles and more. This is the library's largest fundraiser of the year. Proceeds fund library programs, books, furniture and equipment.

Nov. 2025
Field of Dreams baseball registration

Field of Dreams Baseball registration is now open for the 2026 season. FOD Baseball is a free baseball league for children and young adults with special needs. Games are played at Aberdeen Park, across from Freedom Crossing Academy. The season begins Jan. 30, 2026. To guarantee a uniform for opening day, register by the end of November 2025 at FODBaseball.com.

Dec. 2025
Julington Creek Boat Parade of Lights

The annual Julington Creek Boat Parade of Lights, sponsored by the Julington Creek Prop Club, is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 6. Prizes of \$300, \$200 and \$100 will be awarded for the top three holiday-decorated boats, and all participating boaters will receive a Captain's Gift Bag. Prizes are also awarded for best dock along the parade route. Captains must attend one of two registration meetings at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 2 or Dec. 4 at Julington Creek Marina. Email commodore@jcpropclub.com or visit www.jcpropclub.com for more information.

Dec. 2025
Alpine Groves Park Winter Festival

Friends of Alpine Park will hold its annual Winter Festival Saturday, Dec. 6, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. near the riverfront at Alpine Groves Park, 2060 State Road 13. The free community event will feature food trucks, Santa, a blacksmith, arts and crafts vendors, children's games and more.

Ongoing Activities
Open Game Play

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 on Thursdays from 12:15 to 3:15 p.m. Call 904-209-3655 (Monday through Thursday) or email tharris@coasjc.org for more information.

Trout Creek Senior Center activities

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 Jessica Curry at 904-209-3658 or jcurry@stjohnscoa.com for more information.

Playing HOOKie

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. to noon at Maple Street Biscuit Company, 1627 Race Track Road in St. Johns. Visit the group's Facebook page (Playing HOOKie) or email playinghookie2022@gmail.com for more information.

Jokers Wild card group

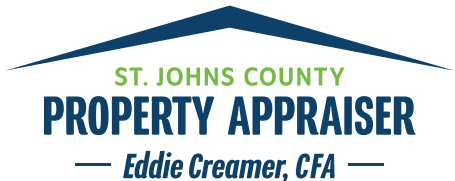
Jokers Wild, a local card group, plays the game of Hand, Knee and Foot on Wednesdays. If you are interested in joining, call 904-230-6962 and leave a message.

A Course in Miracles Study Group

A Course in Miracles Study Group meets Sundays from 9 to 10 a.m. at Unity Church for Creative Living, 2777 Race Track Road. This is a unique spiritual self-study program designed to awaken participants to the truth of our oneness with God. Cost: Donation. For more information, call 904-287-1505 or email UCCLOffice2777@gmail.com.

Widow to Widow support group

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



ST. JOHNS COUNTY
PROPERTY APPRAISER
— *Eddie Creamer, CFA* —



NOTICE OF CERTIFICATION OF TAX ROLL

Pursuant to Sections 193.122 and 197.323, Florida Statutes, Notice is Hereby Given that the Tax Roll for St. Johns County was Certified to the St. Johns County Tax Collector on the 10th day of October, 2025, for the Collection of 2025 Taxes Pending Value Adjustment Board Changes.

EDDIE CREAMER
ST. JOHNS COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER

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

Q. What services does your office offer in recognition of Veterans Day?

A. To honor the brave men and women who have served our nation, we are offering complimentary services to veterans, active-duty military, reservists and their dependents throughout the month of November. These include free passport photos, notary services and recording services for DD-214s. To demonstrate eligibility, individuals must provide a military discharge record (DD-214), military ID, military dependent ID or present a driver license with the veteran designation. In addition, veteran couples and their dependents may enjoy free wedding ceremonies and photos when presenting a valid marriage license.

Q. What is the importance of recording DD-214s?

A. Recording your DD-214 ensures an official copy is available if the original is ever lost or destroyed. These records remain protected and confidential for 62 years after separation. At the time of recording, veterans are also eligible to receive a Salute to Service ID card, which provides special discounts at local dining establishments, attractions and other services throughout St. Johns County.

Q. Where can veterans access these complimentary services?



Brandon Patty

A. Veterans and their families can access these services Monday through Friday during business hours at the Richard O. Watson Judicial Center, 4010 Lewis Speedway, St. Augustine. With the exception of wedding photos, free services are also available by appointment only at the Julington Creek Annex, 725 Flora Branch Boulevard, St. Johns, and the Ponte Vedra Beach Annex, 151 Sawgrass Corners Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach.

Q. Will services be available on Veterans Day?

A. Yes. While our office is closed on Veterans Day, our clerks are thrilled to offer complimentary DD-214 recording services on November 11 at the annual Veterans Council of St. Johns County's Veterans Day Celebration at Anastasia Baptist Church, 1650 A1A South, St. Augustine, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Q. What is the best way for residents to contact your office?

A. If residents have questions about any of the 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 cell at 904-599-8688 or by email at BPatty@stjohnsclerk.com.

the first step in preparing a Thanksgiving dinner is to simply make a plan — and stick to it. Write out a list and establish a clear spending budget. Your list should include not only staples but also extras like drinks, desserts and any last-minute purchases.

Opt for family favorites. An overwhelming spread only gets picked at, leaving you with leftovers you may not even want. When making your list, stick to recipes with pantry staples and choose dishes that share ingredients. Frozen and canned produce can also help lower your final cost.

Planning to cook from scratch may save you some money. Homemade rolls and

mashed potatoes cost less than pre-made versions. You can even prep and freeze dishes like pie crusts or cranberry sauce ahead of time. As a bonus, cooking together can turn meal prep into a fun family activity.

Some items go on “pre-holiday” sale if you shop far enough in advance. Stuffing mix, canned pumpkin and cranberries often get discounted. Once you're at the store with your list, First Florida Credit Union recommends opting for generic brands whenever possible. Store-brand frozen turkeys are often less expensive and just as tasty.

These small savings will add up — and you'll see the final price go down.

Rotary makes a difference locally and globally ... and you can help

By Al Kalter

Perhaps you've read articles here in The Creekline about members of our local Rotary Club donating items to area charities or helping to expand their facilities. Maybe you were intrigued by the story of local teenagers spending a year abroad as Rotary exchange students, or you had the opportunity to meet one of their counterparts from overseas attending our local high school. Then there was the piece about our club coordinating efforts to bring water to a small village in Honduras, or the one promoting our annual "fun-raiser" - the Pub Crawl in Bartram Walk. And of course you can regularly find our volunteers in orange vests picking up trash along Race Track Road.

The Rotary Club of Bartram Trail - Julington Creek is proud to take on all of these projects and activities and so much more, which is only possible due to the active participation of all of our members ... but we could always use more! If you would like to contribute to these efforts, to improve the lives of our friends and neighbors, to make the world a better place, then you are urged to consider becoming a Rotarian.

Rotary is a nonpolitical, nonreligious



Al Kalter

association dedicated to community and international service. With its 120-year history and 1.4 million members worldwide, Rotary is the oldest and most international service organization in the world. Membership in Rotary is open to all individuals who share the commitment to its goals, best represented by the organization's motto, "Service Above Self." But Rotarians are also dedicated to fun and fellowship, and often build lifelong friendships with fellow club members. For anyone looking to give back to their community while building professional and personal relationships, Rotary offers the perfect opportunity.

The Rotary Club of Bartram Trail - Julington Creek meets every Thursday morning, from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., at Westminster Woods on Julington Creek. Guests and prospective members are always welcome. More information about our local club can be found at www.bartramtrailrotary.org.

Al Kalter is a proud member of the Rotary Club of Bartram Trail - Julington Creek.

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Bartram Trail Women’s Club plans floral program, silent auction

By Dawn Garrity

The Bartram Trail Newcomers and Women’s Club (BTNWC) will hold its November luncheon, centered on a theme of "Gratefulness and Sharing," on Tuesday, Nov. 11, at St. John's Golf and Country Club in St. Augustine.

The luncheon, which begins at 11 a.m., will feature a program demonstrating how to create a holiday floral arrangement. The club will welcome ladies from The Garden Club of St. Augustine for the presentation.

Following the demonstration, the BTNWC will host a silent auction of the finished floral arrangement and other items. Proceeds generated from the auction will be distributed to the Betty Griffin Center and a local food bank. The cost for the entertainment and meal is \$32.

The BTNWC provides an opportunity for women to learn about the community and find fellowship through monthly meetings, social and special interest activities. The club is open to all area women.

In addition to monthly meetings, the BTNWC offers a wide variety of special interest groups, including Bridge, Continental Rummy, Pennies Canasta, Mexican Chicken Train, Bunco, Mah Jongg, Golf, Book Club, Nature Walk, Lunch Divas and Girls Night Out.

The club noted that it is the Bartram Trail Newcomers and Women’s Club and is not associated with the North Bartram Women’s Club. Residents interested in joining are invited to visit the club’s Facebook page at <https://www.google.com/search?q=www.facebook.com/BTNC.1> for more information.



Photo courtesy Bartram Trail Women's Club
Four members of the Bartram Trail Newcomers and Women's Club in Halloween costumes.

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Walk-in and same-day appointments now available in Nocatee while Bartram Commons is under construction

We know life is busy. And when you need a doctor, you need someone close to home who you can trust. Our Baptist Primary Care doctors are now accepting new patients at Baptist HealthPlace at Nocatee, Suite 230. Walk-ins and same-day appointments are available while we prepare to open our permanent Bartram Commons office just off Race Track Road in spring 2026.

Meet the care team:



Joel Ahlgrim, DO
Family Medicine Physician
Treats ages 5+



Jagat Patel, MD
Family Medicine Physician
Treats ages 5+



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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Business Briefs

DONNA 5K at TPC Sawgrass raises \$50,000

By Alaina Bundy

Over the weekend, The DONNA Foundation successfully held its annual DONNA 5K at TPC Sawgrass. The sold-out event, presented by Dream Finders Homes, drew more than 1,300 participants to the ‘back 9’ of THE PLAYERS Stadium Course on Saturday, October 11.

In celebration of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, participants, spectators and volunteers gathered at the finish

line to celebrate survivorship and the foundation’s mission to help patients move from a place of fear to a place of love. Together, they raised more than \$50,000 to support families living with breast cancer through The DONNA CareLine.

The event also marked the conclusion of the 2025 DONNA Fearless series, recognizing runners who completed all three signature DONNA races this year and earned their commemorative Fearless Series medal.



Photo courtesy Anthony Duran and Craig Hill

St. Johns CARES 19th Annual Giving Tree Initiative

The 19th Annual St. Johns CARES Giving Tree Initiative will run from Nov. 1 to Dec. 3, benefiting 40 local nonprofit organizations in St. Johns County.

The drive aims to provide holiday gifts for thousands of clients, including elderly residents, veterans, homeless individuals, abuse victims and children. Wish tags will be displayed at

participating businesses, schools and organizations throughout the county.

Monetary donations are also accepted to purchase wish list items that are not donated.

For a list of participating host sites, residents can visit stjohnscares.org. Questions can be directed to president@stjohnscares.org.

First Coast Cultural Center wins \$10,000 Autism Grant

The First Coast Cultural Center (FCCC) was recently awarded a grant of \$10,000 from the Autism License Plate Fund and the Autism Services Grants Council to expand its music therapy program. The center was one of 18 Florida nonprofits to receive funding.

The grant supports Sound Connections® Music Therapy (SCMT), an FCCC outreach program that provides no-cost therapeutic interventions to nearly 300 students per week in four St. Johns County schools, focusing on individuals with autism and related disabilities.

"This grant allows us to continue our mission of providing struc-

tured, data-informed music therapy services to elementary students with special needs, particularly those in Title I schools," said Candice Sirak, senior music therapist and SCMT manager.

The program uses clinically validated techniques to target individualized goals across communication, language, academic readiness and social-emotional functioning. The grant funding was generated by sales of the specialty "Support Autism Programs" license plate, which provided nearly \$160,000 to nonprofits statewide this year.

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Bricks of remembrance, promise of presence

The following column is from "The Patriot Reader," the newsletter of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County.

Around our county, there have been several civic and veterans organizations that have honored and remembered our veterans in some special way. The most prominent way has been the laying of bricks in memorial gardens or Walls of Remembrance.

On Thursday, Sept. 18, Pedro Menendez High School performed such a dedication before their varsity football game that evening. The ceremony was conducted around the American flagpole at the entrance to the football field. This area contains many bricks honoring our local veterans from St. Johns County. The dedication service was attended by Joseph McDermott, director of the Veterans Service Office, and myself as guests of the school, and we participated in the dedication service. The Veterans Council purchased five bricks in honor of all former chairmen of the Veterans Council.

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County made a commitment years ago that no veteran from our county will ever be buried without a family member present. On numerous occasions, the Veterans Council has had to be that family member. This was the situation last Wednesday when Joseph McDermott, director of the Veterans Service Office, and I transported the cremains of an indigent veteran to Jacksonville National Cemetery for burial. Navy veteran Jacquis Hehelijah Rossiter



Bill Dudley

had no known family that could be located. Director McDermott and I, along with a member of the Jacksonville Ladies, a volunteer group that ensures no veteran is buried alone at Jacksonville National Cemetery, performed the services for veteran shipmate Rossiter.

Thank you for your service.

Bill Dudley is chairman of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County. He served 10 years of active duty in the U.S. Air Force, deploying during the Berlin Crisis and Cuban Missile Crisis, before transferring to the USAF Reserves and retiring at the rank of lieutenant colonel. Since 2005, he has served the veteran community as National Director of the U.S. Navy League and in leadership roles with the National Cemetery, Veterans Treatment Court Advisory Board and other local veterans organizations.

A military mom's story of pride and sacrifice

By Tracy McCormick-Dishman
editor@floridanewslines.com

Twelve years ago, my oldest son signed some documents and was whisked away into a life I knew nothing about, but one that he craved. His calling in life is to serve and protect our nation.

I knew how to build a career following a college pathway. I knew nothing about the military as a career. All I knew was this was important to him, and he had to go. He belonged to the United States Army now. I didn't have mom's authority to know what he was doing, where he was going, or who he was going with. I was a military mom.

There are two memories of my son's early military days that changed what it means to me to be an American.

The first memory is my son's graduation from boot camp. It was my first experience being on a military base and getting a peek into where he had been living for 10 weeks. The anticipation of waiting to see him was exhilarating and painful.

I remember hearing them march in as a newly formed team of soldiers. The cadence was one of the coolest songs I had ever heard. The pride of accomplishment showed in their form as they marched in unison. The stern looks of leadership on their faces were more than impressive.

In my opinion, the definition of a great leader is written in the eyes of an American soldier standing at attention; fully engaged in the mo-

ment, with every fiber of their being, and ready for whatever is next.

The feeling of pride in my son at that moment when I looked at his face for the first time in many weeks came bubbling out of me in sobs of joy. He was an American soldier. He was a man, standing at attention, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient. I could tell by the look on his face that he was exactly where he was meant to be.

The second memory was attending a welcome-home ceremony for his tour of duty overseas. My soldier had been active duty for several years at this point and had traveled to many places. We kept in touch over the phone, sometimes late in the evening for him after a grueling day, but an entire day in the future for me because of the time zone difference.

I moved mountains to make arrangements to get myself and my family to the base for his arrival. We gathered in a huge gymnasium and sat in the bleachers with other military families. The program started with a recap of what our soldiers had experienced and accomplished while away.

I knew my son was behind the big doors across the gym from me. We could see shadows under the doors of feet moving around. My heart was racing, and my eyes were starting to fill with happy tears.

Then, over the loudspeaker, "Proud to be an American," by Lee Greenwood, started playing. Special-effect

Mom's story cont. on pg. 9

November 11: A nation says thank you

By NewsLine staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

On November 11, Americans observe Veterans Day, a federal holiday dedicated to honoring all military veterans for their service and patriotism. Unlike Memorial Day, which specifically honors those who died in military service, Veterans Day celebrates all who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, living or dead.

The holiday has deep historical roots. Originally known as Armistice Day, it commemorated the end of World War I, which concluded at the 11th hour

of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918. Congress officially renamed it Veterans Day in 1954 to honor American veterans of all wars.

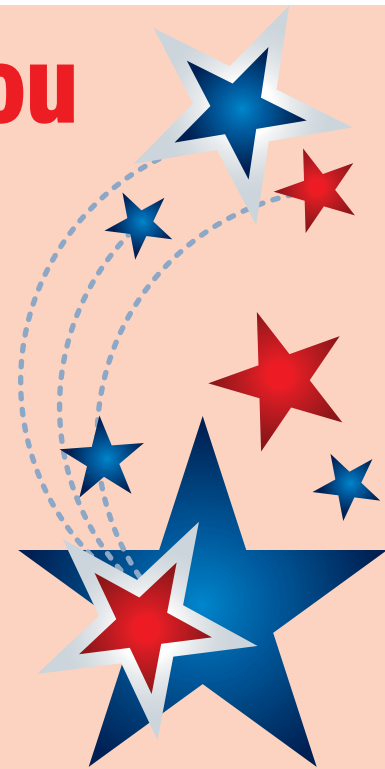
Veterans Day is always observed on November 11, regardless of what day of the week it falls on. This date was chosen to preserve the historical significance of the original armistice.

The purpose of Veterans Day is to show gratitude for the willingness of veterans to serve and sacrifice for our country. It's a time for communities to come together and thank those who have

worn the uniform in defense of our nation.

One interesting note: The official spelling is "Veterans Day" without an apostrophe. This is intentional, as the day honors all veterans collectively rather than being a day that "belongs" to veterans.

As November 11 approaches, take a moment to thank a veteran for their service. Their dedication and sacrifice have helped preserve the freedoms we enjoy today.





Local veteran brings navy boat back to life

By Lawrence P. Dukes

I am a retired U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. and former nuclear reactor operator. I'm also the owner of Dubuque, a 36-foot surplus U.S. Navy Landing Craft Personnel Light that once served aboard the Dubuque (LPD-8), which was decommissioned in 2006.



I found Dubuque on eBay in 2018 — high and dry, covered in red dust in a surplus yard in Del Rio, Texas along the Rio Grande. At first glance, I knew this was my boat. When it arrived at Green Cove Springs Marina, Fla., a crowd formed. Shouts of "it's a gunboat!" rang out. Dubuque was in bad shape — most of the engine missing, no windows, no cleats, no railing. It had been stripped, and I think they were making bets I would never get it in the water.

But the stainless-steel lettering on its stern gleaming in the sunlight stated defiantly "USS DUBUQUE" — identifying itself as one of the Dubuque's small boats. That was enough for me. I had been an engineer half of my Navy career. I was undaunted. I moved Dubuque to long-term storage and formulated a restoration plan.

After almost two years in storage, I moved Dubuque into the work area and began the restoration. COVID-19 hit, making parts difficult to find.



My biggest hurdle was the engine — too many parts missing. Then I miraculously found a fully functional 8V-71 Detroit Diesel on a GSA Government Auction website. I won the auction and drove to Yorktown, Va. to retrieve the 4,000-pound engine myself. The 26-hour trip back at 45 mph drew curious onlookers at every stop. It was slow going, but I made it back to Green Cove Springs.

After more work and a few hiccups, a year and a half after placing Dubuque on the hard stand, she was ready to be tested.

When I energized the batteries, Dubuque woke from a 20-year sleep — lights on, fan whirling. "It's alive!" I shouted. Next came the engine test. Two huge barrels of water on deck fed the raw water-cooling system. I pressed the start button. The engine tried to turn over: "wah," "wah," "wah." Charles, my boat neighbor, threw me a can of starting fluid. "Hit it with this! In the air intakes!" Two shots, and the engine rolled over with a roar, settling into the steady beat of a two-stroke Detroit Diesel. Beautiful.

The cooling water and exhaust flowed from the twin stern exhausts. I went down to view the propeller — the

shaft was spinning, the propeller turning smooth as butter. I sprayed silicon lubricant into the shaft strut bearing, and everything spun smoothly in silence. It was magical. I thought I heard Dubuque say, "Reporting for duty, ready to answer all bells, sir!"

Dubuque would be back in the water very soon now. I looked around and noticed that a few of the Marina Staff had been watching the activity, and they were now enthusiastically giving me and Dubuque a thumbs up. It was a great day. Mission accomplished.

I could not have accomplished this task without the support of the Green Cove Springs Marina Staff and my boat neighbors who are now my good friends.

Lawrence P. Dukes is a retired U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr., former reactor operator aboard the Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69), and U.S. Coast Guard licensed Master. He is a graduate of Terry Parker High School and the University of North Florida. He owns SEA STATE Realty Corp. and SEA STATE Maritime School in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.



Mom's story cont. from pg. 8

smoke came from under and around the two sets of big doors I had been staring at. The doors swung open, and we all jumped to our feet as our soldiers marched in and filled the room.

The soldiers looked similar in their fatigues. We were squinting and scanning

each one to find our soldier as the group marched in and lined up in formation to face us. I recognized one of the forms that moved just a hair differently, one that I knew like the back of my hand. That's him! There he is!

The rush of emotions is something that is difficult to put into words. I soon got my hug and looked into the eyes of my

very exhausted son. My healthy, strong son.

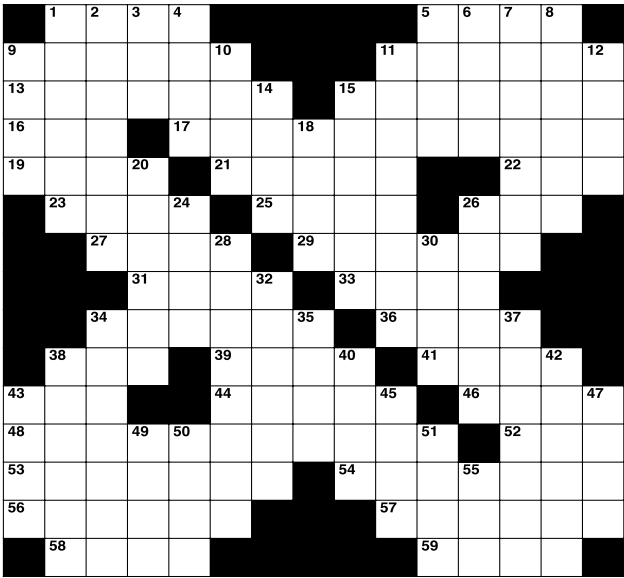
My son is a career military man in his 12th year of service. He now leads his own platoon and trains the next generation of soldiers. The pride he has in his country is evident on his face and in his voice whenever we talk about work.

I pray that pride in this beautiful nation is heard in your voice and shows on your face. I pray you take time to remember those who signed papers, were whisked away from their families to serve and protect, and gave the ultimate sacrifice.

God bless you and your family, and God bless America!

Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. Difficult
5. Coarsely ground corn
9. There's one for the "world"
11. Loved Romeo
13. Sticky situation
15. Pelvic areas
16. An informal debt instrument
17. Cannot be repaired surgically
19. A device attached to a workbench
21. Related on the mother's side
22. Sound unit
23. __ Sagan, astronomer
25. Utah city
26. A disappointing effort
27. Steal goods during a riot
29. Wakes up
31. Hair salon service
33. Serenaded
34. Looked intensely
36. U.S. Air Force expert Robert F.
38. A type of cast
39. One's duty
41. Where golfers begin
43. Make a mistake
44. Semitic sun god
46. Ancient Greek City
48. Having had the head cut off
52. A place to stay
53. Unwise
54. Most unnatural
56. Dennis is a notable one
57. Ointments
58. Students' exam
59. Leaked blood

CLUES DOWN

1. Brave
2. Act of awakening
3. Jest at
4. Sandwich store
5. Chapter of the Koran
6. Dismounted
7. Small vehicle
8. Irked
9. One who earns by disreputable dealings
10. Monetary unit of Samoa
11. Long, mournful lamentation
12. Weight unit
14. Alone, single
15. Decreases
18. Indicates beside
20. Worn by exposure to the weather
24. A body of traditions
26. College students' ultimate goal
28. Amino acid
30. Nasal mucus
32. US government entity
34. Swinish
35. Legislative body in Russia
37. Grant an exemption to
38. Put in advance
40. Satisfy
42. Felt
43. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
45. Witnesses
47. Picnic invaders
49. Gasteyer and de Armas are two
50. Ancient person of Scotland
51. Cheerless
55. Unwell

TURKEY DAY WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- APPLE PIE
BISCUITS
BRINE
CASSEROLE
CIDER
CORNBREAD
CORNUCOPIA
DINNER
ENTERTAIN
FAMILY
FRIENDS
FULL
GRACIOUS
GRATITUDE
GRAVY
GREEN BEANS
HOLIDAY
MEAL
OVEN
SOUP
STUFFING
THANKSGIVING
TURKEY
YAMS



Solve the code to discover words related to senior safety.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 17 = E)

- A. 19 24 13 7 7 17 23 5
Clue: Slick
- B. 19 1 15 11 17 23
Clue: Place to wash
- C. 26 20 23 19
Clue: Handles
- D. 17 5 17 19 13 12 1 25
Clue: Ability to see



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Senior NewsLine

"Caregivers need care too:" How a local day program supports family caregivers

By River Garden Senior Services
mail@floridanewslines.com

More than 2 million Floridians currently provide caregiving for family members, a number that is expected to grow significantly during the next five years. Rich Demico and his wife under-

stand the related challenges all too well. Demico has been a caregiver for his 82-year-old mother Barbara for a year and a half. He moved Barbara into the couple's Bartram Park home when they realized her Alzheimer's had worsened.



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A not-for-profit agency sponsored by the organized Jacksonville Jewish community.

"We immediately realized she was in worse shape than we thought," Demico said. "She was living alone, and a friend of hers was kind of hiding how badly she was doing, how much help she needed."

Those first few weeks were an adjustment for everyone. Demico, who is retired, and his wife who still works, spent four to six weeks helping Barbara acclimate to her new surroundings - cooking for her, cleaning for her, establishing a new sleeping pattern and getting caught up on all her medical needs.

"It's a constant thing where we have to be there at all times with her," he said. "My wife and I play tag team on the weekends and in the evenings just to make sure one of us is awake and available for her."

But when Barbara fell in the garage and broke her nose, they realized caregiving was a greater responsibility than they expected. Rich's wife soon found River Garden Senior Services and discovered the Adult Day Program.

"She needs someone to be with her constantly, and we can't do that," Rich said. "River Garden was quite the life-saver for us."

The Adult Day Program is a safe and engaging space for seniors who live at home but need daytime support and social connection. Each senior receives a personalized, flexible schedule tailored to their needs. They may participate in a range of daily activities from chair exercises and ceramics to baking and bingo.

Caregivers typically begin by scheduling two days per week but often increase that as their loved one becomes more comfortable, said Melanie Ruggiero, director of home and community based services at River Garden. The program operates Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"When we have caregivers come in and interview with us, they are exhausted," Ruggiero said. "Over time, we notice that they look rested."

Barbara now attends the program the full five days per week. For Rich, it's been life-changing. The time allows him to run errands, prepare meals and handle household responsibilities he



can't manage when Barbara is home. But the biggest change, he says, has been in his mother.

"She's made a lot of friends; she's very sociable," Rich said. "I think it's a distraction for her when she's engaged with her friends and staff, and that takes her mind off things."

Ruggiero says River Garden prides itself on being a safe place that caregivers trust. She says their goal is to make every person who walks through their doors feel understood and valued.

"No matter what their diagnosis is, we meet them where they are," Ruggiero said.

The Adult Day program is accepting new clients. Caregivers also now have access to a new drop-in program, where they can drop off their loved one for a four-hour window on short notice if something comes up.

Ruggiero says without respite, caregivers eventually burn out, which is why support systems like River Garden's are so critical.

"It's been a huge help because we have the peace of mind knowing she's being taken care of, and that it's something she enjoys," Rich said.

To learn more about River Garden's Adult Day Program, caregivers can visit RiverGarden.org.

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Senior NewsLine

Thoughtful gifts offer comfort, fun for older adults

By NewsLine staff
mail@floridanewslines.com

Gifts from friends and loved ones can make people feel cherished and valued. When these people are the older adults in one's life, such as parents or grandparents, gifts take on additional meaning because they can warm the hearts of very special people.

Finding unique gifts for seniors can be challenging because these individuals have been receiving gifts for many years, and many may already have everything they need. Inspiration is everything when shopping for the ideal gifts for the older adults in one's life, and the following are some categories that can serve as a springboard for what to get seniors this holiday season.

Comfort and mobility

Although people like to say, 'age is just a number, getting older may come with a few aches and pains and even some limitations. Gifts like seat cushions that correct posture or easy on/off sock helpers can be helpful. Cloud foam slippers or even a grab bar that attaches into the hood of the car door can be

great gifts.

Fitness and fun

Gifts that cater to interests, well-being and more can be ideal. Active seniors may appreciate a fitness tracker or exercise equipment (yoga mat, light dumbbells, resistance bands) to facilitate fitness goals. Storage solutions for hobbies and craft items also can be fitting. See-through containers to store paints or beads or an organizer for fishing tackle can make seniors' hobbies even more enjoyable. A roll-up puzzle mat is great for puzzle enthusiasts to protect their work until completion.

Family gifts

Seniors also may appreciate gifts that touch the heart. A custom recipe cutting board that features a treasured family recipe may become a cherished item. A customized photo calendar that features family members' birthdays and other key events also is thoughtful. A photo jewelry locket makes a nice gift for a special senior woman.

Travel gifts

Seniors typically have more time to

devote to travel than younger adults, and gifts that cater to their wanderlust are a perfect fit. Digital GPS-based devices that connect to keys or luggage can help prevent lost items while traveling. Bright luggage that won't get mixed up at the baggage carousel or ergonomic neck pillows that facilitate napping on a flight also

can be appreciated. Those who know destinations the seniors in their lives may want to visit can purchase plane or cruise tickets as a generous gift for someone special.

Various categories can provide ample inspiration when shopping for gifts for seniors this holiday season.

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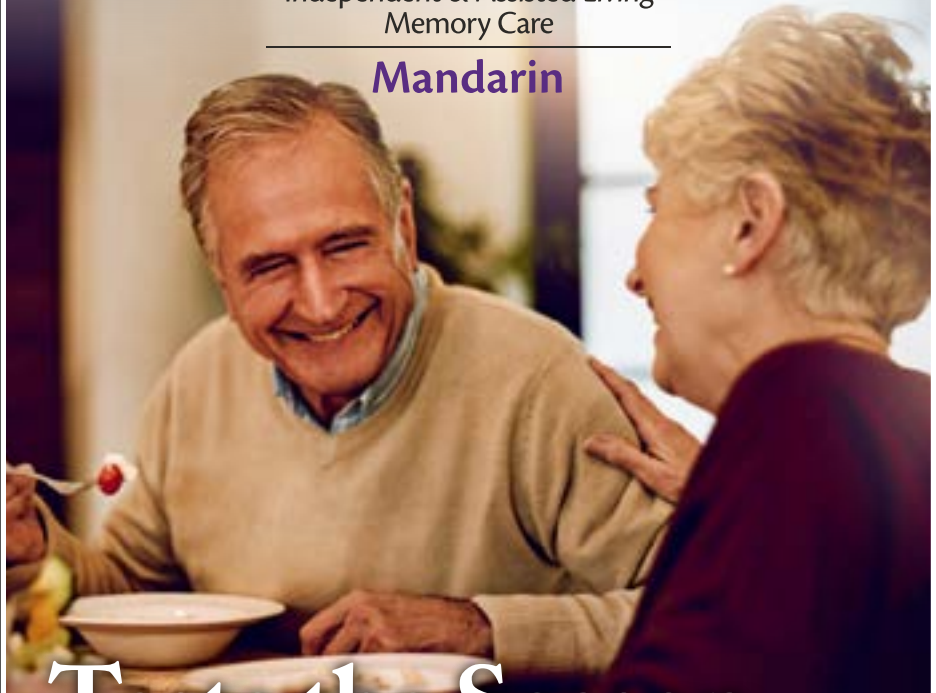
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Travel

Fredericksburg weaves American history into travel destination

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

Few places in America weave so many layers of history into such a small area as Fredericksburg, Virginia. Nestled along the Rappahannock River between Washington, D.C., and Richmond, the town feels like a living timeline—one where the colonial era, Revolutionary War, Civil War and Civil Rights movement all left lasting marks. Walking its brick streets, visitors sense the weight of the nation’s past amid a lively mix of shops, galleries and cafes.

The Washington Family Legacy

Fredericksburg proudly calls itself the boyhood home of George Washington. The story begins at Ferry Farm , where George lived from ages 6 to 16. After his father Augustine’s death, his mother, Mary Ball Washington, guided the family through lean years, shaping her son’s resilience and sense of duty. The reconstructed farmhouse and museum displays reveal what daily colonial life looked like for the future president.

Downtown, the Mary Washington House preserves the home George bought for his mother in 1772. She lived there for the rest of her life, tending her gardens and welcoming visitors, including her famous son. Nearby stands the Rising Sun Tavern,



Debi Lander

built in 1760 by George’s younger brother Charles. Costumed interpreters recreate the atmosphere of an 18th-century tavern, where politics and gossip mingled over tankards of ale.

The family story continues at Kenmore , the Georgian mansion of George’s sister Betty Washington

Lewis and her husband Fielding Lewis. Fielding sacrificed his fortune to fund supplies for the Revolutionary army, a powerful reminder of the personal cost of independence. The home dazzles with ornate plaster ceilings and exhibits honoring the enslaved community who maintained it.

Don’t miss the Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop , owned by Washington’s friend and fellow patriot Dr. Mercer. The 18th-century pharmacy displays the remedies of its day including herbs, tinctures and even leeches. The guides offer a fascinating glimpse into colonial medicine.

The Civil War Crossroads

If Washington’s Fredericksburg represents America’s beginning, its battlefields capture the nation’s near collapse. the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park encompasses four major battlefields—



Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House—forming one of the country’s most extensive Civil War landscapes.

At Marye’s Heights, visitors walk the ground where Union troops suffered staggering losses in December 1862. Chancellorsville, just west of town, saw Gen. Robert E. Lee’s audacious victory but also the death of his trusted lieutenant, “Stonewall” Jackson. The 1864 battles of Wilderness and Spotsylvania marked the relentless Union drive toward Richmond under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Trails, exhibits and ranger programs bring these harrowing moments to life.

The Civil Rights Trail

Fredericksburg’s story doesn’t end with muskets and monuments. the city also plays a key role on Virginia’s U.S. Civil Rights Trail. the Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) served as a center of faith and activism for African Americans from the Civil War era through the modern Civil Rights movement.

Modern Fredericksburg

Though steeped in history, Fredericksburg thrives as a vibrant modern community. Its downtown brims with galleries, boutiques and eateries, while farmers’ markets, carriage rides and festi-

vals enliven the streets.

A Place that Holds It All

Fredericksburg is where the American story converges—where a young George Washington grew under his mother’s watchful eye, where patriots risked everything for independence, where a divided nation fought for survival and where freedom continued to advance.

For travelers, it’s a chance to stand where so many chapters of the American experience overlap.

If You Go: Fredericksburg lies about an hour south of Washington, D.C., via I-95 or Amtrak. Allow at least two days to explore the Washington family homes, nearby battlefields and Civil Rights landmarks.

Debi Lander is an award-winning travel writer and photographer who blends her passion for history, culture, food, and personal discovery into captivating stories. Through her website Bylandersea.com and her long-running travel column for Florida Newslines, she explores destinations from small U.S. towns to iconic global landmarks. She hopes her storytelling and practical insights inspire readers to experience the world with curiosity, appreciation, and a sense of adventure. Debi can be reached by email to mail@floridanewslines.com.



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Julington Creek Boat Parade of Lights set for Dec. 6

By Bob Ponik

The annual Julington Creek Boat Parade of Lights, sponsored by the Julington Creek Prop Club, is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025, at 7 p.m.

Commodore Bob Ponik is extending an invitation to all boat owners interested in decorating their vessels and joining the festivities. The parade route begins at the Julington Creek Marina, motors underneath the Route 13 bridge, circles Bulls Bay, and continues down Durbin Creek.

Established in 1988, the annual event typically features an estimated 40 boats, ranging from 17 to 40 feet in length, decked out in holiday finery. Spectators can view the parade from the Julington Creek Bridge walkways.

Prizes are awarded for the best holiday decorated boats:

- First place receives a \$300 cash prize.
- Second place receives a \$200 cash prize.

- Third place receives a \$100 cash prize.

All participating boat captains will also receive a Captain's Gift Bag.

Homeowners with decorated docks along the route are also invited to participate in the fun, as tradition holds that the boaters judge the shore displays. "The people along the shores of the creek put on quite a show for us every year," said a representative, noting some hosts celebrate with fireworks, live bands and bonfires.

Captain's Meetings All captains wishing to participate must attend one of two Captain's Meetings to register and receive parade information. Meetings will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 2 and again on Dec. 4 at the Julington Creek Marina.

The Prop Club is a social organization for past, present, and future boaters. Interested sponsors or boaters can contact Commodore Ponik at commodore@jcpropclub.com.



Photos courtesy Julington Creek Prop Club





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Fishing

November fishing shifts to bass, stripers

Jimmy Tomazinis
mail@floridanewslines.com

Hello again. I hope everyone is doing well as we begin our annual cool down and the start of the holidays. November brings a big shift for fishing in our area of the river. Saltwater species can still be around, but the balance will slowly shift to the freshwater species until they eventually make up most of our fishing opportunities through the winter, so I'll touch on a little of both this month.

What causes the shift? The water temperatures are dropping, which does make fish move, but the bigger influence on the fish, especially the saltwater species, is the salinity. Shorter days, cooler temperatures, less evapotranspiration, etc., means more freshwater enters and stays in the river during the winter. This combination of lower temperatures and fresher water means it's not comfort-

able for many fish to hang around. They will head to our coastal marshes near the river's mouth if they can handle the cold. If they can't, they head out and south.

Shrimp will continue to exit. They're bigger but less numerous than previous months, but don't let that keep you from looking. I've had some amazing days shrimping around Thanksgiving.

Flounder and redfish will be some of the last saltwater species to leave, and small numbers of them will even stay through the winter. A live shrimp or shiner is great for both. Try shallower water and use floats to cover more area.

Drum can still be found around bridge pilings and shell bars, but they will also

be leaving throughout the month. Shrimp, clams and crab will work for them. If you fish with a Carolina or fish finder rig, try bouncing the sinker off the bottom every now and then. The thud and puff of sediment can attract drum to your bait.

On the freshwater side of things, I'd say we have three main species to target now through the winter: Bass, specks and stripers. Catfish are an honorable mention since our channel and white catfish are the most consistent bite throughout the winter, but for some reason they aren't targeted that much.

Bass and stripers would be my top picks this month. Try shallow structure and near creek mouths for bass and bridges for the stripers. Live shrimp have you



Jimmy Tomazinis

covered for both. Next month we can talk all about freshwater, so keep an eye out for that. 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.



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Dr. Vaziri is committed to serving the community he calls home. Outside the clinic, he enjoys spending time with his family and fishing the coastal flats. His passion for medicine is rooted in a deep desire to help people regain their quality of life so they can get back to doing the things they enjoy with the people they love most.

To request an appointment with Dr. Vaziri, call **904.388.6518** or scan the QR code.





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