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PONTE VEDRA



Recorder

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PonteVedraRecorder.com



VETS & PETS

Veteran Appreciation Night, sponsored by Operation New Uniform and K9s for Warriors, was held Monday at Brewhound in St. Augustine. The event, which featured food and drink specials and doggy play time, brought together area veteran organizations. *Read more on page 8.*

Photo by Paris Moulden

What's Available NOW On

Schneider Eye
A WELLNESS CENTER

INSIDE: CHECK IT OUT!

The Recorder's Entertainment EXTRA featuring TV listings, streaming information, puzzles and more!



Nominate your favorites!

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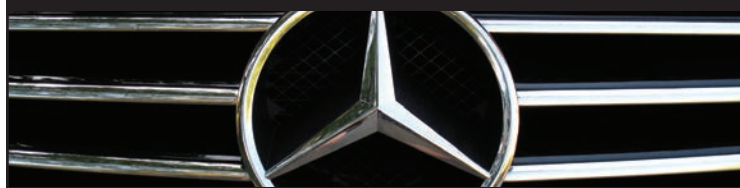


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Also, check out the **Ponte Vedra Recorder** channel on YouTube.

EDITOR'S NOTES

What's This?: Because of the COVID-19 crisis, The Recorder is suspending the "Do you know what this is?" contest until further notice.

Pets of the Week: Because the St. Johns County Pet Center is closed to walk-in traffic, The Recorder's Pets of the Week feature has been temporarily suspended. The feature will return once the Pet Center reopens.

NOTES TO READERS

Don't miss an issue: In case social distancing requirements get more strict, we will email you your paper. Send your email address to don@opcfla.com.

Weekly newsletter: The Recorder offers a weekly newsletter every Monday that outlines some of the top stories of the week, as well as providing access to our E-Edition and Entertainment EXTRA! To get the newsletter emailed for free, email don@opcfla.com. We'll add you to the list.

Sends us your nominations for Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra

The Ponte Vedra Recorder has launched its second annual Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra contest, covering ZIP codes 32082 and 32081.

Readers currently have the chance to nominate their favorite businesses, professional services, organizations and more in nearly 250 categories online. From best new business to best charity event, best real estate agent to best personal trainer and best seafood to best boutique, the categories run the gamut and are sure to include your favorite things.

Nominations can be made on the website at pontevedrarecorder.com/bestof2020/index.html. Nominations will go through Wednesday, July 29. Voting begins July 30 and ends Aug. 31.

Anyone can nominate a business or person — there is no limit to the number of nominations each person can submit. Online voting will begin once nominations are complete. The nominees who receive the most votes will be named 2020 Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra. Nominations and voting are completely free and open to the public.

The Best Of platform on The Recorder's website will feature lists of nominees in an easy-to-use format. Nominees can participate in advertising packages that promote their entry



by expanding their listing to feature additional details on the business.

Winners will receive a free framed certificate and a Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra window cling. Each winner will also be listed in our Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra special section and on the winner's website. Winners will be notified by Recorder staff after votes are counted.

For more information or to find out how to get your nominated business or product involved in promotions that will be going on throughout the contest cycle, contact your sales representative, email susan@opcfla.com or call (904) 686-3938.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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Solutions correspond to last week's puzzles.

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Argument disrupts sheriff candidates' debate



Photo by Don Coble

St. Johns County sheriff candidate Chris Strickland leaves the debate with Rob Hardwick early after an argument broke out between Sheriff David Shoar and Strickland supporters July 16 at the Shrine Club in St. Augustine.

By Don Coble

Hopes for a substantive debate between two candidates for St. Johns County sheriff appear to have been dashed following a dust-up at the last such event.

An argument between Sheriff David Shoar and a supporter for candidate Chris Strickland disrupted the July 16 debate at the Shrine Club, prompting Strickland to depart after just two questions.

The dispute started in the men's restroom during the debate and spilled into a room filled with 150 residents who had gathered to hear from Strickland and St. Augustine

Beach Police Chief Rob Hardwick.

Tensions between Shoar, who will retire after serving St. Johns County for the past 16 years, and Strickland supporters were already being tested before the encounter. According to Strickland volunteer and WFOY 102.1 radio host Tom Verri, Shoar used an expletive to refer to him.

After the brief dispute near the restroom, Strickland asked everyone to calm down and then put an end to the debate.

"Team Strickland, wrap it up and let's go," he said. "Team Strickland, y'all hear

SHERIFF continues on Page 4

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Chamber of Commerce to host virtual Politics in St. Johns event

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce will again host Politics in St. Johns, St. Johns County's largest candidate meet-and-greet. This event will enable St. Johns County voters to get to know the candidates for public office and directly ask them questions prior to the Aug. 18 primary and the Nov. 3 general election.

This year, due to the crowd size restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chamber has transitioned from the traditional in-person events held in Ponte Vedra Beach and St. Augustine to a new online format. The new approach will bring the same one-on-one feel of the in-person events to an engaging online opportunity — expanding the audience participation and interaction.

"We want St. Johns County citizens to have access to all our candidates and their platforms, so they can make informed decisions for the upcoming election cycle," said Isabelle Renault, president and CEO of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce. "The beauty about hosting this event virtually is that residents who may not have been able to travel to the events in the past are now able to join us and interact with candidates in a safe, efficient and convenient way. We are looking forward to reaching more residents than ever before with the information they need to make informed decision to cast their vote."

Candidates have been invited to submit a brief video about their platforms. These will be available for public viewing beginning July 27 on the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce website at www.sjchamber.com. Candidates can continue to register online at www.sjchamber.com/candidate-

information-and-registration, and submit videos through July 24. Each video will allow candidates to put a face and story to their candidacy and candidates will share contact information for voters to forward questions.

The Politics in St. Johns site will remain live on the chamber website from July 27 to Aug. 19. Live conversations via Zoom or Facebook Live featuring candidates from significant countywide races are being planned for the week of Aug. 10. Audience members will be able to ask questions via a moderator.

According to Bob Porter, vice president of public policy for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, straw polls may be held this year, as well.

"While the results won't necessarily reflect what will happen when the official polls open, they will provide excitement and feedback to participating candidates," Porter said. "The straw poll is less about who wins and more about encouraging and providing people incentive to be informed. The elected officials at every level of government make decisions that affect our lives and I am happy to see so many people taking advantage of an opportunity that will help them make an informed decision when entering the voting booth."

St. Johns County residents can register to vote and review the 2020 candidate list at the St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections website at www.votesjc.com.

To find out more about the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce or to become a member, go to www.sjchamber.com, call (904) 829-5681 or find it on Facebook at www.facebook.com/sjchamber.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Our national and local election cycle is fast approaching and there are decisions to be made in addition to that of President. I and my family are St. Johns County residents, having moved here 16 years ago following 41 years in the Navy, starting as a Seaman Recruit and ending as a four-star Admiral commanding the Atlantic Fleet and US Fleet Forces Command. Like many of our St Johns County friends and neighbors, I was and still am attracted to Florida for its healthy outdoor weather, the flourishing economy (opportunity), world-class beaches, and conservative tax policies.

Having served for most of my adult life sailing in ships and living around the world, I did not vote in State, County, and local elections, voting solely for Presidential and Congressional candidates. Since moving to St Johns County though, I am clearly impressed with the impact local and County officials have on all of us, from tax levying, tax revenue distribution, and the education and safety of our kids.

In essence, the responsibility of our County Commissioners is to levy taxes on us when necessary...and always fairly for the common good of all our neighbors being taxed. And this "Fair and Equitable Taxation for the Common Good" principle is why I am supporting a new District 1 candidate to replace the incumbent, Jimmy Johns. I have attended Commission meetings at St. Augustine and listened attentively to the Commissioners. More importantly, I've watched in dismay at some of their votes. Some votes have actually defied logic. Specifically, in spite of the glowing generalities in Jimmy Johns' slick political handouts, he has voted regularly against the principle of fair taxation and fair distribution for the common good.

Examples:

(1) Johns was the ONLY commissioner to vote against incrementally enhancing security for St Johns County school kids after the horrific Parkland massacre. Come on...a vote against our school kids' safety?

(2) Johns voted to implement beach parking fees at a time when the county was running a budget surplus! What a financially irresponsible move for a politician who claims to be a fiscal conservative. Thankfully, beach parking fees were never instituted given the public outcry.

(3) Johns was the ONLY Commissioner to vote SIX times-SIX TIMES against restoration of Ponte Vedra's Beaches. His vote helped make PV Beach one of the ONLY Florida beaches not being renourished from hurricane damage. And all St Johns County citizens benefit from those beaches, from families enjoying them, to County-wide benefits derived from out of area visitors' hotel tax payments, to visitors' frequenting local businesses, stores, and restaurants throughout the County.

I have talked with candidate Christian Whitehurst who has committed publicly and personally that he will correct these kinds of nonsensical votes coming from Jimmy Johns. This August is time to elect a Commissioner who will VOTE fairly and equitably for ALL St Johns County residents. I support Christian Whitehurst. Please VOTE on August 18. Early voting opens August 6.

Admiral Robert J Natter, USN Ret.
Ponte Vedra, St. Johns County

Sheriff

Continued from 3

me? Wrap it up and let's go. We're not going to be part of this. Let's go."

Strickland said he approached Shoar in the parking lot and told him he needed to get help.

According to Strickland, Shoar responded with profanity.

Before Shoar was driven away, several online videos showed him rolling down his window and saying, "Put this on Facebook" as he extended his middle finger.

Hardwick remained at the Shrine Club and answered questions.

"If you don't mind, since we're going to go to the team thing here, Team Hardwick, please stay here so we can answer the questions that were brought forward by you," he said.

Prior to the dispute that ended the debate, the candidates had a chance to address attendees.

Hardwick laid out his qualifications, including his extensive military service and the fact that the St. Augustine Beach Police Department attained accreditation under his watch, talked of his no-nonsense approach to law enforcement, his adamant stance in support of the Second Amendment, the need for transparency throughout the department, fiscal responsibility and improving the culture within the department.



Photo by Don Coble

St. Johns County sheriff candidate Rob Hardwick addresses debate attendees July 16 at the Shrine Club in St. Augustine.

"We'll do a climate survey on Day 1 when I get there," he said. "After six months we'll do another climate survey. The morale will get better and better as we serve together and grow together."

Hardwick said since revenue streams have been affected by COVID-19, he may have to reallocate funding within the department to stay under budget.

Strickland spoke of his credentials, which included roles as a sergeant, lieutenant and commander of the road and investigations with the St. Johns Sheriff's Office. He also served as director of the Office of Sheriff before resigning from the agency after 27 years in 2016. There had been a contentious exchange

of emails between Shoar and Strickland leading up to and following Strickland's departure. Copies of the emails have been made public.

"We had some issues in the past, but I moved on," Strickland said. "Evidentially, he did not."

The continued animosity was evident at the debate.

"It was the most-bizarre behavior I've ever seen," Strickland said. "I don't know what's going on in his life, but I wish him the best."

Shoar called the incident "just politics."

Nobody reported being assaulted or injured during the fracas and no charges were filed, according to the St. Augustine Police Department.

The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office said it wasn't officially involved in the debate. A spokesman also said there was no physical altercation.

Strickland said he will no longer debate Hardwick. The next round was scheduled for Thursday, July 23, at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall.

"I'm not doing any more of these," he said. "I'm not going to waste anybody's time with that kind of foolishness. There's not enough time for that. We'll stick with meet-and-greets."

Strickland and Hardwick, both Republicans, will meet in the Aug. 18 primary. The winner will face a write-in candidate in the general election on Nov. 3.

New Gate gas station causes controversy, confusion on wetlands, zoning regulations

By Amber Lake

Many residents living in Dolphin Cove, just shy of the 330 A1A North parcel, aren't happy with the new Gate gas station to be built on the property. According to Chief Property Appraiser Dave Darty, almost 22 units, over 85% of the land, is designated as wetlands by St. Johns County.

In a Change.org petition posted after the decisions of the Ponte Vedra Architectural Review Committee and Ponte Vedra Zoning and Adjustment Board granting Gate zoning variances, many are claiming little-to-no notification of these meetings were advertised. The petition to stop the construction gained almost 10,000 signatures.

Residents are scratching their heads as to not only why Gate intends to build on wetlands, but also why variances to "increase" signage size were granted despite prior aesthetic regulations to the area being upheld. Currently, an appeal has been filed in the circuit court by a neighboring property owner who previously appealed the variance before the Board of County Commissioners.

"I think it's a bit disappointing the way the county has handled it," said Cornelius Carroll, a Ponte Vedra Beach resident in opposition. "If you look at the tax records it's designated as wetlands and the county otherwise maintains that it can be developed as commercial property. There is a bit of a double standard there. I think it's notable that when a property is designated as wetlands you pay essentially nothing in property taxes."

Jan Brewer, St. Johns County environmental manager, said that over time the wetlands developed on the property after commercial use.

"In 1999, these sewage treatment settling ponds were in use," Brewer said. "Sometime between 1999 and 2002 the use was discontinued and the ponds laid fallow. The ponds have been naturally filling in over the almost 20 years they have been out-of-service and wetland vegetation has been populating the site."

The St. Johns County Water and Sewer Management agency is responsible for wetland permitting on the project, including the determination of the area with respect to the wetlands.

Brewer did say that under Florida code, "settling ponds



An aerial photo shows the proposed site for a new Gate gas station near Dolphin Cove.

are exempt." However, she also added that she is "unsure" of the possible direction the SJRWMD will take, "since this area has been out-of-use for such a long period of time."

Christine Wentzel, supervising environmental scientist in the district's Jacksonville Service Center, said currently the St. Johns River Water Management District does not have a permit application for the project so there hasn't been any formal determination.

"Generally speaking, under the district's criteria, applicants must demonstrate a proposed project meets conditions under state statutes, such as a requirement to provide reasonable assurances his or her project won't cause adverse impacts to value of wetland or surface water functions to fish, wildlife and listed species," Wentzel said.

In addition to environmental factors, residents have voiced concern about variances Gate had applied to with the Ponte Vedra Overlay District that would allow for additional signs. Typically, Ponte Vedra has a relatively strict architectural code that prevents businesses from building too big or bright along the Ponte Vedra Coastal Corridor. Any new structures must adhere to the standards and criteria in order to maintain the aesthetic of the area.

"These variances will be used by nearby businesses and shopping centers to get bigger signs with more colors, bigger buildings, and less landscaping," Carroll said in the Change.org petition. "Mark my words, if those decisions are not successfully opposed by the community, that stretch of A1A will look like Beach Boulevard five years ago and I believe property values will suffer as a result."

Gate's variances were approved in December to allow for additional signage. Currently, the district regulations provide for 24-square-foot wall signs. The variance that was approved for the Gate signs, allows for three wall signs consisting of a 81.8-square-foot Gate sign, a Fresh Kitchen sign consisting of 64.4 square feet and a Yobe Frozen Yogurt sign consisting of 46 square feet.

According to Teresa Bishop, planning division manager, the signs will come down to 24 square feet if the color remains.

"The variance approved two ground signs at 32 square feet, instead of one sign at 60 square feet," she said.

"The applicant provided the requested variances are needed for the signs to be legible and recognizable, since those signs are set back approximately 200 feet from A1A," Bishop said. "The Ponte Vedra Zoning and Adjustment Board discussed the size of the signs and the applicant's hardship in asking for the larger signs. The applicant responded the hardship was related to the property being used as a commercial project, which is set back over 200 feet from A1A, and need for the travelling public to read the signs. The discussed scale of the signs in relation to the building and the need for visible signage."

The Change.org petition also cites possible drainage issues for those living in the surrounding area and as well as traffic increases to an already congested roadway. It is unclear how Gate may address those issues at this stage.

Huge hole at beach threatens sea turtle hatchlings



Photo provided by Sandy Stam

A volunteer stands in a large hole dug in the beach off Ponte Vedra Boulevard. Local sea turtle advocates were concerned that the hole posed a risk to hatchlings.

By Shaun Ryan

On Sunday morning, July 12, three members of the North Ponte Vedra Sea Turtle Patrol found themselves on the beach filling in an enormous hole someone had dug in the sand. The hole, which was several feet deep and wide enough to accommodate a small car, was located behind the 400 block of Ponte Vedra Boulevard.

The task took more than half an hour, but the volunteers recognized the danger posed by the hazardous excavation. Hatchlings from nearby sea turtle nests might have fallen in.

"If they had gotten into that hole, they wouldn't have made it," said patrol member Sandy Stam. She pointed out the importance of protecting the hatchlings as they make their trek to the sea: the species is endangered, and only about one in 1,000 of the young survive.

But sea turtles were not the only ones at risk of tumbling into such a hole.

"It was a danger to people, especially at night,"

Stam said. "People could fall in and get hurt."

While the large hole is a dramatic example of risk to sea turtles, it is not the only one. Stam said children often dig holes in the sand that could be dangerous to the hatchlings as they crawl toward the ocean.

"If you dig a hole," she said, "fill it in."

Another risk is debris left on the beach. Hatchlings can become entangled in it.

The sea turtle patrol conducted a beach clean-up July 5 and found fireworks, chairs, boogie boards and umbrellas.

"The amount of trash was unbelievable," said Stam. "I don't know why people coming to a lovely beach leave their trash."

She also asked those who bring a tent to the beach to take it with them when they leave. And bright lights or flashlights should not be used on the beach as they disorient the hatchlings, something that could prove fatal to them.

Sea turtle season is May 1 through Oct. 31 or until the last nest is vacated.

Horton S. Hickerson, a longtime Rotary member, recent took over as president of the Ponte Vedra Beach Sunset Rotary Club.

Horton S. Hickerson

As told to Shaun Ryan

Tell us about your career.

After graduating from Furman University in 1965, I spent two years on active duty as an artillery officer in Ft. Lewis, Washington, and Vietnam. After the service, I enrolled in a graduate program in professional accounting at Northeastern University and received my master's degree. I then went to work at one of the then-Big 8 accounting firms. I then worked for a small firm in New York City for about five years before going out on my own. That was in 1975, and since then I have practiced as a sole proprietor. About four years ago, I merged my firm into a larger firm in New Jersey.

What do you like best about involvement in Rotary?

I joined the Rotary Club of Red Bank, New Jersey, in 1989, and it was one of the best things that has ever happened to me. I became president of the Red Bank Rotary Club in 1994-1995. The history of that club and its members made it one of the best clubs in the district. I worked as assistant governor and deputy governor for a few years, and then I was selected to be district governor for the 2010-2011 Rotary year.

I have been active as a facilitator in the Rotary Leadership Institute (RLI-NEA) for almost 10 years and was recognized as the outstanding faculty member for the 2013-2014 year. I also have been an instructor in the Mid Atlantic President Elects Training and a zone trainer instructing the incoming district governors for two years.

What I enjoy most about Rotary are the people you meet. The motto of "Service Above Self" challenges you to do good in your area, country and the world and to give back to those less fortunate.

The president-elect of the Ponte Vedra Beach Sunset Rotary Club was transferred just before he was to start his second year as president of the club. I stepped up to fill that position because I felt my experience in Rotary would be helpful.

What activities are being planned by the club?

This will be a challenging year with the COVID-19 virus and the distancing that will be required. Right now, and through the end of the calendar year, we are planning to have all of our meetings via Zoom. We have planned for our bridge clean-up on the Rt. 210 bridge four times this year, and we will be ringing the bell for the Salvation Army around the holidays. We have also planned a shredding fund raiser for later this month and hope to be able to duplicate that again later in the Rotary year.

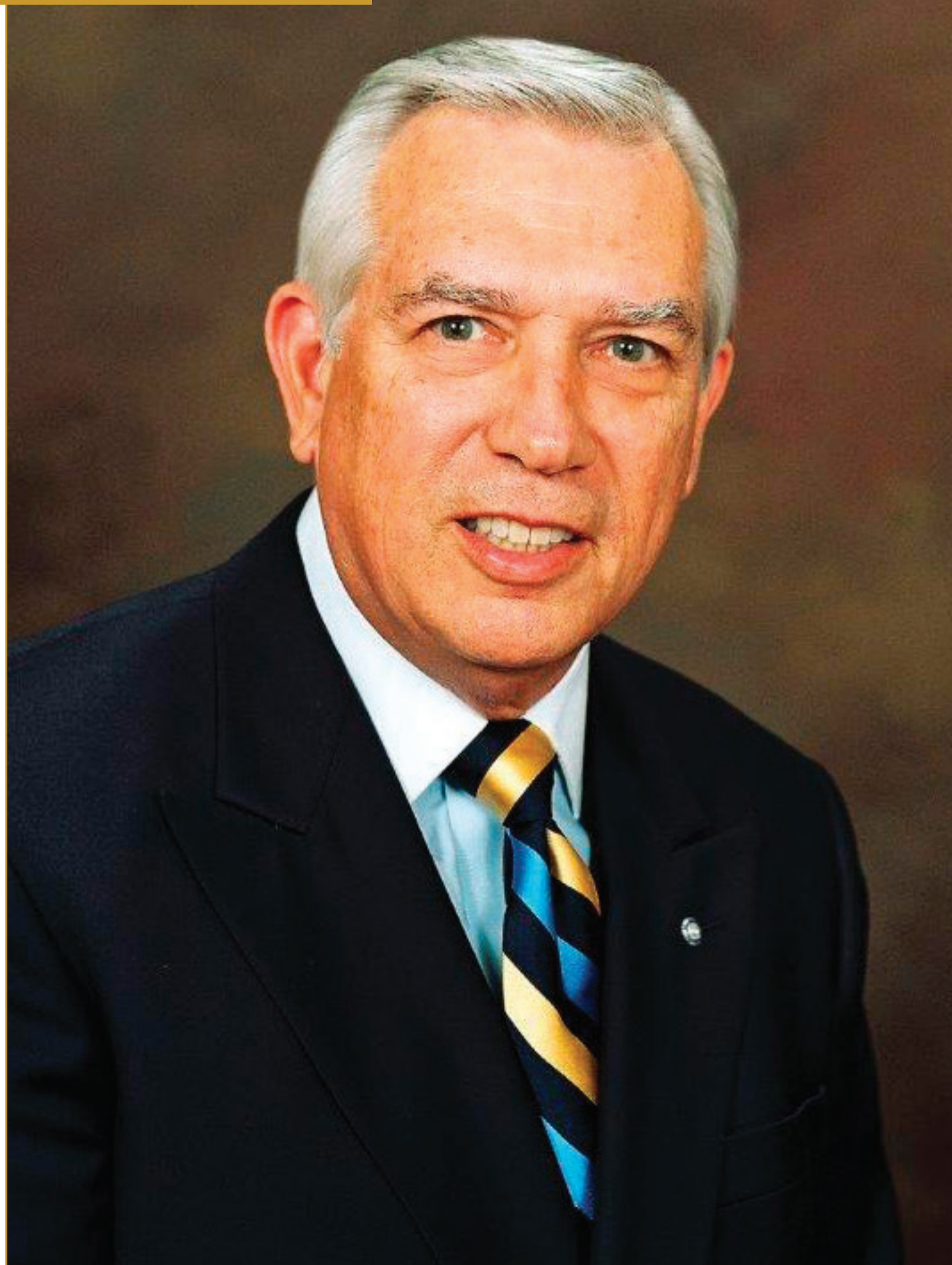


Photo provided by Horton S. Hickerson

What brought you to Ponte Vedra? How long have you lived here?

My wife, Susan Goldring, and I first bought a condominium here in 2000. In 2005, we sold the condo and purchased the house we live in now. While we

have owned property here for over 20 years, both of us were working in our careers — Susan is an attorney — and we couldn't spend the amount of time we might have wanted down here in Florida. It has only been the last two or

three years that we have been full-time residents.

This is an abridged version of the interview. To read the full article, go to pontevedrarecorder.com.



Ponte Vedra Auto Show rescheduled

Annual car show to take place Nov. 15 at Nocatee Event Field

Officials from the Ponte Vedra Auto Show have announced a change of date for the 2020 event, postponing the annual auto show until Nov. 15.

“This event date change from Sept. 27 to Sunday Nov. 15 will allow our staff, the show participants and our business partners more time to plan for another fantastic auto show at the beautiful Nocatee Event Field in Ponte Vedra,” said Justin Felker, president of the Ponte Vedra Auto Show. “The date change, from historically early September to a later date, will remain permanent for all future Ponte Vedra Auto Show events and should result in cooler weather for the attendees and participants. We also like the later date because it coincides with other regional events which will attract additional interest in our car show. We are already planning new features, attractions and participant events for our show in 2021 so keep a close eye on our website for those exciting updates.”

The Ponte Vedra Auto Show is an annual car show produced by Art n Motion LLC, in association with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and the St. Johns County Visitors Bureau. The show is free to attend and includes many of the world’s finest automobiles competing for awards in 25 categories.

Interested participants can register for the Ponte Vedra Auto Show at pvautoshow.com.

NOCATEE HAPPENINGS A TASTE OF THE ISLANDS

The Nocatee Farmers Market: Island Experience offered a taste of the islands during its Hawaiian-themed event happening Saturday, July 18. The market boasted performances by Prince Pele’s Polynesian Revue, including a variety of Polynesian dances, costumes, music and more. Along with the fun and interactive theme, the Farmers Market also featured vendors selling fresh produce, crafts, jewelry, herbs, unique foods and more.

Photos by Susan Griffin



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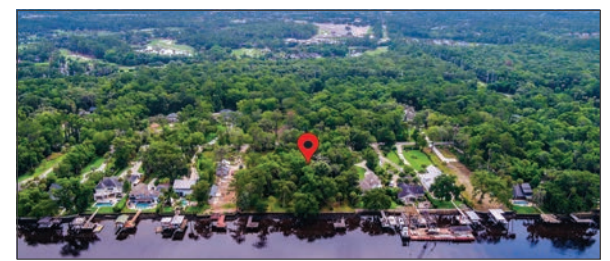
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ABOVE: Barley and Piper, who belong to Navy veteran Kimberly Wichlan, cool off during a Veteran Appreciation Night event on Monday at Brewhound in Neptune Beach.



RIGHT: Brewhound employee and event "rufferee" Alexis Pfister gets a kiss from Blaze.

Photos by Paris Moulden

Organizations unleash the fun at veterans appreciation event

By Paris Moulden

Local veteran organizations came together to celebrate veterans — and their canine companions.

Operation New Uniform and K9s for Warriors co-sponsored a Veteran Appreciation Night on Monday, July 20, at Brewhound Dog Park + Bar in Neptune Beach. The event gave veterans a chance to network with other veterans, and to learn about resources available to them.

"It's awesome the way this community comes together to support veterans," said Michele McManamon, executive director of Operation New Uniform.

ONU's mission is to "train veterans and their families for fulfilling careers and develop their skills as they grow within an organization." ONU was created in 2014 and has served nearly 300 veterans in its six years of operation.

Several other organizations were on hand to talk to veterans about services they provide that veterans may be unaware of.

One of the organizations, The Fire Watch, covers five counties across Northeast Florida, including St. Johns County. The organization's goal is to end military veteran suicide by connecting veterans to available resources.

"The crux of our mission is we believe if we can engage veterans earlier, we can reduce the rate of veteran suicide," said Nick Howland, executive director of The Fire Watch.

Howland said the COVID-19 pandemic makes veteran resources even more important, as socializing and other means of communication have been minimized.

"Isolation is a warning sign," Howland said. "Homeless veterans are five times more likely to attempt suicide. The COVID crisis has aggravated what was already a problem."



Andrea Boyd holds 2-month-old Lily, who was available for adoption.

Howland said The Fire Watch works with Veterans Affairs and other programs to devise a "best practices" approach reducing veteran suicides.

"We're always looking for a way to better connect veterans to resources," Howland said.

Another organization on hand was the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Centerstone. The Cohen Veterans Network is a nonprofit that supports the veteran population by offering accessible, high-quality mental health care services.

"We take the time to talk to them and find out what they need," said Diane Stover, case manager for Cohen.

Stover said events like the one at Brewhound are incredibly important because it gives veterans the chance to not only find out about resources, but to share the information with fellow veterans.

VETERANS continues on Page 10

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OBITUARIES

Charlotte Hatton Courson

Charlotte Hatton Courson passed away Saturday, July 18, 2020 in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.

Charlotte was born in Jacksonville, Georgia to Emma Sue Walker Hatton and James Ira Hatton. She resided in Douglas, Georgia before moving to Tallahassee, Florida in 1962. She moved to Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida in 2018.

She is predeceased by her parents and her husband, Dr. Jack D. Courson. She is survived by her son, Jack D. Courson, Jr. (Lisa), Bradenton, Florida and daughter, Lisa Courson Kessler (Keith), Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida; five grandchildren: Emily and Diana Courson and Kaitlyn, Andrew and Daniel Kessler; two brothers: Eldridge and John Hatton, Atlanta, Georgia.

A private family service will be held. Please visit the Tribute online at www.quinn-shalz.com. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home.



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Phone: 904.249.1100 Fax: 904.241.7554

Frank Martin Ebitz

Frank Martin Ebitz, 95, of Jacksonville, Florida, died July 18, 2020. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre (904) 249-1100 www.quinn-shalz.com

Douglas A. Fields

Douglas A. Fields, 65, of Ponte Vedra, Florida, died July 9, 2020. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravalle.com

Charles Duane Johnson

Charles Duane Johnson, 82, of Ponte Vedra, Florida, died July 9, 2020. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravalle.com

Marjorie Stone

Marjorie Stone, 98, of Jacksonville Beach, died July 19, 2020. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com (904) 249-1100.

Joan Ann Straw

Joan Ann Straw, 81, of Ponte Vedra, Florida, died July 17, 2020. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. (904) 249-1100 www.quinn-shalz.com

Ann S. Tillis

Ann S. Tillis, 90, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died July 18, 2020. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. (904) 249-1100 www.quinn-shalz.com

Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach Sunset to hold shredding event benefitting local food pantries

In a continuing effort to help support those in our community most adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach Sunset is sponsoring a Community Shredding Event on Saturday, July 25, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Ponte Vedra United Methodist Church parking lot, located at 75 S. Roscoe Blvd. in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Funds raised will go to restock 22 local food pantries so those families in need will continue to receive critical support. The minimum donation is \$20 per bag or box. Cash is appreciated, but credit cards are accepted.

This is a good opportunity for anyone in the area who needs to safely destroy and properly dispose of shreddable docu-

ments. Procedures for the shredding event are simple and safe; drivers do not need to leave their vehicles. Masked Rotary volunteers will remove bags and “banker” boxes of documents from the vehicles and take them to the onsite shredding truck, while other volunteers will collect the donations.

The PVB Sunset Rotary Club previously worked with United Way of St Johns County in May on a successful food drive and sees this event as another way to join forces to help their neighbors during this challenging time.

For more information or to arrange for a large donation, contact project coordinators Janeene Hart at (904) 412-5409 or Carol Maurer at (904) 226-2696.

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Paid for by Christian Whitehurst, Republican, for St. Johns County Commission, District 1.



Photo by Paris Moulden

Representatives of Operation New Uniform Maddie Goldstein (from left), Jake Wilson, Ashley Dunham, Christine Jones and Michele McManamon were on hand at Monday night's veteran appreciation event to talk to veterans about the services their organization provides.

VOTE on August 18th

CHRIS

Strickland (Rep)

for ST. JOHNS COUNTY SHERIFF

Strickland uniquely qualified to be our next sheriff

By Tom Verri
St. Johns County, FL

Based on my 34 years of experience in law enforcement, working for two of the country's largest police agencies as well as the US Department of State, in command-level and supervisory positions I would like to announce that I am supporting Chris Strickland for St. Johns County Sheriff.

I have compared the qualifications and experience of the two current candidates: Chris Strickland and Rob Hardwick. This county needs proper administration of our sheriff's office. It is our primary law enforcement and public safety agency. With that in mind, I find that Strickland far and away exceeds his opponent. Sheriff Neil Perry appointed Strickland a deputy sheriff when he was only 19 years old. Perry saw Strickland's dedication and realized Chris had great promise. Strickland rose through the ranks as the agency and the county grew. He advanced from deputy to sergeant to detective, lieutenant, to commander and finally to the highest-ranking uniformed career position, Director of the Office of Sheriff. As Director, he oversaw operations at the highest level of the agency. Strickland earned a Master of Public Administration degree and is a graduate of Georgia Command College.

Chris Strickland is uniquely qualified to be our next sheriff. In recent years, our sheriff's office has been plagued with scandals. Under outgoing Sheriff Shoar, we have witnessed the national embarrassment of mishandling in the Michelle O'Connell death investigation as well as the embezzlement of nearly a million dollars by Shoar's handpicked Director of Finance. After 16-years of no accountability for his actions, Shoar and his backers have donated hundreds or thousands of dollars and are aggressively promoting Harwick, who oversees an agency made up of about 21 officers, to be Shoar's handpicked successor. That is disturbing. Chris Strickland has been for openness and honesty since day one. Last year, he promised to equip all deputies with body-worn cameras. In fact, during his tenure as chief of the 21 officer St. Augustine Police Department, he has never equipped his officers with them. Why?

Chris Strickland will restore excellent police and community relations by reviewing and reforming use of force training, setting up strong protocols for budgetary and fiscal management insure accountability of taxpayer dollars and move the department into the future with innovative platform for the agency and for all residents of the county.

Strickland4Sheriff.com

Paid for by Chris Strickland, Rep. for St Johns County Sheriff

Veterans

Continued from 8

Veterans at Monday's event were also able to enjoy Brewhound's wide selection of beer, \$2 tacos and the joy of seeing their animal friends play. There were also adoptable dogs on hand for anyone who didn't have one —or wanted another one.

Navy veteran Kimberly Wichlan enjoyed the event with her pups, 2-year-old Barley and 4-month-old Piper.

"It's really nice because there are just enough dogs and just enough people," Wichlan said.

Few organizations combine veterans and dogs like K9s for Warriors, which is the nation's largest provider of service dogs for disabled American veterans.

"It's critical to get veterans together so they can speak with each other, get out of the house and into the world," said Rory Diamond, CEO of K9s for Warriors and Jacksonville City Council member.

Veterans can be gainfully employed, doing their regular routines, and still be in crisis and not reaching out, Diamond said.

"There's nothing more powerful than well-informed veterans to help their brothers and sisters," Diamond said.

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Health Care PROFILES

PAGES 12-17



IN THIS SECTION:

- Minority Mental Health Awareness
- A look at Lakeview Health
- The importance of telemedicine
- Emergency heart care during COVID
- How to keep your back healthy

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Minorities face barriers when it comes to mental health care

By Paris Moulden

While mental health issues may not discriminate, certain factors can impact the ability to deal with those issues.

July is Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, and there is a need to recognize the unique challenges that affect minority communities when it comes to mental health.

Our culture has a big impact on the way we see the world, and respond to it, said Dr. Renee McQueen, senior director of Social Services for Pace Center for Girls. Pace is a local nonprofit serving at-risk girls across diverse backgrounds.

“Cultural differences create behavior and personality differences; things like body language, speaking, communication, which can also lead to miscommunication,” McQueen said. “Cultural differences, coupled with the stigmas around mental health, increases the likelihood of miscommunication.”

Pace aims to provide girls and young women an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training and advocacy.

“Part of our mission is to provide girls the opportunity to find their voice,” McQueen said. “So, we try to eliminate or minimize



Dr. Renee McQueen
Senior director of
Social Services for Pace

those barriers that might hinder us in fulfilling that mission. We recognize that in order to help the girls find success, cultural stigmas around mental health must be addressed.”

McQueen said involving the family unit and the community is key to helping those in the minority community, who are struggling with mental health issues and the stigma surrounding it.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, only one in three African Americans who need mental health help receive it. The APA states much of this is because disparities exist in regard to mental health care services and many minorities often receive poorer quality of care and lack access to culturally competent care.

“A lot of that goes along with the stigma that surrounds it, but it also has to do with the historical perception,” McQueen said. “It has to do with the history of oppression and violence that has evolved into present-day disparities, including the inadequate access to, and delivery of care for, physical

and mental health care.”

One way to help overcome the disparity is spreading the message to bring awareness surrounding mental health, especially when it comes to minorities, McQueen said. Starting the conversation regarding mental health, as well as recognizing family history and the impact of the perception, is a key component to addressing mental health struggles for minorities.

“It’s having the conversation, bringing the awareness and getting the word out,” McQueen said.

Youth organizations, churches, the faith-based community, community outreach programs are all resources people can turn to for help, or to find out how to access available resources.

McQueen said the COVID-19 pandemic is also contributing to concerns over mental health, in minority communities and around the world.

“Mental health affects us all. It does not discriminate,” she said. “I think we’re all under a lot of undue stress. COVID has additional factors to all of our mental health well-being.”

Dealing with the crisis caused by the pandemic is important. But for many minorities, being able to be heard, and

also address issues that stem from current events as well as historical events, add extra significance on mental health.

“[Mental health care] is crucial year-round,” McQueen said. “This month offered that dedicated time to delve deeper into the stigma regarding mental health discussion across minority communities. We don’t want to forget that marginalized, oppressed and disenfranchised people have unique concerns, trauma, stress, obstacles and challenges because of historical experiences. [Because of] the cultural differences and social disparities, it is vital to have culturally competent professionals providing a safe and trusting environment and to assist in eradicating minority stigma bias and mental health misdiagnosis.”

McQueen said leaders and community members in Jacksonville recently held a forum to discuss issues that uniquely affect minorities.

“Hurt people need to talk, even if they don’t realize it,” McQueen said. “If I can hear how you feel that is going to help. Just listening. If we can just talk, that starts the healing process, and hopefully, the solution process.”

For more information on Pace, go to pacecenter.org or call (904) 421-8585.

An interview with Lakeview Health’s CEO Jim Evanger

By Shaun Ryan

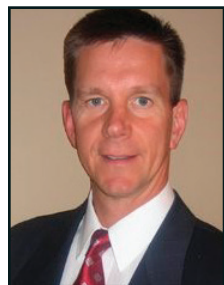
Recently, *The Ponte Vedra Recorder* had a chance to speak with Jim Evanger, CEO of Lakeview Health, a nationally recognized alcohol and drug treatment center in Jacksonville.

Many people do not think of addiction treatment as a healthcare need. Can you explain the connection between this treatment and its ramifications for the patient’s health?

Addiction is a disease — just like diabetes, cancer, heart disease and others. Alcohol is the third largest preventable cause of death in the U.S., over 88,000 cases annually. And over 71,000 people additionally died of drug overdoses last year. That is a health care crisis that isn’t always understood.

Substance abuse, whether it is alcohol or drugs, also takes its physical toll on the body, impairs brain function, affects decision making, work and family relationships. It’s a major health issue.

The good news is, the body also has amazing healing abilities if you combine the most effective medical efficacy with a high-quality therapeutic environment, engage in physical activity and the right nutritional needs for the body.



Jim Evanger



Photo by Shaun Ryan

The interior of Lakeview Health is calming and comfortable.. Lakeview Health is a nationally recognized alcohol and drug treatment center located in Jacksonville.

Lakeview Health has been called one of the best facilities of its kind in the country. What sets it apart?

Our people are truly difference-makers utilizing evidence-based treatment methods for some of the best clinical outcomes in our industry — including a 4% recidivism rate, which is amazing.

We are one of the few programs in the country that has a full-time medical staff, 24/7 medical care, and our chief medical officer is one of few doctors in the country that is dual board-certified in addiction psychiatry and addiction medicine.

We only utilize master-level therapists, and we take a very individualistic approach

to each person’s treatment, using evidence-based methodology. Our family workshop engages family members in your treatment to better understand the new commitment patients are making and how they can support the patient’s journey.

We have many comprehensive programs with separate residential treatment centers for women and men, a professionals program, a chronic pain recovery program, equine and surf therapy.

Our aftercare and alumni program is also a huge difference-maker for people after leaving treatment. Recovery is a lifetime journey, and our alumni program keeps you connected through our private social net-

working, in-person events here in Jacksonville, our Cared For app and also regular phone calls and weekly virtual support groups that are confidential. Our aftercare coordinators help get you connected to regular meetings in your area and outpatient therapy to help keep you on track.

How has the recent COVID-19 outbreak contributed to an increase in alcohol use?

In general, people are feeling a lot of anxiety and depression from being so isolated and not being able to live their lives normally. Alcohol being readily available at home makes it an easy way to alleviate those issues. Having children at home with restricted activities causes more pressure on families. Many people have been laid off or furloughed, which can create financial pressures as well as just having too much time on their hands. Alcohol is a legal and easy escape from those pressures.

How is Lakeview Health meeting the demands of this increase?

We doubled down our efforts to actively speak and engage with our alumni knowing they would be the most affected by this pandemic. Our campus is on 14 acres and can accommodate over 225 patients, so we are large enough to still hold group activities and dining with the appropriate social distancing. We transitioned to virtual family workshops and meetings as needed.

This is an abridged version of the interview. Go to pontevedrarecorder.com to read the full text.

Level Up Fitness aims to train newcomers and pros



Photo by Amber Lake

Since the reopening of gyms in May, Level Up Fitness has provided N95 respirator masks as an added safety precaution.

By Amber Lake

Anyone who has suffered from “gym-timidation” while standing on the precipice of the weight room knows that working out is more than doing a few pull-ups and then showcasing a six-pack during the swimsuit competition round.

Surly meatheads aside, the banging of dumbbells and machinery with questionable purposes (why so many straps?) can feel like a roadblock on the highway toward health goals.

At Level Up Fitness, not knowing is actually the first step.

“When you sign up you go through an eval,” said Brandon Floyd, co-owner of Level Up. “We put (clients) on the body scan then take them on the floor and see what their strengths and weaknesses are. From there our trainers and our staff meet and we develop a program that works for them.”

So, when a new client walks into Level Up Fitness, Floyd takes the

time to get to know them.

“We do specialties services,” said Floyd. “Each client’s workout is customized based on their body type and goals. I am a believer that each person’s goals and body types are different, so we don’t believe in giving the exact same thing for each individual.”

With one-on-one workouts with a trainer, Floyd said people can expect to eliminate the trial and error of starting new programs and diets, as well as limit injury while giving an extra boost of accountability.

“Because I’ve been in the fitness industry for over 15 years, I’ve had the opportunity to go through over hundreds of clients from all walks of life,” Floyd said. “No matter what your goals are, it’s our job to help build a plan of attack to get you as close to your goal as possible.”

Outside of “Leveling Up” tender-footed bodybuilding hopefuls, Floyd and former Jaguars defensive co-owner Joshua Evans specialize in

training actual athletic professionals.

“Since the coronavirus, when we opened back up, we’ve increased in athletes. Prior to that I’ve trained a magnitude of high-level athletes in the community. We’ve gained a reputation of success.”

Floyd said especially now with the pandemic, people are looking to reevaluate their fitness goals. Some are just realizing that they’d like to start working on a goal and others are looking to get back on the wagon after the shutdown period. Either way, he said it’s important to remember that a goal isn’t a finish line.

“We help build a lifestyle,” Floyd said. “Even if clients choose to stop at Level Up, they are going to go forward with enough knowledge and experience to continue their fitness journey. With or without us. We teach you how to continuously keep leveling up.”

Go to levelupfitnessjax.com for more information about Level Up Fitness Jax.

Telemedicine: The Robin Hood of health care during pandemic

Seeing a provider when you need one during a pandemic can be challenging for many patients. The practice of telemedicine has exploded during the coronavirus pandemic. In March, when COVID-19 cases first became prevalent in the U.S., patients began to associate in-person visits to the doctor’s office with risk of infection, quickly leading to an increase in telemedicine visits. Prior to the pandemic, seeing a doctor via smart phone was rarely ever used.

The significant increase in visits has caused the health care industry to see value in virtual medicine like never before. According to local telemedicine company



Dr. Matthew Rill



Dr. Matthew Thompson

Telescope Health, the newfound spotlight on telemedicine sets the service up to achieve something new to the industry: bridging the gap in health care inequity.

The coronavirus pandemic has disproportionately affected minority groups, and

with the U.S. in the midst of a turning point, emergency physicians Dr. Matthew Rill and Dr. Matthew Thompson, Telescope Health co-founders, believe virtual medicine can become the great equalizer.

“As physicians, we’ve seen that barriers to health care truly do exist and make accessing care far more difficult,” said Rill, CEO of Telescope Health. “These disparities, driven by historical inequity, tend to occur in minority communities where medical care is further away, but underlying health conditions are much more prevalent.”

The cost of care is also problematic, but across all demographics. A 2018 Census study found that more than 27 million Americans did not have health insurance at any point during the year because it was simply too expensive.

“Health care can be challenging for pa-

tients,” said Thompson, COO of Telescope Health. “In the age of technology, quality health care is becoming possible for those who have historically found care to be out of reach.”

The health care industry alone faces its own stigma as a highly fragmented, slow moving and non-transformative institution. Some argue that these complexities stem from the administrative costs to the system, where inefficiencies negatively impact patient interactions. Rill and Thompson acknowledge the inefficiencies and complexities, but say that thanks to telemedicine, innovation is occurring to lower costs for patients and allow providers more time for personalized care.

Through smartphones and common technologies designed to foster connection,

TELEMEDICINE continues on Page 15

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Emergency heart care during COVID: When to call 911 and how hospitals are keeping patients safe



Samer Garas, M.D.
FACC, Ascension
St. Vincent's

Cardiac and stroke hospital admissions have dropped significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic — by nearly 40%, according to the New England Journal of Medicine. This may be because many patients, fearing the pandemic, are not seeking

life-saving care. When concerns about catching the coronavirus encourage people to stay physically distant, that's healthy. When those fears drive ailing people away from hospitals, though, it can be dangerous. While COVID-19 has changed the world, it hasn't changed the fact that hospitals are the safest place to be if there's a heart attack, stroke or other medical emergency.

KNOCKING DOWN MYTHS ABOUT HEALTH EMERGENCIES IN COVID-19

Although some hospitals may be seeing fewer heart attack and stroke patients, that doesn't mean those events are on the decline. At the peak of the pandemic, out-of-hospital cardiac arrests doubled or tripled in major cities with COVID-19 outbreaks, as reported by publications such as *Lancet Public Health* and *JAMA Cardiology*. According to the *JAMA* study, many states have seen huge increases in deaths from underlying diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. So, why are patients avoiding the hospital?

We've heard some patients think they'll be a burden for emergency department personnel. Other patients may avoid or delay a hospital visit in fear of getting COVID-19. They shrug off their symptoms and think they'll be fine at home. But it's critical for these patients to know that the emergency response system is prepared to help patients safely and quickly, even during a pandemic. We are seeing patients wait until they are much sicker to receive the care they need. Unfortunately, when patients wait to seek care, damage to the heart increases. When a heart valve deteriorates significantly, there is more heart failure, and outcomes are much worse. On the other hand, patients who come to the hospital earlier can catch problems sooner. This can potentially save

their lives. That's true any day, and it's true during COVID-19.

HOSPITALS ARE THE SAFEST PLACE FOR EMERGENCY, HEART DISEASE PATIENTS

We understand that patients are worried about COVID-19. Many people don't even want to go to the grocery store. But hospitals are the safest place for you during a medical emergency. They are equipped to safely protect patients from potential exposure to COVID-19 while taking care of their emergent health concerns. Separate intake and care areas, waiting room distancing, staff screening, ongoing use of personal protective equipment, universal masking, and extensive safety and sanitation protocols, are in place to ensure all patients are cared for in a protected environment. Our health system continuously monitors guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and adjusts safety practices and safeguards accordingly.

SIGNS YOU NEED TO CALL 911

Calling 911 at the first sign of a heart attack or stroke could save your life, or a loved one's. Don't assume that what you're experiencing is "nothing." Some heart attacks are sudden and intense. But most start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Pay attention to your body and call 911 if you experience chest discomfort, discomfort in other areas of the upper body, shortness of breath, breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness. With strokes, the important acronym to remember is F.A.S.T. That stands for face drooping, arm weakness, speech difficulty, time to call 911. It's common to mistake or minimize signs of stroke, but don't delay treatment. For example, if your arm is suddenly numb or weak, and it doesn't go away in a few minutes, don't assume it just fell asleep. Call 911.

No one should risk their health out of fear of COVID-19. Timely treatment is critical for achieving the best outcomes. Hospitals are set up to provide the safe, effective care you need.

Dr. Samer Garas is a cardiologist and medical director of the cardiovascular service line at Ascension St. Vincent's. For more information on Dr. Garas and his specialty of interventional cardiology, visit Healthcare.ascension.org.

Telemedicine

Continued from 14

Telescope Health's co-founders say that health care can now become affordable and flexible, enabling a wider group of patients to receive care—including those without access to insurance or transportation that use the Telescope Health app.

"Telemedicine is really the corner-

stone of innovation in health care, giving patients access to care from home, work or wherever internet is available. It's consumer-focused care at its finest—bringing personalized care to all patients that doesn't have to break the bank," Rill said. "We're thrilled to be at the forefront of this new wave in medicine that bridges the care gap, and we're honored to be pursuing these changes across our greater Jacksonville community."

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- Mary Frances M.

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Ways to keep your back healthy during summer



Dr. Erika Hamer
Guest Columnist

Now that it's summertime, many of us are catching up on yard work and enjoying outdoor activities. Unfortunately, back pain can be a consequence if you work or play too hard and don't follow a few simple back precautions.

Outlined below are some of the common causes of back pain in the summer and a few tips for staying pain free.

GARDENING AND YARD WORK

Weeding, mowing, planting, raking and other lawn and garden tasks can take a toll on the muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints in your back. Muscles in your back can be strained when you lift heavy bags of mulch or gravel, while stiffness and muscle spasms may be a consequence of sitting in the same position for hours when planting flowers and shrubs. Following a few of these tips can help you avoid back pain while working in the yard:

- Warm up before you begin — even a few laps around the yard will get your blood flowing, relax your muscles and improve flexibility along with range of motion

- Wear supportive shoes and avoid flip flops — closed shoes are safer, especially when mowing the yard

- When moving heavy items, place your feet about 18 inches apart to improve stability. Bending your knees when you lift reduces stress on your back. Better yet, ask for help or use a wheelbarrow

- Take frequent breaks when painting or planting to prevent your back from stiffening up

- Don't twist your body when you lift or dig

- Use your arm and leg muscles to push your mower

- Raise your flower beds to reduce the amount of bending needed to tend to your plants

- Alternate hands — avoid only using your dominant hand when digging or raking as this constant motion on one side of your body can result in back pain.

- Bend and stretch every 20 minutes or so when weeding or painting. This helps to keep your back and neck flexible

GOLF, TENNIS, AND OTHER SPORTS OR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Swinging a golf club, tennis racquet or baseball bat can strain your back muscles and joints, particularly if your form is off or your posture is bad. According to the American Chiropractic Association, a

force equal to 10 times your body weight is exerted on your spine during a golf swing. Playing these sports may also increase your risk of elbow and hip pain. Working with a professional or coach can help you ensure that you're using the best form when you swing. If you don't have a pro or coach, you'll find plenty of information on stances, swings, and body mechanics in online videos.

Hiking or biking may also increase your risk of back pain or injuries. If you're a hiker, make sure you wear hiking shoes or boots that offer adequate support for your feet. You can also use a walking stick to improve your balance and reduce pressure on your back.

Spending hours in one position during a long bike ride may lead to back spasms and a reduced range of motion. Make sure your bike is the right size for your body. If you have to stretch to reach the handlebars or the seat is too high, you're more likely to strain your lower back.

STAY HYDRATED

A final and critical tip in avoiding pain in the summer is to stay hydrated. Enjoying outdoor activities in the Florida sun means drinking a lot of water. We have always heard about the importance of drinking four-to-eight glasses of water a day, but did you know that four

8-ounce glasses of water are considered the minimum intake for adults? So how much is best? A good rule of thumb is drink before you are thirsty. Ideally, you should never feel as if your mouth and throat are dry and that you "need" a drink of water. That means, when doing anything outdoors in the summer, have water nearby.

Sufficient water intake is critically important in maintaining normal physiological processes and eliminating metabolic waste products. Drinking appropriate amounts of water everyday aids each and every one of your body's cells in performing its numerous functions. In addition, water is a key component of the intervertebral discs located in your spinal column. So, adequate hydration is a critical element to keeping your back working properly and pain free.

If you are experiencing back pain, talk with your health care provider. There are a variety of ways back pain can be treated. However, by following a few safety precautions, we hope you can enjoy all your favorite summer activities while staying pain free.

Dr. Erika Hamer, DC, DIBCN, DIBE, Board Certified Chiropractic Neurologist and owner of Ponte Vedra Wellness Center with offices in Ponte Vedra Beach and Nocatee Town Center.

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Business Weekly

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THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2020

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Balloon decorating business grows out of lifelong interest

By Shaun Ryan

An enormous half circle of about 200 white balloons in various sizes dominates a meeting room at the Hilton Garden Inn on PGA Tour Boulevard. Created for a wedding reception, it's the latest work by a gifted artist who only recently realized the scope of her own talent.

Anette Saalmann was 16 years old when she discovered the joy of decorating spaces with balloons. Her mother had a flower shop and was hired to decorate for an event. It was there that Saalmann observed another person decorating with balloons. She studied his technique and learned how balloons could be arranged into a spiral.

A couple of months later, her mother was hired by Pepsi to decorate for a company Christmas party. It happened that no one quite knew how to adorn a couple of columns, and Saalmann, remembering what she'd learned earlier, suggested spirals of balloons.

A company representative thought it was a great idea, and Saalmann was put in charge of that.

"Everybody loved it," she said.

In the years that followed, she developed her skills by creating displays for family and friends. But even then, it was little more than a hobby.

Then, five years ago, she was put in charge of decorating for two events. The pressure was on, for the events — a birthday party and anniversary celebration — were for the owner of the hotel where she worked.

Her arrangements were a success, and she was asked to do more parties over the ensuing years including decorating for the Donna Marathon. But it was those first two events that awakened Saalmann to her own talents.

"I didn't know my creativity until I was forced to do it," she said.



Photo by Shaun Ryan

Anette Saalmann stands in front of one of her large colorful balloon displays.

Then, about five months ago, she went to a training session in Miami to learn about the latest techniques and was encouraged by the instructor to start her own business.

And that's how Sparkle Balloons began.

Saalmann's arrangements are colorful and varied and surprising.

"I can create pretty much anything with balloons," she said.

Through hours of hard work and great patience, she can create complicated shapes — such as flowers — out of balloons. But she doesn't think of it as work.

"When you have a passion for something, it's not a job," she said. "It's fun."

She has a preference for Gemar Balloons, which are made in Italy, because they are biodegradable. And she prefers to inflate

BALLOONS continues on Page 19

Leaders in Finance:
Call (904) 285-8831
to find out more about
this upcoming section

'Tax-free' still exists in America



Ric Schilling
Columnist

"Those who understand interest earn it, those who don't pay it." — Albert Einstein

I want to talk to you today about a very special type of account that everyone, no matter how rich or poor, can own.

Experts call this the biggest benefit left in the tax code, because your money grows tax-deferred and you can access it tax-free. It can provide a supplemental retirement cash flow that could last until age 100 IF structured and funded correctly. You can use your money to become your own source of financing. It's a self-completing insurance policy, so if you pass away before you can save enough for your family to live on, the insurance benefit will provide the money needed for them, tax-free.

In very simple terms this strategy is Indexed Universal Life (IUL). It can be a customized cash value life insurance policy which will not only provide protection but can be a powerful wealth accumulation too if handled correctly.

But hold on here, both Suze Orman and Dave Ramsey say cash value life insurance is a bad idea. Or maybe it was your CPA that said cash value life insurance is a bad idea.

Well, guess what? I am going to debunk those myths for you right now.

As Americans, we spend more money insuring our cars than we do our lives. In fact, we actually do things in reverse: we focus on protecting the golden eggs — cars, homes or possessions — instead of protecting the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Using cash value life insurance like an IUL can provide death benefit protection like term, along with a protected place for your money, growth without risk even tax-free access. We've all seen the Stock Market rise and fall, with banks and companies failing, the insurance industry has stayed solid. Did you know that during the Great Depression, while the banks and Wall Street crashed, the

SCHILLING continues on Page 19

Protect yourself against financial scammers



Karsten Jacobson
Columnist

look for, and how to defend yourself.

For starters, just how widespread is financial fraud? Consider this: In 2019,

It's unfortunate, but true: During this period of economic uncertainty, one of the busiest "industries" has been financial scamming. But it goes on even during normal times, too, so you'll want to know what to

more than 3.2 million fraud cases were reported to the Federal Trade Commission, with identity theft being the most common type of fraud, accounting for about one-fifth of the overall cases. And fraudulent new accounts (mortgages, student loans, car loans and credit cards) amounted to about \$3.4 billion in 2018, according to a study by Javelin Strategy & Research.

To help yourself from being victimized, consider the following suggestions. They are certainly not an exhaustive list, but they should prove useful.

■ Watch out for unsecure websites.

Make sure a website is secure before entering any payment or personal information. Look for sites that start with HTTPS, rather than those with just HTTP, which are not secure and can be hacked. But even a site with HTTPS can still be used by scammers, so, if you don't recognize the name of the company or group that's requesting your information, do some research to make sure it's legitimate.

JACOBSON continues on Page 19

Balloons

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them with air, because they last longer than those inflated with helium.

In making her displays, she said she strives to create something that people will like. And she takes joy in the reactions she gets.

“Just to see the face of the person you’re making the arrangement for, you can’t put a price on that,” she said.

The email address for Sparkle Balloons by Anette is anette@sparkleballoonsjax.com.



Photo by Shaun Ryan

Anette Saalman’s latest creation is an arrangement for a wedding.

Jacobson

Continued from 18

■ **Review your credit reports.** As mentioned above, the fraudulent opening of new accounts is a big source of financial scams. To be sure nobody has opened new accounts under your name, try to review your credit reports at least once a year. You can get them for free at AnnualCreditReport.com.

■ **Follow up on fraud.** If you’ve already been victimized by having new accounts opened in your name, contact one of the three major credit reporting agencies (Experian, Equifax or TransUnion) and place a 90-day fraud alert on your credit file. You might also want to file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, print it out and file it with your local law enforcement agency. And it’s also a good idea to contact the fraud department of the financial companies where the thief has opened a fraudulent account in your name.

■ **Be alert for suspicious links.** “Phishers” have gotten quite good at sending out messages that look like they’re from reputable businesses. But if you examine these messages carefully, you can usually determine if there’s something off about

them. For example, no legitimate business will tell you, via this type of message, that you have to “correct your account” by providing additional information. And if you do hit the link provided, and it takes you to a third-party site, you can be pretty sure it’s bogus.

■ **Resist “act now” offers.** If you get an offer, via phone or online, urging you to “act immediately” on an investment opportunity, discontinue the communication. No reputable financial advisor will ever try to force you to take such swift action, and if an investment is legitimate, it will be available tomorrow, next week and next year.

■ **Use your shredder.** You probably have the option to “go paperless” with all your banks and financial services providers, but, if you still do receive paper documents, be sure to shred them when they’re no longer needed.

You save and invest for years to help achieve your long-term goals. Don’t let any of your efforts be undone by financial fraudsters.

Karsten L. Jacobson, CFP, is a financial advisor for Edward Jones at 2208 Sawgrass Village Drive in Ponte Vedra Beach. For information, call (904) 285-9898. This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

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Schilling

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insurance industry not only maintained its strength but kept its promises. During the greatest period of economic stress in the nation’s history to date, policyholder’s cash value in insurance companies, were unaffected. Contrast that to 9,000-to-10,000 banks that failed during that time and again in 2010, when over 143 banks failed.

This article is not just promoting cash value life insurance but promoting how to grow wealth without risking your money in the stock market, while also providing you with the option of building a tax-free pension and when you leave this good earth to leave a tax-free benefit to the ones you love the most.

Please understand that all cash value life insurance policies are not created equal. You should choose a company that allows you to max fund it without creating a Modified Endowment Contract (MEC). Your premium payments are used to pay for the cost insurance and anything above those cost is allocated to an index account receives interest based on performance of the underlying index, which is then added to the cash value side of the contract. The key to this index is the contract can’t ever have a negative return.

The vast majority of financial professionals and insurance agents don’t know how to do this properly to maximize the cash value growth. When agents study for their licenses, this type of advanced training is not taught. It’s more important to know how to maximize the cash value growth as opposed to the insurance costs.

If you’d like a free copy of the best-selling book “Wealth Beyond Wall Street,” call our office at (888) 891-3381.

Frederic “Ric” Schilling is a Florida native, born in Jacksonville, Fl. Ric is President and founder of Senior Guardians of America, a local North Florida firm specializing in tax reduction, long term illness planning, asset protection, probate avoidance and life income planning. Ric is a National Speaker and Advocate on Senior Issues and has been featured by the Florida Times Union and WJXT, TV-4 in Jacksonville as an authority on Estate Planning and Retirement Issues. Senior Guardians has an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau and is a member in excellent standing with the National Ethics Association. Ric Schilling is a Certified Financial Fiduciary (CFF). You may contact Ric at 904-371-3302 or 888-891-3381 Please visit: www.seniorguardian.com This article is not intended to give tax or legal advice. Securities offered through Center Street Securities, Inc. (CSS), a registered Broker-Dealer & member FINRA & SIPC. Investment Advisory Services offered through Center Street Advisors, Inc. (CSA), a SEC Registered Investment Advisor. Schilling and Associates (d/b/a Senior Guardians of America) and CSA are independent of CSS.



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Concerts in the Plaza cancels rest of 30th anniversary season

As positive cases of COVID-19 continue to rise in St. Johns County, and in an effort to minimize the risk of people gathering in crowds without the ability to safely social distance, the City of St. Augustine has decided to cancel the remaining scheduled performances of the 30th anniversary season for Concerts in the Plaza.

“While we are disappointed to have to cancel the 30th anniversary season of Concerts in the Plaza, we must do everything that we can to keep St. Augustine safe and healthy,” said Kimberly Mayo, events and venue coordinator. “We plan to

come back better than ever next year, with a handful of new acts, and inviting back several of our favorite local bands.”

Concerts in the Plaza has brought a wide variety of musical entertainment to St. Augustine’s historic downtown all summer long for 29 consecutive years. The series is best known for showcasing all styles of music including bluegrass and blues, jazz, country, swing and folk, old time and popular rock.

For more information about Concerts in the Plaza, contact Mayo at (904) 825-1004 or events@CityStAug.com.



Photo provided by the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall

Chris Hillman is bringing his “Time Between: An Evening of Stories and Songs” featuring Herb Pedersen and John Jorgenson to the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall on Jan. 18, 2021.

Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Chris Hillman to perform at Ponte Vedra Concert Hall

Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Chris Hillman will bring his “Time Between: An Evening of Stories and Songs” to the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall on Jan. 18. Tickets go on sale 10 a.m. Friday, July 24.

Hillman has never stopped making music, but the last few years have seen the music, milestones, special events and live performances happening at an exceptional pace.

In 2017, he released the acclaimed “Bidin’ My Time,” his first solo album in 12 years, produced by Tom Petty and executive-produced by Herb Pedersen. In 2018, the 50th anniversary of The Byrds’ groundbreaking “Sweetheart of the Rodeo” album, was celebrated with a special tour featuring Hillman and fellow Byrds alum Roger McGuinn, joined by country legends Marty Stuart and His Fabulous Superlatives.

Following the “Sweetheart” tour, in January 2019, Hillman became the focus of another benchmark event when the Museum of Ventura County honored his six-decade career with a vivid retro-

spective. Titled “Chris Hillman: Time Between,” the exhibit spanned the ’60s to the present and showcased Hillman’s legacy through stories, memorabilia, instruments and stage attire. A special evening also featured Hillman performing songs and narrating his life in music.

For the Jan. 18 show Hillman, on mandolin and guitar, will be joined by Herb Pedersen playing rhythm guitar and banjo and John Jorgenson on guitars and mandolin.

Hillman’s memoir, “Time Between: My Life as a Byrd, Burrito Brother, and Beyond,” will be released by BMG in September.

As the momentum continues, Hillman is enjoying each chapter of the experience.

“I’ve had a great life,” he said. “And it’s not over — we’re not done.”

Tickets can be purchased at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre box office on Thursdays or Fridays or on Ticketmaster. The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall box office is closed at this time.

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 - W-2, e.g.
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 - “Fear of Flying” author
 - “Chronicles: Volume One” author
 - Not counterfeit
 - Leaf gathering tool
 - Pep gathering
 - Decorated
 - Kind of caviar
 - Pined
 - Newspapers and such
 - Cause for food recall
 - One of Five Ws
 - Seed coat
 - Type of parrot
 - Commoner
 - Golfer's destination
 - “Put a lid ____!”
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 - Pencil type
 - Romanian money

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

Sports



THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2020 • PAGE 21

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JAGA's Jacksonville Amateur Championship tees off at Jax Beach GC

Event features 1st female contestants, including Ponte Vedra Beach's Hannah Stevens; assistant UNF coach Jordan Batchelor to defend title

The 59th edition of the Jacksonville Amateur Championship, sponsored and conducted by the Jacksonville Area Golf Association, got underway Thursday, July 23, at Jax Beach Golf Club in Jacksonville Beach. The 54-hole championship will crown its 2020 champion Saturday.

University of North Florida assistant golf coach Jordan Batchelor of San Jose Country Club will defend.

For the first time in the 59-year history of the Jacksonville Amateur, female contestants will compete. The trio includes Gabriela Ruffels of Melbourne, Australia, Tori Mouton of St. Johns and Hannah Stevens of Ponte Vedra Beach.

Ruffels is the reigning U.S. Women's Amateur champion, having claimed the prestigious U.S.G.A. title last August in Mississippi. The rising University of Southern Cal junior also claimed last summer's North and South title at Pinehurst

Resort in North Carolina.

Mouton won the 2019 JAGA First Coast Women's Amateur at Eagle Harbor Golf Club on Fleming Island. She will begin her junior year at The Bolles School in Jacksonville next month.

Stevens was awarded a JAGA scholarship last month and in August is bound for Flagler College in St. Augustine where she will play golf for the Saints. She is a regular at Jax Beach Golf Club.

The championship features 84 entries, 15 of which are in a category which accepts entries from outside JAGA's Northeast Florida footprint. The 15 hail from all over the state of Florida, and Georgia and Illinois, plus Australia and Ecuador.

Other Ponte Vedra Beach players include Duke Butler IV, Matt Cooper, Ken Dye, Kirk Irvin, Jake Newman, Anthony Scolapio, Kevin Slayden Jr., Stewart Slayden, Michael Smith, Grant Sutliff,

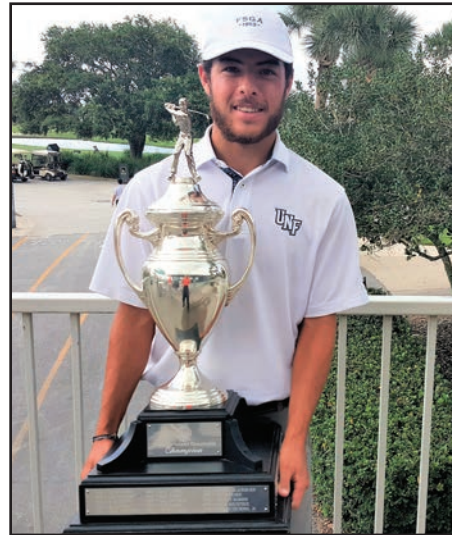


Photo provided by JAGA

Jordan Batchelor, assistant UNF golf coach, holds the trophy after winning last year's Jacksonville Amateur Championship.

Kip Webber and Rob Webster III.

The field was increased from 78 to 84 last week due to significant demand and a growing alternates list and host Jax Beach

Golf Club's reputation as a faster-playing golf course.

Contestants range in age from 16 to 66. Past champions David Anthony (2006) and Duke Butler IV (2009) will join Batchelor at Jax Beach, all in pursuit of their second Amateur title.

The North Florida Junior Golf Foundation will be represented via its two exemptions extended to Andrew Davis of Fleming Island and Cody Carroll of Jacksonville who plays for coach Scott Schroeder and Batchelor at UNF.

Handicap index eligibility is limited to six. Fifty-one contestants are registered with handicap indexes of scratch (0) or plus-digits.

The Amateur is one of three JAGA-conducted events in which the top finishers are awarded World Amateur Golf Ranking points.

The JAGA First Coast Amateur and the JAGA Match Play Championship are the others. Jax Beach Golf Club will host its first Jacksonville Amateur in the 2000s.

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