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Recorder

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YEAR!

December 31, 2020

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75 cents

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2020 YEAR IN REVIEW



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CONNECTIONS
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Send us your news

We welcome submissions of photos, stories, columns and letters to the editor. Let us know what's happening. Email submissions to pvrecorder@opcfla.com or bring them by our office at **1102 A1A N., Unit 108, Ponte Vedra Beach**. Submissions may be published in the paper, on our website or on our social media platforms.

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NOTES TO READERS

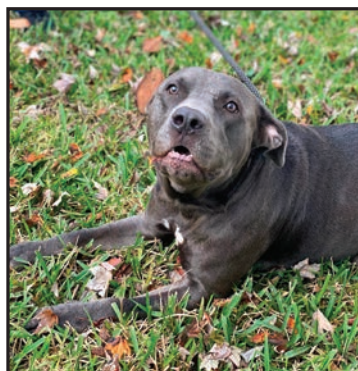
Don't miss an issue: In case social distancing requirements get more strict, we will email you your paper. Send your email address to pvrecorder@opcfla.com.

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.

ADOPT A PET

CAT OF THE WEEK

Hi. My name is Ringo and I am a super sweet 5-month-old male domestic shorthair. If you give me a little bit of time, I will open up and show you how loving I am. I am calm and super chill – just need a human to love. Come see me at the Pet Center today. #56772



DOG OF THE WEEK

Hello there. My name is Smokey, and guess what? I know commands such as "sit" and "speak," and I am house-trained. I am good with

kids, dogs and some cats. I am super happy, loving and energetic. Come visit me at the Pet Center today so we can play. #56789

Any new pet being introduced to a new home will need time to adjust to its new environment. Please reinforce house training and behavioral training, and be mindful of interacting with other pets.

St. Johns County Pet Center

Cat adoptions are \$30 for males and \$40 for females. Dog adoptions are \$45 for males and \$60 for females. Adoption fees include microchipping, neutering/spaying, rabies vaccinations and shots. The Pet Center is located at 130 N. Stratton Road in St. Augustine, off U.S. 1 between County Road 210 and International Golf Parkway. Business hours are Tuesday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The center is closed to the public on Sunday. On Monday, the office is open by appointment only to claim a lost pet. **For more information, please call the St. Johns County Pet Center at (904) 209-6190.**

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The Ponte Vedra Recorder's annual "Year in Review" takes a look back at the people, stories and events that made the biggest impact in 2020 around Ponte Vedra and The Beaches. This year presented unique challenges amid a global pandemic, so here's looking forward to 2021!

Note: Some of the reproduced articles in this edition were edited for space. The entire articles can be found at pontevedrarecorder.com

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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4	2	7	3	1	9	8	5	6

Solutions correspond to last week's puzzles.



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Hugh Osteen

Florida Market Manager
hugh@opcfla.com
(904) 285-8831

Susan Griffin

Publisher
susan@opcfla.com
(904) 686-3938

Paris Moulden

Page Designer/Reporter
paris@opcfla.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 3943

Shaun Ryan

Reporter
shaun@opcfla.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 3941

Holly Tishfield

Reporter
holly@opcfla.com
(904) 285-8831

Don Coble

Contributor
don@opcfla.com
(904) 686-3939

Ed Johnson

Senior Account Executive
ed@opcfla.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 3940

Kristin Flanagan

Account Executive
kristin@opcfla.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 3950

April Snyder

Sales Assistant
aprils@opcfla.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 3937

Jonathan Bueno

Circulation Manager
jonathan@opcfla.com
904-463-4407

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K9s for Warriors breaks ground on new resource center

Addition to main campus will allow nonprofit to serve more veterans

By Paris Moulden

Originally ran Jan. 23, 2020

K9s for Warriors recently held a groundbreaking ceremony for its new Chartrand Family Warrior Resource Center to be located at its main campus in Ponte Vedra.

The nonprofit, which provides service dogs to veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury and/or Military Sexual Trauma, plans to expand the facilities to add for more training and to better assist post 9/11 veterans.

“It will provide extra space to be able to bring in more veterans, simultaneous to classes we already run,” K9s for Warriors COO Jason Snodgrass said.

Snodgrass said the facility will allow veterans who have already partnered with a canine companion to return for additional training or to work with a new dog once their service dog retires.

“We won’t have to interrupt the process we have going on with new classes,” he said.

Snodgrass said the next step in the process is to get permits issued and then construction can begin.

According to K9s for Warriors, the additional facility will be home to a resource center, an American Service Dog Access Coalition, offices for the Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans and a K9s for Warriors Research Institute.

The new resource center will allow the nonprofit to house and train an additional four veterans at a time. The organization is also increasing its dedication to prevent veteran suicides through the additional workspace for the research institute. K9s for Warriors has already partnered with Purdue University to study the effect of service dogs on veterans suffering from PTSD, and to encourage the VA to accept service dogs as a part of a healthcare plan for veterans suffering from PTSD, in the hopes of giving “all veterans access to service dogs if they choose.”

To date, K9s for Warriors has served almost 600 veterans, and the resource center is just another way to further the organization’s mission.

“Community support and that of existing donors and sponsors are critical to our mission of serving veterans,” Snodgrass said.

For more information on K9s for Warriors, go to www.k9sforwarriors.org.



Photo provided by K9s for Warriors

Representatives from K9s for Warriors break ground on the new Chartrand Family Warrior Resource Center at the nonprofit’s main campus in Ponte Vedra.

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Barbara Maple | 904.571.1764
BarbaraMaple@WatsonRealtyCorp.com



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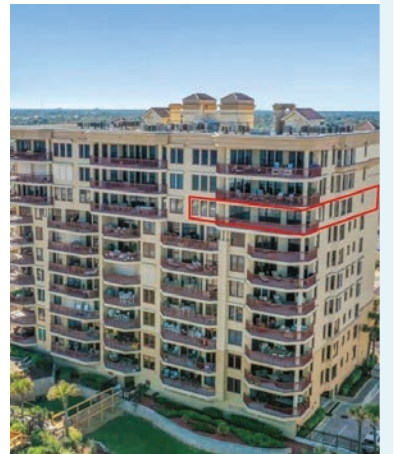
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Happy New Year!



JANUARY



KAREN EVERETT



SUSANNE SCHUENKE



RHONDA GOODALL

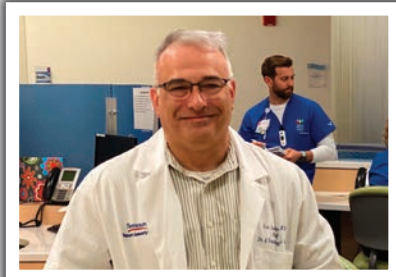


MATT WILLIS



ADAM LEVINE

FEBRUARY



DR. ERIC SANDLER



AMY HARRIS



LIAM O'REILLY



SARA FRASCA

MARCH



ALEX BENNETT



ANDY CARROLL

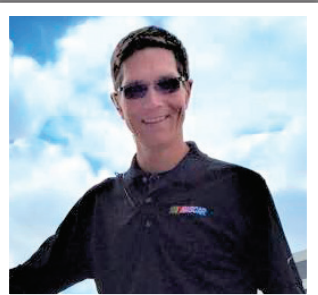


BRAD TALBERT



JEN SCHLECHTE

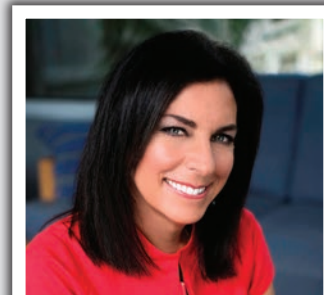
APRIL



MATT HUMPHREY



ED KUHL



JANET JOHNSON



BEAU BEECH

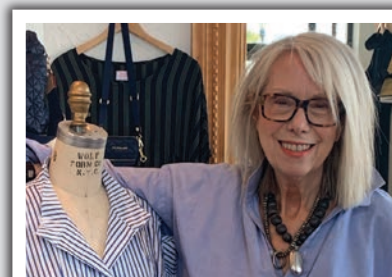


KIMBERLY LAWLOR

MAY



ROBERT MCGINTY



MARCIA BORG



GREG VOSS

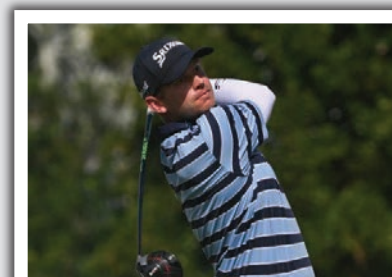


ANDY LEVINSON

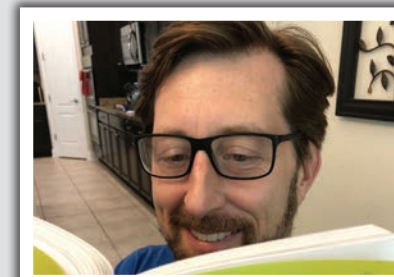
JUNE



CHASE MAGNANO



JARED WOLFE



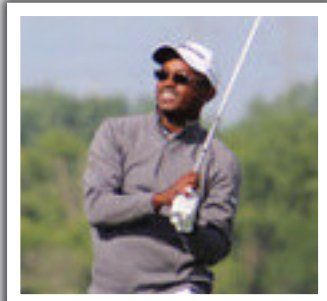
BOB WILTFONG



BRUNO COUTURIER



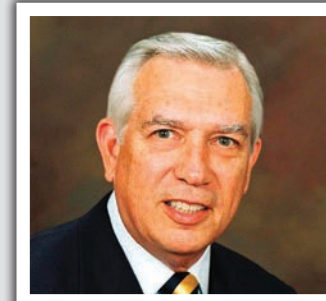
BRENDA DAVID



MONTRELE WELLS



MARK NIGHBOR



HORTON S. HICKERSON

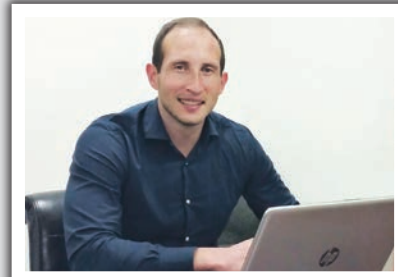


ROBERT PEEK

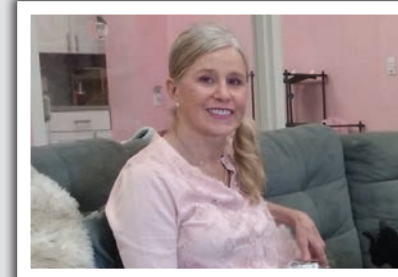
JULY



STEVE HORNER



IAN AGUILAR

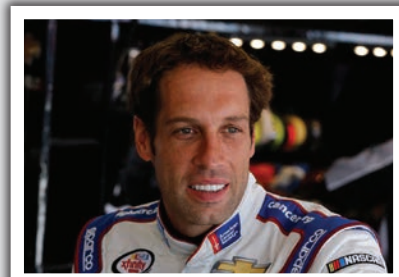


CARLA FORREST

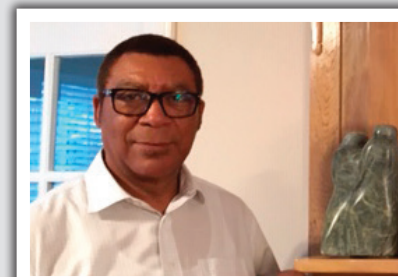


MIKE SEESE

AUGUST



SCOTT LAGASSE JR.



SAM HALL



DR. STEPHANIE HOLLIS



DR. ERIKA HAMER

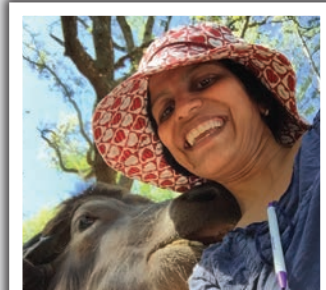
SEPTEMBER



MATT PRICE



RANDY BRADLEY



PUNITA PATEL

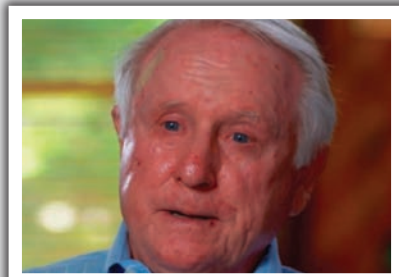


JUSTIN FELKER



TAMMY BOBO

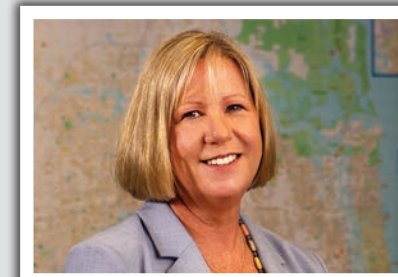
OCTOBER



DEANE BEMAN



BONNIE HAYFLICK



SHANNON NAZWORTH



KARSTEN JACOBSON

NOVEMBER



MICHELLE SMITH



PASTOR JACQUIE LEVERON



LORI ADAMS



MIKE CROWDER

DECEMBER

Land lease announced for Vicar's Landing expansion and Oak Bridge golf course revitalization

By Amber Lake

Originally ran Feb. 6, 2020

Vicar's Landing, in conjunction with Alta Mar, officially announced its plans for the expansion of the retirement community and the modernization of the Oak Bridge golf course.

The announcement took place on Feb. 4 at the 3 Palms Grille, overlooking the construction of the new course. In addition to revamping the Oak Bridge golf

course, the land lease will allow for 238 senior living units.

The expansion has come as no small feat, occurring to Dave Miller, owner of Oak Bridge. Plans had been in place as early as four years prior. Due to adjustments with the area HOA and residence requests, however, construction has been delayed.

"We went through two different deals," Miller said. "Anytime you try to bring about change into a community that's



Rendering provided by Vicar's Landing

Vicar's Landing at Oak Bridge intends to provide more than 200 living units for retirees.

as established as this, you meet with resistance. But everyone rode in the same direction at the end of the day, including the PGA TOUR. We are all going to be better off for it."

Currently, Vicar's Landing is facing a

7½-year wait list for admittance. Bruce Jones, CEO of Vicar's Landing, said he is looking forward to the expansion of the 30-year-old retirement community, whose presence is "part of the fabric of Ponte Vedra Beach."

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THE PLAYERS players react to cancellation

By Kathy Bissell

Originally ran March 19, 2020

For the first time since 9/11, a PGA TOUR event has been canceled. THE PLAYERS Championship was halted at 9:50 p.m. Thursday, March 12.

In addition, for the first time since WWII, several additional PGA TOUR events, the Valspar in Tampa and the Dell Match Play tournament in Austin, Texas, were also canceled.

The PGA TOUR is not alone. The Masters has announced a postponement of this year's tournament, but they have indicated that they will hold it at some time later in the year. The others just will not take place in 2020.

The closing of the theme parks — Disney World and Universal — in Orlando was the tipping point for the PGA TOUR in making their decision.

"When you looked to that moment in time where you have two theme parks that are located between Jacksonville and Tampa cancel, to me that really was the final thing that we had heard that said, you know what, even though we feel like we have a safe environment and we've done all the right things, we can't proceed," PGA TOUR Commissioner Jay Monahan said early Friday morning.

Monahan, who lost a lot of sleep last week, had been on the phone with President Donald Trump, the CDC, Gov. Ron DeSantis, local government officials and others prior to the decision to play Thursday. At that time, it was felt that because the tournament was outside and because it was spread over 400 acres at the TPC Sawgrass facility, it was not a health hazard for the tournament to continue. However, as the days wore on, as other organizations cancelled their events, as more and more players had



Photo by Craig O'Neal

Matthew Wolff putts during the first round of THE PLAYERS Championship on Thursday, March 12 at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass.

concerns, it became a bigger issue to continue with THE PLAYERS. Then late in the day on Thursday, Disney World and Universal decided to close.

"It's gut-wrenching, when you're affecting so many people's livelihoods, that weighs heavily on you," Monahan admitted. "As you look into the rest of the season, tournaments in every market are well on their way towards planning their events, to fundraising. You've got charities, just like we have here, that are counting on those events.

And we feel like it was our opportunity to potentially play this week."

Monahan also said the PGA TOUR would be working with the tournament Red Coats and Blue Coats to identify some things that could be done for local and regional charities that are affected by the cancellation.

"We take our commitment to this community very, very seriously, and we're going to get to the work at hand to make sure that we continue to help our community as everybody tries to make their way forward here," he said.

Several of the players had comments late Thursday and early Friday morning regarding the situation.

"You keep hearing that word that it's a fluid situation, that things are changing at a fast pace," former PLAYERS champ Webb Simpson said. "When I showed up here on Monday, it (cancellation) wasn't even a thought."

He and the group he was playing with on Thursday found out that no fans were going to be out on Friday when they were on the 4th hole in round one. Then that changed. Now he's headed back to Charlotte, North Carolina to try to stay sharp for whenever golf begins again.

Rory McIlroy didn't receive notice about the cancellation until Friday morning. He was asleep when the announcement was made.

"It's going to get worse before it gets better," McIlroy said about COVID-19. "It's a hard one because you look at volunteers out here and a lot of volunteers are in their 60s and 70's and retired, and you don't want someone that's got the virus that passes it on to them, and then they're susceptible, and for me, like I, my mother's got respiratory issues and I certainly don't want to get something and pass it on to her and all of a sudden there's some sort of complication."



Oceanfront Beach Escape

Located between The Lodge and the Cabana Beach Club, this second-story condo gives elevated views of the beach while maintaining the unit's privacy and security. Includes a large covered balcony and ground floor storage. **3 bedrooms & 3 bathrooms \$1,585,000**



Atlantic Beach Retreat

This 3-story townhome, 334 2nd Street, is only two blocks away from the ocean as well as the Beaches Town Center. Enjoy the home's rooftop deck or the easily maintained backyard oasis complete with a 6-ft privacy fence, covered patio, and relaxing hot tub. **3 bedrooms, 2F/2H bathrooms \$810,000**



Intracoastal Luxury Condo

Located in the private gated community of Marina San Pablo, this 6th story luxury condo offers a convenient location, resort style amenities, and phenomenal views of the marina and Intracoastal Waterway along with a 20x50 boat slip. **3 bedrooms, 3.5 baths \$699,000**



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Beaches closed out of concern for COVID-19, growing traffic

By Don Coble

Originally ran April 2, 2020

Members of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office no longer will have to draw a line in the sand at the St. Johns County line to keep beachgoers away from their shoreline.

Officials in St. Johns yielded to mounting pressure from local residents and health officials late last Saturday by closing its 42 miles of beaches as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

That means Duval's sheriff's office no

longer will have to set up a wall to keep thousands of beachgoers from St. Johns County from spilling onto the Duval County beaches.

"We have taken as many measures as possible up to this point to preserve our residents' ability to access their beach. Unfortunately, those visiting the beach continue to ignore CDC guidelines regarding crowd size and personal distancing. In order to maintain public safety and respect the State of Florida's Executive Order, we had no choice but to close the coastline to public access today," said Hunter S. Con-

rad, St. Johns County Administrator. "We will continue to be methodical in our approach to closings related to COVID-19, and like every decision we have made to this point, we will open the beaches at the appropriate time when it is safe to do so."

The determination to close all public beaches was based upon a recommendation to reduce health risks associated with COVID-19 and beach overcrowding by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, the St. Augustine Beach Police Department, the City of St. Augustine, the City of St. Augustine Beach, St. Johns County

Emergency Management and local health officials.

Scott Beaver, the commander for the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office in the Ponte Vedra Beach area, said another factor was the growing risks posed by the crowds and traffic.

"One they were on the beach, most of them practiced social distancing," Beaver said. "The problem was off the beach. We had people parking in streets and in yards, everywhere. People have been cooped up for a couple weeks and they're excited. We just could risk anyone getting hurt."

Beaches reopen throughout St. Johns County

By Daniela Toporek

Originally ran May 7, 2020

Monday mornings can be a hassle, but when St. Johns County reopened its beaches for all activities last Monday, the biggest struggle was finding a parking spot within walking distance from the dearly missed ocean.

It was a sunny morning and the Mickler's Beach parking lot was full by 10:45 a.m. Ponte Vedra Beach residents and guests from surrounding areas eagerly walked towards the ocean.

Ready to lay out and finally sunbathe, beachgoer Angela Sneed searched for the perfect spot — distanced enough from the crowds to try and feel safe from the COVID-19 pandemic, but still close enough to be able to walk back to her car.

"We're doing the best we can to be as safe as possible, but we just really needed to be out in the sun and enjoy this beautiful day," Sneed said.

Sneed lives in Georgia but is in town checking on family during the pandemic.

"We've been cooped up indoors for so long, we just finally needed some light.

And since I'm visiting, I may as well take advantage of the views," Sneed added.

Another beach attendee, Josh Mulligan, was excited for the reopening to bring back a "sense of normalcy" that has been missing since the shutdown.

"It will take a long time to get back to our regular patterns and enjoy large gatherings," he said. "But right now, letting locals enjoy the beach safely and have social distancing is good for the community."

While those catching some rays and waves agree, some avid beachgoers are

playing it by ear and waiting just a little longer for the pandemic to calm.

"I'm waiting a month to see what happens," said Jacksonville's Bryan Askins, an avid beach goer. "Although I'm happy our governor is implementing phases to bring everything back, I feel like we needed at least another month before doing so. I just feel like we are reopening too soon."

As of Monday, St. Johns County beaches were open for normal hours and regular activities, with social distancing regulations still being implemented.



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OBITUARIES

James P. Lenihan

James P. Lenihan, 77, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., passed away on December 2nd, 2020, leaving behind a life lived to the fullest and a legacy to be proud of.

James, Jay, JP, Jim, The Dude, The Big Kahuna, Sir Lenihan, Uncle Jay, Mr. Lenihan, Grandpa, or Daddy was born and raised in North Tonowanda, NY until he moved to Greenwich CT in the sixth grade. A graduate of Greenwich High School, James went on to graduate with a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Connecticut. After graduation James set sail with the Norwegian Merchant Marines traveling the world, seeing things most will never see, both in good ways and bad.

Upon his return, James married his high school sweetheart Jacqueline Deluca. The sweethearts were married in Greenwich, CT on May 18th, 1968. Jackie and Jay stayed in Riverside, CT and raised their two daughters, Martha and Sarah. During this time James was the Northeastern Logistics Coordinator for the United States Postal Service.

Jay was a direct descendent of Robert Morris of PA who is known to have been a financier for the American Revolution and signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Sparked by his heritage, James was a historical guru holding memberships in several New York historical societies including the Veteran Core of Artillery where he helped to set up the annual Flag Day Parade in Manhattan and light the cannons off in the NY Harbor on the 4th of July. He was also a Knight of the Templar and a member of the Sons of the American Revolution. In the SAR he proudly served on several different committees throughout the years helping to promote the historical heritage of America, donating several historical flags to the Frances Tavern Museum and stepping down from an active membership roll in the Sons only to pass memberships onto his grandsons to continue the tradition.

A man constantly on the move whether it be a winter's drive around Todd's Point, a run down to the grocery store or on his way to Quebec, Bermuda or Bethany Beach there was always an adventure and fun to be had when you were with him. His love of adventure was highlighted by his favorite mode of transportation, his motorcycle. Jay loved taking motorcycle trips around the United States, Mexico, Canada and Africa and used those experiences to contribute to articles in various motorcycle magazines.

Introspective like no other and a true listener James was a friend and father figure to many. He practiced transcendental meditation on a daily basis for over 40 years. He knew the power of introspection and made it a part of his daily life.

Upon his retirement James and his wife followed their daughters to Florida to take on his new role of Grandpa. Not being one to be able to sit still for long Jay found a fun role as head of The Plantation community mail department. He loved riding around in his golf cart, smoking his cigars, staying under the radar and befriending its residents. After several years there James then turned his sights on taking his time to volunteer for Community Hospice where he would sit and speak with patients and help visitors see their loved ones.

He loved history, he loved to read, he loved to explore, he loved people, but most of all he loved his family. He lived his life being the best husband, father and grandfather he could be every day. A husband always there to tell you he loves you. A father always there for whatever you needed. A grandfather always there to learn from and hug. His remarkable perspective wisdoms now live on through his family and friends. His beautiful blue eyes, infectious smile, loving words and humorous sarcasm are dearly missed.

Elvis has left the building.

James was predeceased by his parents James Claire Lenihan and Dorothy Lose Lenihan, and his sister Martha Zavarella. James is survived by Jackie his wife of 52 years, his Magic Princess daughter Martha Foster and her husband Jonathan, his Princess Baby daughter Sarah Zebroski and her husband Kip, His four grandchildren that he liked to take full credit for, Jack and Kate Foster, and James and William Zebroski, and countless friends,

nieces and nephews.

A memorial in his honor will be held a later date. In lieu of flowers donations in his name may be sent to Community Hospice & Palliative Care Foundation, 4266 Sunbeam Road, Jacksonville, FL 32257, or support.communityhospice.com.

Mary Lee Westberry

It is with great sadness that the Westberry family announces the passing of Mary Lee Westberry on December 18, 2020 at the age of 78. Mary Lee will be lovingly



Mary Lee Westberry

remembered by her daughter Cathy (Chris), her two grandchildren Daniel and Nathan, her sister Janice, nephew Mark (Cathy), his two children Emily and Brandi and his grandchildren Zane and Mila. She will

be fondly remembered by her two Aunts, Joan and Elsie and several cousins and friends.

A private memorial service for Mary Lee will be held on January 2, 2021. You may write on her tribute wall at <https://quinn-shalz.com/obituary/MaryLee-Westberry>.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial gifts be made in memory of Mary Lee Westberry and in honor of Dr. James Foran to Mayo Clinic's Leukemia Research efforts. Donations may be made

by phone 1-855-852-8129, online <https://philanthropy.mayoclinic.org/donatemc> (select tribute information) or by mail to Mayo Clinic Department of Development, 200 First Street SW, Rochester, MN 55905. Please reference the memorial fund of Mary Lee Westberry in honor of Dr. James Foran. Donations will be tripled until January 15, 2021. Arrangements by Quinn Shalz Family Funeral Home.



Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre
3600 Third Street South, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
Phone: 904.249.1100 Fax: 904.241.7354

Ann Baily

Ann Baily, 98, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died on Dec. 20, 2020. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravalle.com

Melvin Bielecki

Melvin Bielecki, 79, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died December 22, 2020. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. (904) 249-1100 www.quinn-shalz.com

Alan Setzer

Alan Setzer, 75, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Dec. 22, 2020. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravalle.com

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School district implements 3-tiered plan to reopen in wake of COVID-19

By Amber Lake

Originally ran June 25, 2020

The St. Johns County School District is currently working to finalize its plan for reopening schools in the fall, as addressed by a June 11 virtual meeting.

Tim Forson, superintendent of St. Johns County Schools, presented a draft plan, which includes three phases of reopening protocols based on infection rates. Forson said the models include a collection of ideas from local and state levels, along with discussions with principals and teacher representatives. Input was gathered from parent surveys, internal task force sub-groups, business leader meetings, small group principal meetings, FOCUS groups and a teacher advisory group.

In one survey gathered from 18,600 parents, 70% of respondents said they were comfortable with having their children return to school in the fall.

The collaboration meeting outlined “what schools will look like” in the fall.

Continuity guidelines are approached-based the current status of COVID-19, including plans for low or no spread, minimal/moderate spread and substantial spread. Parents are also offered the ability to fully enroll their child in a virtual school, which is held on a semester basis and would in-

volve a withdrawal from a zoned school.

During a period of low or no spread, learning would continue as normal under brick-and-mortar conditions, reverting to regular status. In the event of a minimal-to-moderate spread of COVID-19, education would either continue traditionally or involve short-term distance learning. During a substantial spread of the virus, distance learning would continue across all levels with a potential closure by the district.

The school’s response across all levels of viral severity would include a “first tier” implementation of “cohort groups” for elementary schools and “A/B schedules” for middle and high schools.

In cohort group, elementary classrooms will have restricted movement, limiting interaction outside of the room, including lunches and other activities. High schools and middle schools may enforce an “A/B schedule.”

On the week of June 29-July 3, families will be asked to inform the district of their intent to return in the fall semester or enroll in the St. Johns Virtual School. Forson also said there will be another meeting toward the end of the summer to tighten the district’s plan.

“It is a world that is changing and very fluid, and I want to recognize that moving forward,” Forson said.

Patrons pack Bogey Grille on its final day in business

By Shaun Ryan

Originally ran July 9, 2020

In its final hours, Bogey Grille was doing a booming business. Even under the state-mandated 50% capacity rule, the place was hopping — so much so that owner Derek Prince compared the volume of activity to what he’s normally seen during THE PLAYERS.

The sports bar and restaurant, a popular gathering spot for local residents for more than 16 years, succumbed to the economic fallout resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak. It closed Friday, July 3, after struggling to remain profitable despite a temporary statewide shutdown of restaurant dining rooms in the spring and the cancellation of this year’s PLAYERS’ Championship. The event had always generated a lot of trade for Bogey Grille and played a pivotal role in its profitability, and its cancellation had a devastating impact.

Friday, Prince and his staff were scrambling to keep up with orders as customers seized a final opportunity to enjoy a Bogey Burger or sip one of the establishment’s specialty cocktails.

Pausing for a moment between orders, Prince reflected on his years of success

since purchasing the former Glory Days Sports Grille as a real estate investment in 2003.

“It’s been great,” he said. “It has been really awesome.”

But, he said, it was time he moved on to a new venture.

After Prince announced June 30 his intention to close, the business’s Facebook page lit up with comments from saddened patrons. For many, Bogey Grille has been the go-to place for something to eat after sporting events, dances, celebrations and more. The restaurant’s walls were decorated with school banners, pennants and photos contributed by families and sports teams.

People frequently referred to Bogey Grille as “Cheers,” after the television show about a bar where “everybody knows your name.”

“You and the Bogey’s Family are such a huge part of the fabric of the community,” wrote Holly Montroy on Facebook.

“I will never forget after one of the hurricanes when all the power was out everywhere, Bogey Grille stayed open and many people who had not evacuated came and pitched in and served food and ate at least one good meal!” wrote Laura Schnorr Warwin.

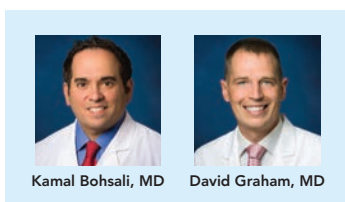
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



Isabelle Renault
President/CEO
St. Johns County
Chamber of Commerce

While we were unable to gather to publicly recognize and thank our many volunteer leaders who power our Chamber of Commerce, we still recognized our outstanding Chamber leaders—albeit virtually.

We began our virtual presentation at the Dec. 4 Virtual Economic Development Breakfast. Mark Nighbor, the Chamber's 2019-2020 Chairman of the Board, presented the Chamber Member of the Year to Northrop Grumman and First Coast Technical College for their outstanding collaboration and efforts in workforce development. He also awarded Joy Andrews, deputy county administrator, St. Johns County, with the Chairman's Award for her outstanding leadership and support of St. Johns County businesses Through COVID-19. And, Mike Koppenhafer, chair, Executive Committee, Economic Development Council, 2019-2020, presented the Fred Schroeder Economic Development Council Member of the Year award

to Firehouse Subs for Outstanding Corporate Stewardship to St. Johns County, the First Coast, and the Nation Through COVID-19.

All 2020 award recipients were recognized on the Chamber's social media platforms. The other winners are: Small Business of the Year Award, St. Augustine Distillery; President's Award: Skip Marsh, Flagler Health +; Public Policy Member of the Year: Michael Scine, Scine CPA Advisors; Chamber Ambassador of the Year/ Gene Morse Award, David Permenter, N2 Publishing; and Ponte Vedra Beach Division Ambassador of the Year/ Grace Hayes Award: Kari Zerrahn, Anderson Agency of NE Florida. Also honored for their significant contributions: Past Chairman of the Board Mark Nighbor and Past Chairman, executive committee, Economic Development Council, Mike Koppenhafer.

I agree with Dr. Erika Hamer, the chairman of the board for 2020-2021, when she commented that the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce is poised to succeed due to the efforts of these awardees. "We have endured a challenging year," she said. "Our members are resilient and will continue thriving due to the incredible support shown by these volunteer leaders."

And in breaking news ... Congress officially passed a new COVID-19 stimulus bill over the holidays to help businesses, families and individuals cope with economic impacts from the coronavirus epidemic. We will be sending out relevant timely information as it becomes available on our website and via social media platforms. Information is also posted at www.uschamber.com. Click on New Relief Package.

Welcome to 2021!!!

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Karen Everett
Director PVB Division,
St. Johns County
Chamber of Commerce

My End-of-Year message takes the form of a mix of useful resources and good wishes for a happ(ier) year in 2021.

EXHAUSTION, GRATITUDE & HOPE

Everyone I've talked to in the past few weeks is tired to the bone. I know you are, too. You've done such incredible work for your business, your fellow members and our community. While you may not have heard it often, THANK YOU for your creativeness, tenacity and commitment.

The entire Chamber team wishes you a wonderful holiday. I have a lot of hope and optimism for the future. While the road may not be easy, I know we will build even stronger in 2021.

I look forward to seeing you all (hopefully off the screen at some point) in 2021.

Isabelle Renault, the president and CEO, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, listed the annual awards members in her message. As many of you know, the Ponte Vedra Beach Division's Annual Membership Appreciation Event had to be cancelled in 2020, so we recognized the following at our marvelous Holiday Jingle and Mingle in early December. The Florida weather cooperated and we had a

lovely outdoors event at the Quadrille Model Home in Ponte Vedra Beach. Thanks again to our sponsors, especially those at AR Homes! The recipients of our awards were:

Going the Distance: Given to the member that travels far and wide to attend numerous events in BOTH the St. Augustine and Ponte Vedra areas. *ThompsonBaker Agency*

Crushing It: Given to the member that has shown great initiative in networking, recruiting new members, and has become a great asset to the division. *Trudy Toche, Mary Kay Consultant/Trainer*

Dedicated Service: Given to a member that goes the extra mile throughout the years. She is the true definition of dedication. *Jackie Smith, Rep. John Rutherford's Office*

Key Contributor: Given to the member that never says no and can be consistently depended on for all things happening at the Division. This person also is the recipient of 2020 PVB Division Ambassador of the YEAR! *Kari Zerrahn, Allstate Anderson Agencies*

Board Member of Year: Given to the board member that is dedicated to supporting chamber-wide initiatives and is committed to helping the division as a great community partner. *Pamela Bomba, Pivot CPAs.*

Jeff Jenkins Community Service Award: The Community Service Award recognizes the team's efforts to make our piece of paradise special. Their center tells our local story in an entertaining and visual manner, they provide families an outlet for adventurous hikes in the woods and along the beach or lake, and educate the public about local wildlife and plants and issues. The staff has also said YES to our requests for help to promote our area as a destination. *The Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve*

Pat Morgan Outstanding Member Award: Given to the member that goes above and beyond in their commitment to expanding and improving. Pat Morgan was involved in the establishment of the Ponte Vedra Beach Chamber in 1996. *Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman LLP* is the recipient of our 2019-20 Pat Morgan Outstanding Member award!
See you in January 2021!!

Kari Zerrahn named Ambassador of the Year for Ponte Vedra Beach Division

Congratulations to Kari Zerrahn, Anderson Agency of NE Florida, for receiving the Ponte Vedra Beach Division Ambassador of the Year Award!

A long-time member and supporter of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and current vice-chair and leader of membership for the Ponte Vedra Beach group of ambassadors, Zerrahn is a consistent participant at Chamber events. She is the Key Contributor to the PVB Division.



Kari Zerrahn

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY

PVB Division Chamber at Noon

Date: Wednesday, Jan. 27

Time: 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

Location: TPC Clubhouse (outdoor setting)

Info: Jared Rice, vice president PGA TOUR and executive director of THE PLAYERS Championship, will give the members an update on the 2021 edition of THE PLAYERS Championship.

Sponsor: Fields Auto Group

For more information or to register, go to www.sjcchamber.com, or call the Ponte Vedra Beach Division office at (904) 285-2004.



Corinne Howard, marketing director of Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery, talks with guests during a Before Hours event for the SJC Chamber-PVB Division on Jan. 15.

Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery-Nocatee hosts Before Hours

Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery-Nocatee hosted a Before Hours event for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce-PVB Division on Jan. 15.

Chamber members and guests enjoyed a little breakfast, networking and conversation before heading to work. Attendees also received \$25 off skincare services.

Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery-Nocatee is a state-of-the-art facility located in The Town Plaza Offices at Nocatee.

THE PLAYERS Championship has 'something for everybody'

By Christine Rodenbaugh

Jared Rice, vice president PGA TOUR and executive director THE PLAYERS Championship, presented an update on the 2020 edition of THE PLAYERS Championship during the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division joint luncheon with the Jax Chamber Beaches Division on Jan. 22. The two Chamber groups combine meetings quarterly to network and share information. The January meeting was at the Casa Marina Hotel and Restaurant in Jacksonville Beach, sponsored by Fields Auto Group.

Rice said planning began 18 months ago for the 2020 tournament, scheduled March 12 to 15.

"Just 47 days to go," he said at the luncheon. There is a convenient count-down clock on the tournament website at theplayers.com.

Some of the changes for the 2019 tournament were a new trophy, the new Jack Nicklaus boardwalk entry, new brand-specific theme music and the controversial move from May to March.

"The numbers show the move to March was a success," Rice said.

Of the 200,000 Tuesday through Saturday tickets for the 2019 event, 67% were purchased outside the local five-county region. March 2019 was the all-time busi-



Photo by Christine Rodenbaugh

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division hosted a joint luncheon with the Jax Chamber Beaches Division on Jan. 22. Gracie Simendinger, BEAM; (from left) Karen Everett, SJC Chamber – PVB Division director; Tierney Anderson, Fields Auto Group; Gloria Don-gara, PVB Division board chair; Jared Rice, vice president PGA TOUR and executive director THE PLAYERS Championship; Jackie Smith, Jax Chamber Beaches Division board chair; Kathy Sutton, Jax Chamber Beaches Division; Isabelle Renault, SJC Chamber president and CEO.

est March for Jacksonville International Airport, and the area hotel occupancy rate averaged 88%. The goal is to be considered a "bucket list" destination.

Rice highlighted some of the 2020 tournament plans and improvements.

Fans can watch every shot live. The tournament has installed in-ground fiber optic cable around every hole and will double its videographer staff to stream every shot live. A new partnership with Discovery Networks will stream tour-

nament action to 86 foreign countries through subscription. Further, TPC on Jan. 22 announced a relationship with Facebook Watch.

There will be no printed tickets. All tickets will be mobile and all tickets will be day-specific.

"This is important from a service perspective," Rice said. "We need to know when you're coming."

PLAYERS continues on Page 15

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Photo by Susan Griffin

A ribbon-cutting celebration and Chamber After Hours event was held Jan. 29 at Aesthetix Plus Medical Spa.

Aesthetix Plus Medical Spa holds ribbon cutting, After Hours event

Aesthetix Plus Medical Spa held a ribbon-cutting celebration and hosted an After Hours event for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, PVB Division, on Jan. 29.

Attendees enjoyed the networking event and met other business owners in the area during the After Hours. Aesthetix Plus Medical Spa is located at 486 Town Plaza Ave., Suite 420, in Ponte Vedra.

Gloria Dongara (from left), Joy Andrews, Brad Bradley, Hunter Conrad and Andrew Holfinger attend a Before Hours event at Sentosa Beachwalk holds for Chamber members to network and enjoy breakfast Feb. 5.

Photo by Susan Griffin



Sentosa Beachwalk hosts Before Hours

Sentosa Beachwalk hosted a Before Hours event for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 5.

The event provided local business professionals the chance to network with each other and enjoy breakfast and conversation before work.

Sentosa Beachwalk is a new luxury apartment community located at 64 Sentosa Drive in St. Johns.

Chamber at Noon focuses on helping businesses gain more attention

Jay Owen of Design Extensions Marketing Agency was the keynote speaker at the St. Johns County Chamber Ponte Vedra Beach Division's Chamber at Noon luncheon on Feb. 12 at Ruth's Chris Steak House in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Owen's topic of discussion was "Using Story to Get Attention and Acquire Customers," which explored ways of getting attention for your business in today's marketplace and "explore how the power of story can be used to capture attention, focus it on



Photo by Susan Griffin

John Rutkowski, Michael Schmitz and Ali Walker

the customers' needs, and convert them into a customers."

The Chamber at Noon event was sponsored by Fields Auto Group.

EDC Breakfast keynote topic focuses on Nocatee

PARC Group Community Development Director Maurice "Mo" Rudolph discussed the impact the Nocatee community has had upon St. Johns County and the Northeast Florida region at a St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Council meeting Jan. 31.

Addressing a full ballroom at the Renaissance Resort at the World Golf Village, Rudolph shared his insights relating to the continued success of the Nocatee community and development throughout St. Johns County. The fourth best-selling community for the last decade, Nocatee has become a competitor in the national home market, Rudolph said. He contributed Nocatee's success to a strong collaboration between St. Johns County government, local builders, real estate agents, financial institutions and other related businesses.

Rudolph announced the PARC Group's plans to complete an extension of Pine Island Road connecting Nocatee

to U.S. 1 in the second quarter of 2021. A new K-8 school is also planned to be completed in the second quarter of 2021 and open for the 2021-2022 school year. He also discussed commercial development in the Nocatee community, including the new Park Place One at Nocatee office complex by VanTrust and a third office building on the west side of Nocatee Parkway.

Chamber President and CEO Isabelle Renault said, "Nocatee is changing at a rapid pace and it was time for the Chamber to provide an update to its members. Mo's presentation was informative and gave our members a good perspective on the continued growth in St. Johns County. His presentation was made available for review by our EDC members in the Member Information Center of our website under Resources."

To find out more about the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce or to become a member visit www.sjccchamber.com or call (904) 829-5681.



Photos by Susan Griffin

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce President Isabelle Renault (from left), PARC Group Community Development Director Maurice "Mo" Rudolph, Advanced Disposal VP of Marketing and Communications Mark Nighbor, owner of Ponte Wellness Center Dr. Erika Hamer and U.S. Rep. John Rutherford.

The Morgan Company hosts Chamber After Hours event



Photo by Susan Griffin

Representatives of The Morgan Company pose for a photo during a Chamber After Hours event.

The Morgan Company hosted an "After Hours" event for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 19.

Attendees networked among Chamber members and guests, as well as enjoyed beverages and snacks. The Morgan Company also held prize giveaways and had one if its top suppliers showcase top apparel and promo products.

Chamber holds After Hours at THE PLAYERS

More than 700 Northeast Florida business leaders attended After Hours at THE PLAYERS on March 5 at Stadium Village at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass.

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the JAX Chamber, hosted members and guests for an evening of complimentary refreshments and networking.

The Ponte Vedra Recorder was a proud sponsor of the event.



Sawgrass events booth



Alyson Cannady and Tracey Pearson

Photos by Susan Griffin



Kelly Bost and Nancy Russell

PLAYERS

Continued from 13

The tournament draws capacity crowds on peak days. Daily Stadium Passes range from \$25 to \$70. All active duty, military retirees, military reserve, National Guard and military spouses, along with dependents, can claim complimentary tickets online. College students can purchase a discounted Thursday through Sunday pass for \$55. Admission for kids 15 and younger is free when accompanied by a properly credentialed adult.

“The spirit of this [youth admission] program is we want kids and families to come out and enjoy the sport,” Rice said.

To better serve guests, day-specific parking passes are also required. Four or more in one vehicle can still park for free, but only with a day-specific pass.

THE PLAYERS Championship is more than a sporting event that draws worldwide attention to Northeast Florida. In 2019 alone, the tournament had a \$9.25 million charitable impact. Since the tournament’s inception, more than \$100 million has directly supported nonprofit organizations in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties.

Rice encourages locals to attend the 2020 event and see improvements made to the fan experience during the last eight years, including ease of entry, more diverse food and beverage offerings and revamped spectator venues.

“There’s something for everybody, whether you’re a sports fan, foodie or a family,” Rice said.

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Photo by Chris Gillyard

Representatives of Sawgrass Pet Resort and the SJC Chamber Of Commerce, Ponte Vedra Beach Division hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 6.

Dog boarding and daycare facility opens in Sawgrass

By Amber Lake

The Sawgrass Pet Resort hosted an open house to a packed crowd on March 6 and 7. The 5,000 square-foot facility provides dog daycare, boarding and training, among other services.

Kate Wagner, owner of the Sawgrass Pet Resort, said she was excited to see so many Ponte Vedra Beach residents come out to show support for her new business.

"It's so exciting because we are locals and we live here," Wagner said. "Everyone has been texting and telling me they are so happy we are here. It's been wild."

Wagner founded the Sawgrass Pet Resort after seeing a lack of available boarding facilities in the area. Due to her work running the Grayter Good Weimaraner Rescue, Wagner has established rela-

tions with the Humane Society, S.A.F.E Pet Rescue and Florida Urgent Rescue (F.U.R.).

Wagner said that what she is most excited for is the ability to host organizations like these for charity and community events.

"We have a seasoned staff of professionals in the industry," Wagner said. "I am going to focus on doing the altruistic stuff. Quarterly adoptions, football nights and Round Up for Rescues."

In addition to providing boarding, hosting events, daycare and training, the resort will offer dog reiki and Pawsitively Delectable locally made, all-natural dog treats. Currently the facility is accepting registration for dog boarding and daycare. Visit sawgrasspetresort.com to fill out an online registration form or for more information.



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber, PVB Division

Dr. Megan N. Scott Carlton of Palm Valley Eye Care & Surgeons speaks to attendees.

Palm Valley Eye Care & Surgeons hosts Before Hours

Palm Valley Eye Care & Surgeons hosted a Before Hours event for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce on March 4.

Attendees enjoyed a little breakfast

and conversation and networking before heading to work.

Palm Valley Eye Care & Surgeons provides comprehensive eye care and is located at 151 Sawgrass Corners Drive, Suite 208, in Ponte Vedra Beach.

PINSPIRATION HOLDS RIBBON CUTTING



Pinspiration owner Jen Schlechte (center) holds a ribbon-cutting ceremony with employees and Chamber members on June 6. Pinspiration is a DIY Craft Studio where people of all ages can come make the trendiest projects.

Photo provided by the SJC Chamber

Technology helping businesses to safely reopen

Flagler Health+ president and CEO offers COVID-19 update at EDC webinar

By Shaun Ryan

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of social distancing guidelines, St. Johns County businesses are looking for ways to protect employees, customers and work environments as they seek to reopen.

Thursday, June 11, local business leaders had an opportunity to learn how new technology is making that possible. Representatives of Healthfully, creators of a digital health platform, joined Flagler Health+ President and CEO Jason Barrett for a webinar on the local response to the coronavirus.

The webinar was presented by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and the county's Economic Development Council.

The Healthfully app can be used by



Jason Barrett

businesses, colleges, schools and other institutions, according to company CEO Paul Viskovich. It helps employees and students monitor symptoms and seek guidance. It also

provides employers and administrators with a dashboard that displays data related to areas of concern.

The goal is to offer a comprehensive back-to-work solution.

"We cover everything from daily self-screening to having to consult with a physician virtually, getting the lab order results and then communicating that back to the employer, the employee, the provider and then providing the tools for employers to manage exposure in their work environments," said Chief Operating Officer Mark Boudreau.

The dashboard ensures that employees are getting tested, pursuing care where

necessary and complying with workplace safety policies. In terms of managing exposure, employers can see whether employees may have come in contact with coworkers who have tested positive.

Boudreau said the company maintains "the highest privacy and security standards" and that the only health results shared with employers are those related to COVID-19.

Employers subscribe to the service, which can be billed to insurance. To learn more, go to healthfully.io.

"This is the continued innovation of medicine," said Barrett. Flagler Health+, as the county's largest private employer, has partnered with Healthfully.

Barrett offered an overview of the hospital's response to the pandemic. The hospital, which began planning for an outbreak in January, saw its first case March 10.

Though the hospital had 98 dedicated COVID-19 beds, only about 20 coronavirus patients have required hospitalization.

"We were not overrun," Barrett said.

In March and April, the hospital staffed a testing site at no cost to the community and saw more than 2,000 residents. It worked with St. Johns Care Connect to help more than 500 families get access to food and rental assistance and partnered with EPIC Behavioral Health to address a spike in mental health episodes.

Activity has bounced back in some areas. Inpatient treatment is at 92% of the pre-COVID-19 level. Outpatient heart procedures are at 96%, outpatient surgery is at 70%. Emergency care is at 61%, which is consistent with numbers nationally.

The hospital saw a financial impact of about \$15 million and has received federal funding to contend with that; much of it is a loan. Grant funding covered about 40% of lost revenue.

COVID-19 has not disrupted the hospital's growth strategy. It is on track to open a health village in Nocatee in November, and groundbreaking on a Durbin Park health and wellness campus in partnership with UF Health is expected to be held in September.

AT&T Florida regional director discusses 5G technology at Chamber at Noon event

Pivoting to a virtual platform, the Ponte Vedra Beach Division hosted a Chamber at Noon online June 17 and Kevin Craig, Regional Director, External and Legislative Affairs, AT&T Florida, explained how the advent of 5G technology will be changing our world.



Kevin Craig

5G is the fifth generation of wireless technology and will be faster and more robust than our current wireless technology. That means faster downloads and upload speeds. Latency, or the time it takes devices to communicate with wireless networks, will also drastically

decrease. When is it arriving? Where will it be available? Which 5G smartphone should I buy and when? Craig addressed these and other questions. The deployment of 5G will interact with autonomous vehicles, public safety and infrastructure, remote device control, health care, and the Internet of Things (IoT).

Sponsored by The Fields Group, the Chamber luncheons provide relevant information and networking opportunities. All attendees received a copy of Kevin's slides and a list of attendees.



BURN BOOT CAMP OPENS

Burn Boot Camp opened its doors recently at the Nocatee Town Center. The camp focuses on challenging workouts to transform the lives of its members. While classes are conducted in a group setting, the camp is complying with recommendations set by the CDC. Franchise partner Jessica Melquist cut the ribbon to open her camp. Burn Boot Camp worked with the St. Johns Chamber of Commerce to get business back on track during the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses with questions or needing help should contact the chamber at www.sjcchamber.com/business-continuity-recovery.

Photo by Lucia Miller, SJC Chamber

COVID-19 impacts hurricane preparations

By Shaun Ryan

Every year, county officials remind the public of the need to prepare for possible hurricanes. This year, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, some new elements have been added.

Kelly Wilson, the county's interim deputy director of emergency management, spoke on storm preparation Wednesday, July 15, during a virtual meeting of the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce. She led members on a tour of the go-to website for information vital to residents and businesses.

Perhaps the biggest changes this year have been brought about by the

ongoing need to remain safe from the coronavirus.

In addition to having an adequate supply of food and water for three to seven days, Wilson recommended residents have lots of soap, hand sanitizer and disposable masks.

Evacuation shelters will be taking extra precautions. They will have additional hand-sanitizing and cleaning and may ask people seeking shelter to wear a facial covering.

"We are taking steps regarding our sheltering to ensure social distancing," Wilson said. "In the past, we may have opened five or six shelters. Now, we have to cut capacity in half. We're going to have to open additional shelters so we have less people

in each shelter."

She pointed out that businesses can apply what they learned during the recent shutdown, when many employees had to work from home. Those same lessons can be adapted to help businesses function should a hurricane strike.

The greater portion of Wilson's presentation, however, was devoted to explaining features found on the county emergency management site.

Residents can find out if they are in an evacuation zone by clicking on the My Evacuation Zone tool. They can get information on the county's 15 shelters, including which ones are for people with special needs and which ones are pet-friendly.

Innovation, problem-solving focus of virtual Chamber event

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce PVB Division held a virtual Chamber at Noon event Aug. 12. Sara Frasca gave Chamber members a presentation about how to use fresh approaches to growth, creativity and transformation.

An innovation expert, Frasca honed her skills in senior leadership roles in both corporate America and the world of startups. Frasca now serves as an innovation consultant and helps leading organizations cultivate human imagination, build a culture of innovation and solve complex problems in creative ways. Frasca is the go-to resource for leaders seeking competitive advantage and sustainable success by harnessing innovation.

Frasca's talk at the Chamber at Noon was one of the monthly events sponsored by Fields Auto Group. Watch for news from the Chamber about the monthly events, usually held on the third Wednesday of the month.

New wellness center brings chiropractic care to Nocatee community

By Kassidy Lankford

For Dr. Ryan Heinz, chiropractic care is more than a few cracks to the back. When patients visit Heinz's new Nocatee practice, they receive far more than the five-minute, spine-snapping visit that many chiropractors offer. Nestled in the heart of the Nocatee Town Center, True Wellness Health Center is a haven for patients of all ages to receive a customized treatment plan for their health needs.

"I'm not selling my patients on 30-visit plan packages," said Heinz, explaining that chiropractic care is not one size fits all. "I come up with a treatment plan that is customized to the specific condition of the patient and we re-evaluate the progress at each visit."

Heinz said he likes to spend at least 30 minutes per visit (or even longer at the initial appointment) with patients to get a deeper feel for their health needs.

Heinz is a Jacksonville native who recently went back to his roots after living in New Jersey. As a college baseball player,



Dr. Ryan Heinz (center), with St. Johns County Chamber members, family and staff members, cuts the ribbon to celebrate the opening of True Wellness Health Center in the Nocatee Town Center on Thursday, Aug. 27.

Photo by Susan Griffin

Heinz suffered a stress fracture in his lower spine and was unable to find any relief. Medical professionals couldn't help him and he was at a loss, his quality of life and his sanity dwindling. It wasn't until he visited a chiropractor while he was at home on Christmas break that he finally found relief. It was then that Heinz decided to leave his baseball days in the rearview mirror and pursue a higher education in chiropractic care.

Heinz practiced in the New Jersey area

for a number of years, but when he felt it was time to open his own clinic he knew that returning to his roots was his best option. Around Thanksgiving 2019, Heinz packed his bags and began his journey to opening his chiropractic clinic in Nocatee.

"I love working with the Nocatee and Ponte Vedra community because everyone is so welcoming," Heinz said, noting New Jersey lacked the 'at-home' community feeling that is so prominently felt in the Ponte Vedra area. "I've gained a lot of busi-

ness through word-of-mouth, just because patients are sharing their experience here with the rest of the community."

Heinz shared his love for the Ponte Vedra area and said even the art on the walls of his clinic all comes from local Ponte Vedra and Jacksonville artists.

"Ponte Vedra has a very special, family feel," added Jennifer McLendon, office manager at True Wellness Health Center

For Heinz, providing chiropractic care to the Ponte Vedra community is not just a job — it is a passion. Helping patients improve their quality of life and reduce their pain is something that brings Heinz great joy.

Although True Wellness Health Center has only been open since June 2020, its business is already growing. It celebrated its opening with a ribbon cutting Aug. 27, and the team is excited to continue its journey providing care to the Ponte Vedra community.

"The most rewarding part of my job is watching a patient come in with pain and seeing their smile come back by the time they leave," Heinz said.

Northrop Grumman VP addresses Economic Development Council

By Shaun Ryan

After Randy Bradley took the helm at the local Northrop Grumman facility in January, he quickly found himself working to keep things running despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As it turned out, there were no layoffs at the St. Augustine Aircraft Integration Center of Excellence where Bradley is vice president and site leader.

“I would say our company did a great job with getting me prepared,” he said in a presentation Friday, Aug. 28, during a virtual meeting of the Economic Development Council hosted by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

Indeed, before Bradley moved into his new position he had time to develop under his predecessor and came to the job with an extensive background, two things that no doubt contributed to his effectiveness.

The former U.S. Marine earned his degree at Southern Illinois University and joined Northrop Aircraft in 1990, four years before it merged with Grumman Aerospace. After a five-year stint with the Honeywell Corp., he returned to Northrop Grumman and worked in various capacities leading up to his current role.

He has been involved with a number of aircraft and spacecraft projects, including environmental control

systems for the International Space Station. In 2013, he came to St. Augustine where he has been involved in work on the Navy’s E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and other projects.

“If you look at the movie ‘Top Gun’ you will see a lot of Grumman products,” Bradley said. “A lot of those products were modified here in St. Augustine.”

The E-2D is the main focus at the local facility, which is one of the largest employers in the county. It’s a big job. The aircraft has tens of thousands of parts. In fact, during the process of assembling one, workers drill more than a million holes.

“The E2 is probably one of the longest running programs that the Navy has,” Bradley said. “It started in the ‘50s and here we are in 2020 still talking about E-2Ds. That goes to show the evolution and the growth of that product and the need for it.”

Another project the local plant has been working on is modifying aircraft to add air-refueling, which extends flying time.

“We’re very excited about that,” said Bradley.

This spring, the facility will start building conformal fuel tanks for the F-18, which extend the endurance of the aircraft.

Bradley said Northrop Grumman has a great relationship with the community and is involved with STEM



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
Northrop Grumman Vice President Randy Bradley (center) spoke during a virtual Economic Development Council meeting hosted by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce on Aug. 28. With Bradley are SJC Chamber President and CEO Isabelle Renault (left) and Mike Koppenhafer, chairman of the Chamber’s Economic Development Council.

classes at local high schools.

On a more personal note, he enjoys living in the Nation’s Oldest City.

“My wife and I really make this a home now,” he said. “We’ve gotten to love this community. We talk about it all the time. This is where we want to settle down — in St. Augustine.”

St. Johns County Chamber PVB Division holds Before Hours event at TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse

It was Chamber’s 1st face-to-face meeting since start of pandemic

By Cassidy Lankford

On Sept. 9, the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division held its long-awaited Chamber Before Hours meeting at the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse. The event was originally scheduled to take place prior to the onset of COVID-19 and was rescheduled twice during the summer before finally taking place in September.

The event was held at the luxurious 77,000-square-foot clubhouse at TPC Sawgrass. Guests gathered behind the clubhouse to mingle and enjoy breakfast with one another before breaking off into groups to tour the clubhouse facility.

Although the pandemic has brought many social events to a halt, TPC Sawgrass is doing everything it can to allow the Ponte Vedra Beach community to carry on with their lives — safely and responsibly. After implementing rigorous safety procedures, TPC Sawgrass has reopened its facilities for events.

“We’ve been 100% open for golf throughout the pandemic, but we have



Guests mingle at the St. Johns County Chamber PVB Division Before Hours event on Sept. 9 at TPC Sawgrass. It was the first in-person event for the Chamber since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

been hosting events again since the middle of summer and we are seeing even more events come up now,” said Peter verDorn, sales manager at TPC Sawgrass. “We have put several rigid safety measures into place to keep our guests safe.”

VerDorn said the team at TPC Sawgrass is adhering to CDC social distancing and

capacity guidelines, both during events and in the restaurant.

In addition to adhering to CDC guidelines, TPC Sawgrass has set up numerous sanitization stations throughout its facility, has implemented thorough cleaning procedures, installed plexiglass barriers at all of its food-serving stations and more.

Photos by Susan Griffin

“This meeting was a way for local business owners to gather together to get a glimpse into the world of hospitality and show them that it’s still possible to host events in a safe environment,” verDorn said.

He also said that through hard work and careful planning, TPC Sawgrass has seen one of the busiest and most successful Augusts it has ever had in its restaurant.

Despite the pandemic changing the way events are carried out, TPC Sawgrass has done everything possible to keep its guests happy and remain open for business. In addition to being open for golf and private events, its restaurant is also in operation (with adherence to CDC guidelines) and open to the public.

VerDorn said it is a common misconception the restaurant is private, but the dining space is actually open to the public seven days a week and has plenty of space inside for guests to spread out, along with an abundance of outdoor seating.

Although life as we know it has changed, TPC Sawgrass has found ways to continue serving the St. Johns County community and the team was thrilled to have the opportunity to open its doors to the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce PVB Division to reunite with one another, face-to-face, after many months.

Speakers address ways to heighten virtual presence at Chamber at Noon meeting

By Shaun Ryan

Last year, maintaining an effective virtual presence was a staple for most businesses. This year, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting financial impact, it has become even more important.

On Wednesday, Sept. 16, local businesses had an opportunity to learn more about how to best connect with customers online. Janice and Donald Jones of CycleHere Media gave a presentation on the topic during the Chamber at Noon virtual meeting of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division.

Founded in 2012 and based in St. Augustine, CycleHere Media provides video marketing, consulting and production services throughout Florida. It specializes in boosting public awareness, customer engagement and reputation value for government agencies, destinations and private businesses.

Janice Jones named three main components of a business's "virtual front door": the website, social platforms and email.

"Before COVID, we were all there – we were working on these; we were building them – that was part of just business these days, being out there virtually," said Donald Jones. "But it's obviously so much more important at this point to fine-tune that, focus it on what your message is."

Janice Jones said the public should always find something current on websites and social media. And when speaking to a client or customer via online conferencing, the speaker should always look directly into the camera — not at the screen showing the other party's image.

"Eye contact," said Donald Jones. "We think about that when we are in person."

When we're in a Chamber event or a meeting or we're sitting down face-to-face on a one-on-one client meeting, you're looking in their eye. But with computers and all the screens, it's natural for us to ... look a little bit off."

Janice Jones also suggested keeping distractions out of the background, putting some light on the speaker's face and using expressions while communicating.

She also emphasized thinking of the website as more than just an electronic flier.

"If you can share your process within your website, then you're taking that customer, that potential client, and you're walking them in the door," she said.

Likewise, social media is more than a commercial aired to a passive audience. There's a reason it's called "social."

One taco shop, for instance, intersperses humor and family news with photos of tacos and recipes. People are drawn to the site and hopefully get the urge to eat some tacos.

One tool the Joneses didn't want their audience to take for granted was email. Janice Jones cited a survey that found 86% of professionals prefer to use email when communicating for business purposes.

"So, I'm asking you: Could you be more personable through your emails?" she said.

The Joneses use a service called BombBomb, which allows them to send a video in an email, a different way to communicate visually.

"These are all ways that you can add value," said Janice Jones. "That's what we're hoping to do, to inspire you to add a little value in the ways and the means that you can from your desktop or your home or wherever you're working from right now."

The St. Johns County Chamber Ponte Vedra Beach Division held a Before Hours event to honor veterans Nov. 3 at Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa. Mike Linnington, CEO of the Wounded Warriors Project, was the featured speaker.

Photo by Susan Griffin



Before Hours event salutes veterans

The St. Johns County Chamber Ponte Vedra Beach Division held a Before Hours: Salute to Veterans event Tuesday, Nov. 3, at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa.

The event celebrated the men and women who served the country and featured special guest Mike Linnington, CEO of the Wounded Warrior Project. Linnington,

a retired U.S. Army lieutenant general, has 35 years of military experience. He oversees day-to-day operations and works with the executive team to set and implement WWP's strategic vision. He is responsible for ensuring WWP's free, direct programs and services continue to have the greatest possible impact on the warriors, caregivers and families it serves.



Ponte Vedra Wellness Center staff members Marcelo Sacedo (from left), owner Dr. Erika Hamer, Lisa Tromsdorff and Janine Parker celebrated the center's 16th anniversary with a fall festival and wellness expo. Photo by Susan Griffin

Ponte Vedra Wellness Center celebrates 16 years with fall festival, wellness expo

By Holly Tishfield

Dr. Erika Hamer opened the Ponte Vedra Wellness Center with a vision of creating a family practice, a place where patients felt happy and welcome every time they walked through the doors.

Sixteen years later, and Hamer has created just that. At the epicenter of health and well-being in the Ponte Vedra community, Hamer's practice has cultivated quite a name for itself.

"Ponte Vedra Beach is a very good community," Hamer said. "I still have so many patients that I have had for the last 10-to-15 years, but I get a lot of new people too. It's a mix."

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, staff at the Ponte Vedra Wellness Center have done everything in their power to keep a smile on patients' faces, even surprising a long-time guest with cupcakes and balloons on their birthday.

"There are so many things today that can make your world tough, but I want you to come in and just feel really good when you walk through the door," Hamer said.

When first opening her practice, Hamer wanted a patient's mental, physical and emotional well-being to be at the forefront of her teachings.

"Not just 'what I can do for you,'" she said, "but more 'how can I teach you the whole concept?'"

It may be common nowadays to see doctor's offices and yoga studios slap the word "wellness" onto their names, but when Hamer came up with her practice, it was genuine. To communicate that, the staff wanted their patients to be present and be well.

To adhere with new CDC guidelines, the Ponte Vedra Wellness Center spaces out its client appointments and practices safe social distancing, but Hamer said patients like to schedule appointments around one another, to chat and catch up after isolating the last seven-to-eight months.

"I love the warm environment I have been able to build with my practice," Hamer said, noting that even though the pandemic has made people lonelier than usually, she wanted her office staff to make patients smile.

At the celebration Thursday, Nov. 5, local guests and members from the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce came together to commemorate Hamer's successful impact on the Ponte Vedra community.

Attendees got their fill of charcuterie cups and Halloween-themed desserts, as well as games and chair massages.

Chamber holds in-person outdoor networking event

The St. Johns County Chamber held a "Business on the Move" in-person outdoor networking event Nov. 10.

The event, sponsored by Florida Power & Light, gave attendees the opportunity to create new business contacts, promote their business and build relationships while enjoying an authentic experience with a lakefront view at Ponte Vedra Beaches awarded "Best Happy Hour" location, Pusser's Bar & Grille.

Business on the Move is a special



Photo provided by the SJC Chamber
Trudy Toche, Lori Adams and Carol Everitt

networking opportunity offered to highlight local chamber businesses and bring members together. The event was a collaboration between the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and Pusser's Bar & Grille.

Ponte Vedra Auto Show attracts 200 cars, thousands of fans

By Don Coble

Jake Weisman almost seemed overwhelmed by the number of cars — and spectators — at the Ponte Vedra Car Show last Sunday.

He was part of a judging crew that had nearly 200 cars to examine. With more than 25 different categories to judge, the task was daunting.

“I’m not surprised, I’m enthused,” Weisman said. “No matter what’s going on. Car enthusiasts always love their cars.”

Thousands of fans attended the show near Spray Park at the Nocatee Event Field. While live music, vendor booths and food were popular, the real stars were the cars.

Weisman’s father, Larry, started the car show 18 years ago. The elder Weisman died in 2019 and the show’s biggest prize,

Best in Show, is named in his honor.

Andre BesMarais’ 1966 Ford GT 40 won the award — and \$500. The car also was selected for the Spirit in Racing award.

Other winners included: Mark Becker’s 1942 Chrysler Royal Business Coupe for Best Pre-War Vintage; Gary Corvino’s 1982 Mazda RX-7 for Asia Excellence Award; Dale Hickman’s 1976 Ford Bronco for Hagerty “People’s Choice Award,” William Cooper’s 1970 Iso Rivolta LeLe for Best Exotic; Dale Hickman’s 1976 Ford Bronco for Best Off Road; Lamar Fontaine’s 1971 Datsun 28-Z for Z Car 50th Anniversary Award; Kurt Hall’s 1998 Toyota Pickup for Best Custom Paint Job; and Matthew Bonin’s 1965 VW Bus for Best Custom Interior.

The show is run by Art ‘n Motion, a St. Augustine business that displays and sells rare cars.



Photo by Craig O’Neal

Andre BesMarais’ 1966 Ford GT 40 is awarded Best in Show in Honor of Larry Weisman during the Ponte Vedra Auto Show on Sunday, Nov. 15, at Nocatee Event Field.

Members of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division join First Coast Mortgage Funding Vice President Aaron Bacus (center, left) and President Jason Kindler (center, right) in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Nov. 19, in front of their office in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Photo by Susan Griffin



First Coast Mortgage Funding draws on long experience of founders

By Shaun Ryan

Two highly experienced mortgage professionals have joined forces to found a new business in Nocatee. Aaron Bacus is vice president and Jason Kindler is president of First Coast Mortgage Funding, located at 360 Town Plaza Ave. Suite 340.

Though the business has only been open since February and just had its ribbon-cutting ceremony this month, it has been performing well. Bacus said it has been averaging about 50 loans per month.

“It’s been spectacular,” he said.

That success may be due in part to each man’s extensive experience. Each has originated mortgages for thousands of clients, Kindler since 2001 and Bacus since 1997.

The two had long known each other, working together at a firm in Jacksonville and have built very good reputations in the industry. Finally, they decided to strike out on their own and form their own company focused on residential mortgages.

First Coast Mortgage Funding is a mortgage broker, which is different than a lender.

“We can survey lots of different lenders and choose what lender best fits our clients’ needs,” Bacus said.

This gives clients a choice, made possible in part by changing technology. In fact, the business’ website allows clients to submit a loan application or pre-qualify for a home loan. They may also evaluate their options by using the website’s interactive calculators.

Another thing First Coast Mortgage Funding has going for it is its focus on local properties and local partners.

“Our bread and butter, obviously, is North Florida and the Nocatee area,” said Bacus.

The business has Realtor partners throughout the area and also works with David Weekley Homes.

Of course, the increase in people moving into Northeast Florida has helped First Coast Mortgage Funding to find rapid success.

“The growth has been spectacular,” Bacus said. “Obviously, rates being so low doesn’t hurt, but people are just flocking here. It’s unbelievable. We’re really excited to be a part of it.”

Kindler and Bacus are also deeply involved in the community. They support the schools as well as the YMCA.

Go to firstcoastmortgagefunding.com for more information.

New dental office in Nocatee offers relaxing, spa-like atmosphere

By Holly Tishfield

Most people dread a trip to the dentist’s office. Between the stress of handling insurance coverage, booking an appointment and possibly needing work done, it is no wonder we do not normally associate the word “relaxing” with a dentist visit — but, for a new office in Nocatee, relaxing is exactly what they strive to be.

Dr. Pauline Le, a Jacksonville resident with a passion for health and wellness, opened her new dentist office/spa named Le Dental Spa at the end of September.

Le has a notable presence on social media, where she shares videos and photos of the procedures she offers in her office, as well as tips and tricks on the best ways to take care of your pearly whites. She enjoys having such a vast platform to help educate people on how dental health can impact more than just your mouth.

“It is not your typical dentist’s office. We have definitely honed in on making it feel more like a spa,” Le said. “We want to make our patients feel relaxed.”

Focusing on natural lighting and general coziness, Le and her team worked together to ensure that the office is a safe space for patients. There are TV’s mounted to the ceilings, candles lit around the room, the option of pillows, blankets and even a selection of beer and wines.

“I went into dentistry because I love building relationships with people,” Le said. “It is not just a one-time visit. I am going to see you for the rest of your life, if I am doing something right.”

For opening her first solo practice, Le knew that the Jacksonville/Nocatee



Photo provided by Pauline Le

Dr. Pauline Le recently opened Le Dental Spa in Nocatee.

area would be the perfect location to draw in like-minded patients.

“In Nocatee, people really care about their health and well-being,” Le said. “They like to take care of themselves, and at this point in my career, I like to be surrounded by people who think the same way I do.”

At the opening celebration back in September, Le’s office hosted guests in the parking lot of the office building, where it catered food and offered drinks. Guests were also lucky enough to receive an early tour of the office and meet staff members.

“It has been super rewarding treating people the way I want to treat them, the way they deserve to be treated, without any restrictions from insurance companies,” said Le.

Le Dental Spa is accepting new patients every day. Guests can choose from Le’s extensive list of fillers and botox treatments or visit the spa for cleanings, whitenings and other dental procedures. You can learn more about the Spa on its website at www.ledentalspa.com or find it on Instagram at @ledentalspa.

2021 legislative session subject for EDC Breakfast

By Shaun Ryan

Two of Florida's leading political journalists gave St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce members a look inside the coming legislative session Friday, Dec. 4.

Peter Schosch, publisher of the Florida Politics blog, and Matt Dixon, bureau chief for Politico Florida, spoke during the Economic Development Council Breakfast virtual broadcast.

Schosch is a political consultant to numerous elected officials, as well as some of the state's largest companies. Dixon has covered Florida politics and policy. Prior to that, he covered local government for The Villages Daily Sun and the Panama City News-Herald.

Both men agreed that there hasn't been a lot of activity on the part of the Legislature as it prepares for the 2021 session.

"It's been eerily quiet," said Schosch. "I think that is indicative of a session where we're not going to see a lot of movement on things."

Dixon suggested that state lawmakers could be occupied with any COVID-related federal funding issues originating in the Congress.

"The flow of federal money to the state and how that looks is going to be hugely important for setting the stage for the legislative session," he said.

With regards to member projects – those opportunities for legislators to bring funding back home for specific projects – Dixon had a suggestion.

"If you have something that you want to do as a member project, you would be smart to try to figure out a way to tie it to COVID," he said. "Those are probably the only things the lawmakers are going to listen to."

One area that could gain attention is anti-protest legislation proposed by Gov. Ron DeSantis. The idea was inspired by protests across the nation last summer, but there isn't a related bill in either the House or Senate yet.

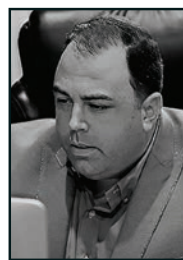
"It's going to be a politically contentious bill that is going to get a lot of protests, a lot of attention, so that's a politically dicey situation," predicted Dixon.

One area where both Schosch and Dixon expected action is COVID liability protections.

Dixon said the Senate is looking at immunity for health care facilities and nursing homes that



Matt Dixon



Peter Schosch

would make the legal threshold for proving liability in a civil case related to COVID "gross negligence" – a high benchmark to hit.

"A deal is going to be reached," he predicted. "Something is going to be passed. The governor is going to sign something. There's too much pressure not to. But ultimately, what that looks like is going to be very interesting."

Schosch predicted that there will be attempts to extend legal liability protections to a growing number of businesses once people see the bill.

Concerning the passage of Amendment 2, which raises the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in a series of steps and then ties it to inflation, Schosch speculated that the Legislature may attempt to undermine it.

"I do think there will be an attempt, probably out of the House, to manipulate Amendment 2 or to implement it in a way that puts it off, delays it, makes it go through another vote or something like that," he said.

Chamber honors volunteer leaders

Awards recognize business leaders who make their mark

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce announced the 2020 Leadership Awards will be presented virtually. Pre COVID-19, the Chamber held a signature event in the fall to recognize and thank the volunteer leaders for their donation of time and expertise.

The Chamber began its virtual presentation at the Dec. 4 virtual Economic Development Breakfast. Mark Nighbor, the Chamber's 2019-2020 Chairman of the Board, presented the Chamber Member of the Year to Northrop Grumman and First Coast Technical College for their Outstanding Collaboration and Efforts in Workforce Development. He also awarded Joy Andrews, deputy county administrator, St. Johns County, with the Chairman's Award for her outstanding leadership and support of St. Johns County businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mike Koppenhafer, chair, executive committee, Economic Development Council, 2019-2020, presented the Fred Schroeder Economic Development Council Member of the Year award to Firehouse Subs for Outstanding Corporate Stewardship to St. Johns County, the First Coast and the nation through COVID-19.

All 2020 award recipients will be recognized on the Chamber's social media platforms. The other winners are: Small Business of the Year Award, St. Augustine Distillery; President's Award: Skip Marsh, Flagler Health +; Public Policy Member of the Year: Michael Scine, Scine CPA Advisors; Chamber Ambassador of the Year/ Gene Morse Award, David Permenter, N2 Publishing; and Ponte Vedra Beach Division Ambassador of the Year/Grace Hayes Award: Kari Zerrahn, Anderson Agency of NE Florida. Also honored for their significant contributions: Past Chairman of the Board, Mark Nighbor and Past Chairman, executive committee, Economic Development Council, Mike Koppenhafer.



Photos by Susan Griffin
Trudy Toche wins the Crushing It Award.



Tatum Theodore accepts the Jeff Jenkins Community Service Award.



Kari Zerrahn was presented the Key Contributor Award.



Shannon Peabody accepts the Pat Morgan Outstanding Member Award.

Chamber PVB Division holds annual Jingle and Mingle event

By Holly Tishfield

With Christmas and the holiday season just around the corner, the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. John's County Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual Jingle and Mingle Holiday Party last week at a stunning model home by Arthur Rutenberg Homes.

The event was not only a great chance to enjoy a classic holiday mixer, but to socialize with other members of the Chamber and business owners from the area.

"All chamber events have two purposes," said Karen Everett, director of the PVB Division. "One is for people to enjoy themselves, and two is to have a meaningful business networking opportunity."

Several local companies/business owners sponsored the holiday party, including Arthur Rutenberg Homes, Synovus Mortgage Corp., Berry & Co Real Estate, Iberia Bank, The Ponte Vedra Recorder, Keith E. Johnson, CPA, PA and FastSigns of St. Augustine.

Attendees enjoyed hors d'oeuvres from Biscotti's and desserts from Ruth's Chris Steakhouse while mingling and listening to live music from performer Samuel Sanders.

Upon entrance attendees were also given the opportunity to enter a raffle for a number of incredible prizes, such as a gift certificate to Spavia Day Spa, brunch for two at TPC Clubhouse, two tickets for the Jaguars vs. Bears football game and much more.

Everett said that events like the Jingle

and Mingle holiday party would not be possible without the help of passionate members and local business owners.

"We look for sponsorships and donations to help cover the expenses to put these events on," she said. "The chamber is very careful with its resources and tries to make membership investment stretch as far as it can."

Last week's holiday party was not only a way to celebrate the holiday season, but also to honor some of the Chamber's extraordinary members.

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Quilter makes, donates hundreds of masks

By Shaun Ryan

Originally ran Aug. 6, 2020

Like many people, Marilyn Elston found herself reluctant to go out to public places after hearing about the spread of COVID-19 in Florida. Even before Gov. Ron DeSantis issued his stay-at-home order, Elston was taking no chances of contracting the virus.

Sitting at home with too much time on her hands, she yearned to do something to help during this time of crisis. As it turned out, Elston's skill as a quilter proved to be essential to healthcare providers as they sought to safeguard the public.

Early in March, a friend familiar with Elston's quilting asked if she could make masks for caregivers at an area retirement community. At the time, the now-ubiquitous paper masks were in short supply, and caregivers were forced to keep reusing them.

"I had so much fabric," Elston said, "and I just got started."

She soon learned that she was not alone in this effort. Two other members of her quilt circle at Ponte Vedra United Methodist Church also began to make masks for healthcare facilities and retirement communities.

But it wasn't until she began to donate masks to Baptist Hospital in Jacksonville



Megan Lee of the activities department at The Palms at Ponte Vedra and resident Anne Ruvane wear masks made by Marilyn Elston.

Photo provided by The Palms at Ponte Vedra

that she saw the true scale of like-minded people doing the same. She went to the drop-off site, where a woman was accepting the newly made masks from countless members of the sewing and quilting com-

munities.

"There's got to be hundreds out there doing it," Elston said.

She attributed this spirit of giving to the quality of people who share her hobby.

"Quilting is a labor of love," she said. "It's not something that you get immediate satisfaction from, because it takes a while to make a quilt. You put your heart and soul in it."

She called those who are drawn to quilting "very good-hearted" and "very giving."

Elston herself has made about 600 masks. She uses quilter's cotton, which has a tighter weave than many other fabrics and is thus recommended by the CDC. She also lines her masks with an inner layer to help improve their effectiveness.

She can make about five or six of the colorful masks per hour and likens her work to an assembly line.

In addition to Baptist Hospital, Elston said she has donated her masks to Mayo Clinic and several retirement communities and adult-care facilities.

Though Elston currently lives just over the Duval County line, she said her heart is in Ponte Vedra, where she lived from 1990 to 2007. She's got family and friends in Ponte Vedra and spends a lot of time in the community.

Helping others has also helped Elston.

"It's kept me so busy, and it's kept my mind off of watching the news, hearing about all the sadness," she said. "I just tried to think positive and try and do something to help."

Newsweek names Nocatee Florida's 'Best Place to Live'

Originally ran Sept. 10, 2020

Nocatee is the best place to live in Florida, according to new rankings published in Newsweek magazine.

The list ranks the best place to live in each of the 50 states based on several factors, including cost of living, educational attainment, housing and public schools. The article highlights Nocatee's "carefully designed neighborhoods featuring everything from parks and recreation to shopping, restaurants and more."

The coastal community's location puts it "at the doorstep of golf courses, beaches and the airports of Jacksonville," reported Newsweek.

"Our vision for Nocatee was to create a community that was unmatched in Northeast Florida," said Rick Ray, president and CEO of The PARC Group, Nocatee's master developer. "We're honored to see Nocatee ranked as the best place to live in Florida and to see it consistently recognized at the national level."

Nocatee, which repeatedly ranks as a

top 10 best-selling master-planned community in the United States, continues to grow with plans for new amenities, neighborhoods, restaurants and businesses, including First Watch Café, Greenwise Market and a new Baptist medical center.

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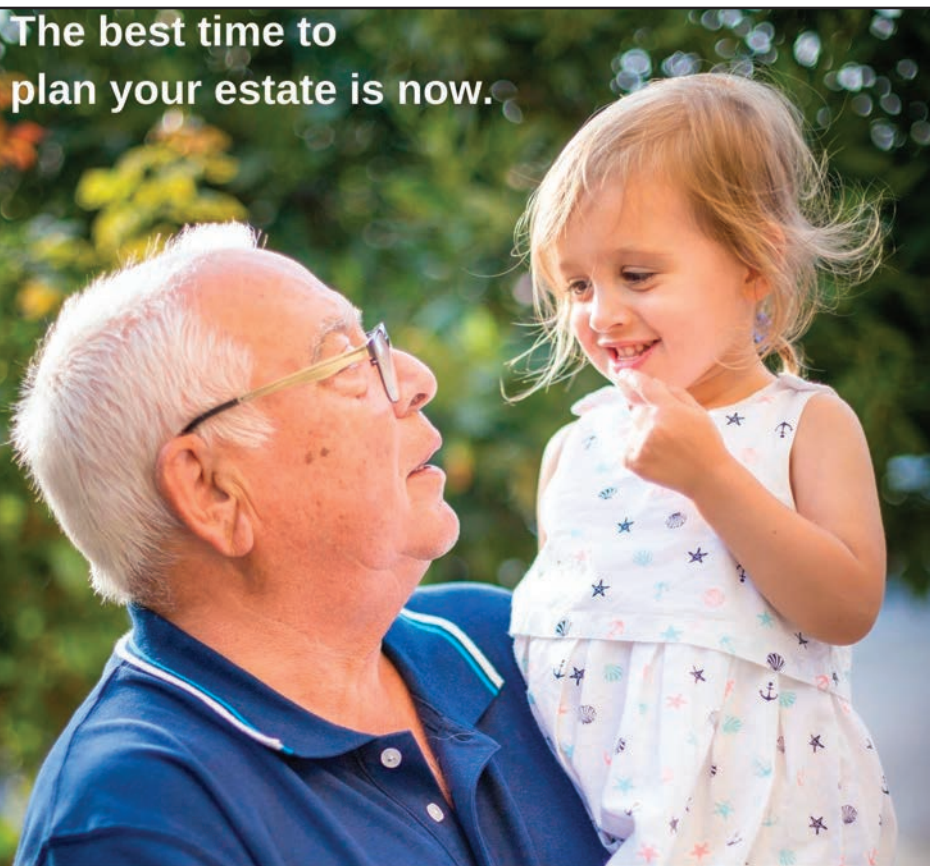
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Judge John: Election protection attorney and poll watcher



John Miller
Guest Columnist

Why would you give up a full day of productivity on your job to volunteer for one of these tasks? What exactly is it you do?

For multiple election cycles, Judge John has volunteered to support the election process by acting in the role of an election protection attorney, which doubles as a poll watcher.

An election protection attorney is an attorney at law who undergoes special training to learn about the law relating to elections. That attorney is then authorized by a campaign or political party and certified by the supervisor of elections to be permitted to be in voting polls on election day, or at early voting.

We all took an oath to uphold every vote, for every properly registered citizen, regardless of party. Initially, many volunteers are placed in a single poll and work the same hours as does the precinct manager and staff to watch to be sure that the opening takes place on time and is carried out properly, and that the same thing occurs in reverse at the end of the day,

with the votes properly counted.

After gaining some experience, one may be asked to serve in a rover role, or even become a precinct captain. This is pretty cool because throughout the day one is authorized to visit multiple polling locations. It is very interesting to see how very different one precinct may be from another. Judge John has observed locations that are as quiet as a tomb, while others have a loud party atmosphere just outside of the poll perimeter, while the inside features a low hum of activity.

An important thing to observe is that within the poll perimeter and in the precinct, the election protection attorney and poll watcher may not speak to anyone other than the precinct manager. Judge John has regularly observed individuals of all parties, including both major parties, working together to assist properly registered citizens to cast their vote. Every effort is made that a regular vote is cast, and when that fails, an effort is made to allow a provisional ballot to be cast.

While there have certainly been efforts at voter intimidation and effort to squeeze the vote, Judge John has been fortunate to serve in areas where this has rarely, if ever,

JUDGE JOHN continues on **Page 26**

Janet E. Johnson, P.A.

Criminal Defense Attorney

Janet Johnson is committed to aggressively defending people accused in all criminal matters in state and federal court. In practice since 1994, she is a member of the Florida Bar, The Federal Bar, Colorado Bar, as well as the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. She has been on the faculty of FACDL "Blood, Breath & Tears" annual DUI seminar. Ms. Johnson has been awarded the AV preeminent rating™ from Martindale-Hubbell® and was named a fellow to the prestigious Litigation Counsel of America™, as well as one of the ten best criminal defense attorneys nationally for client satisfaction by the American Institute of Criminal Law Attorneys. She also appears as a legal commentator on CNN and HLN.

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PVHS wrestles with sudden loss of head coach, star QB

By Don Coble

Originally ran Oct. 29, 2020

A season that started with such promise at Ponte Vedra High took a sudden and unexpected turn with the sudden resignation of head football coach Jeff DiSandro and the loss of all-star quarter-

back Jacobi Myers.

DiSandro confirmed his departure from the Sharks' sideline, saying: "Sorry, I had to step away not too long ago with some personal things."

Ponte Vedra Athletics Director Eric Frank repeated DiSandro's reason for leaving the team, adding, "It goes with the year 2020."

Defensive coordinator Brad Kessel will serve as the interim coach for the rest of the season, Frank said.

Myers, who missed all but eight plays of the 2019 season with a torn Achilles tendon, was injured two weeks ago against Bartram Trail. Sophomore Joseph Wisner will be the starter when the Sharks

play at 4-2 St. Augustine this Friday. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

Myers threw for 927 yards and 11 touchdowns in five games before being injured. If and when the senior can return hasn't been determined.

OCTOBER continues on Page 27

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Judge John

Continued from 24

occurred. I would note that in multiple instances in the 2020 election, I was able to visit with friends who were serving the party other than mine. Courtesy was always observed. Civilized behavior is what we need to get our country back on track.

In closing, I want to share that one of the most moving parts of the experience is just before the poll opens in the morning having the precinct manager issue an oath to all of the precinct workers. This is a beautiful thing to observe and is the key to democracy at its most basic level. Long live our republic.

John Miller is the Special Magistrate for the City of Neptune Beach. His law firm, Rock Solid Law, focuses on Estate Planning, Real Estate Closings and Title, and representing entrepreneurial small Business Owners. (904) 241-1113

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Rutherford, Larizza, Stevenson win

St. Johns County voters support Republican candidates, incumbents

By Shaun Ryan

Originally ran Nov. 5, 2020

As election results poured in Tuesday night, voters still didn't know who the president would be for the next four years. But local results were all determined early on, and incumbent Republicans enjoyed large margins of victory.

In the race for U.S. representative, incumbent Republican John H. Rutherford received 61% of the votes across District 4 and easily prevailed over Democrat Donna Deegan. In St. Johns County, the margin was larger; Rutherford received 72% of the votes.

Republican R.J. Larizza was reelected as state attorney for the 7th Judicial Circuit by a large margin over challenger Don Dempsey, who ran as a nonparty candidate.

Larizza, the incumbent, received 65% of the votes over the four-county circuit. In St. Johns County, he did better, receiving 70% of the votes cast here.

Cyndi Stevenson, the incumbent state representative for District 17, was reelected by a large margin over challenger Dave Rogers, a Democrat. Republican Stevenson received 97,885 votes (68%) to Rogers' 46,665 (32%).

In the state senator District 7 race, incumbent Republican Travis J. Hutson received 62% of the votes to Heather Hunter's 38%. Again, Hutson did better in St. Johns County with 66%.

Rob Hardwick, the Republican candidate for St. Johns County sheriff, easily won in a landslide against write-in challenger Scott C. Boutwell. Hardwick received 139,768 votes (96%) to Boutwell's 6,457 (4%).

In the race for St. Johns County commissioner for District 1, Republican Christian Whitehurst received 110,251 votes (66%) to Democrat Joe McAnarney's 57,910 (34%).

In District 5, incumbent Republican County Commissioner Henry Dean received 117,622 (73%) to challenger Merrill Paul Roland's 42,816 (27%). Roland ran as a nonparty candidate.

In the race for circuit judge for the 7th Circuit, the results were much closer, with Joan Anthony receiving 57% of the votes to Dan Hilbert's 43%. The contest was even closer in St. Johns County, with Anthony receiving 53% of the vote to Hilbert's 47%.

Anastasia Mosquito Control District seat 1 went to Catherine Brandhorst, who received 54,869 votes (40%). Challenger Tim Burton got 49,900 votes (37%) and Jan Cardia got 31,822 votes (23%).

Gina LeBlanc won the race for Anastasia Mosquito Control District seat 3, receiving 55,683 votes (41%). Challenger Howard G. McGaffney got 46,040 votes (34%) and Felicia Proia got 34,188 votes (25%).

Gayle Gardner was the winner in the race for Anastasia Mosquito Control District seat 5, receiving 64,269 votes (47.5%).

Challenger Gary Howell got 52,160 votes (38.5%), and Ed Slavin got 18,886 votes (14%).

Robert E. Olson received 43,245 votes (33%) to win the race for St. Augustine-St. Johns County Airport Authority group 4. Samuel Nicholas Barresi got 35,500 votes (27%), Michael Henne got 32,777 votes (25%) and Austin Lee Lantaigne got 19,278 votes (15%).

In the race for St. Augustine-St. Johns County Airport Authority group 5, Reba J. Ludlow won with 62,381 votes (47%). Jerome Dion got 36,541 votes (28%), and Mark Alan Frazier got 32,500 votes (25%).

Nicole Crosby won the race for St. Johns Soil and Water Conservation District group 3, receiving 73,814 votes (54%). John "Bucky" Sykes received 62,770 votes (45%).

Charles C. Owen won the race for St. Johns Soil and Water Conservation District group 4, receiving 71,031 votes (53%). Brenda A. Stratton received 62,901 votes (47%).

October

Continued from 26

"That's sports," Frank said. "You see it at the professional level all the way down to high schools. When someone goes out, somebody else has to step up."

Without DiSandro and Myers, Ponte Vedra lost 14-0 last week at Live Oak Suwannee. After starting with four consecutive victories, the Sharks now have lost two of their last three to be 4-2.

"With COVID and everything else, nothing has been normal this year," Frank said. "That's life right now. Things happen. But these kids have adapted and will succeed."

Both Ponte Vedra and Nease, which

travels to Oakleaf on Friday, have earned a spot in the playoffs. Since the brackets were created by a blind draw, the regular season is little more than dress rehearsal.

"You just want to be 1-0 after the first week of the playoffs," Frank said.

Columbia and Jacksonville Englewood open the Class 6A playoffs on Nov. 6 with the winner hosting Ponte Vedra of Nov. 13, while Nease will play at Oakleaf on Nov. 13 in the Class 8A tournament with the winner moving on to a road game at Oakleaf on Nov. 20.

Nease (1-5) lost 49-16 at St. Augustine last week. The Panthers have three regular season games remaining.

Counting a Nov. 6 home game against Creekside, Ponte Vedra has two regular season games remaining.

DiSandro came to Ponte Vedra ahead of the 2019 season after working at Bishop Kenny. He was 11-4 overall, including a trip to the 1-6A playoffs a year ago.

"No one else on the staff left," Frank

said. "We have every bit of confidence in our football team. We'll get into a coaching search, but right now, the players are the only thing that matters. We're only focused on them."

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PVHS tops rival Nease to remain unbeaten

By Jim Moyes

Originally ran Dec. 17, 2020

Ponte Vedra kept its early season winning streak alive following a 48-41 victory over arch-rival Nease on Friday, Dec. 11. After defeating Fleming Island (59-46) and St. Augustine St. Joseph (29-21) earlier in the week, the win over Nease marked the second week in a row in which the Sharks won all three of their scheduled games.

With a suffocating defense, and a team loaded with depth, the Sharks head to Creekside High on Thursday, Dec. 17, in an attempt to keep their streak intact. Although Junior Luke Pirris is the only Shark to average in double figures (15.4 ppg.), second-year head coach Kevin Whirity has seen seven of his players score in double figures at one time or another during the early part of the season.

While Pirris once again led Shark scorers with 16 points against Nease, the Sharks got a real spark from a pair of seniors who stepped up to rescue their mates. Jack Polian netted a career-high 14 points, while Rory Mayer added a season-high 10 tallies.

When asked if he was surprised at the play he got from Polian and Mayer, Whirity replied, “surprised, no ... Impressed, Yes.



Photo by Dylan Lane

Ponte Vedra senior Jack Polian drives to the basket against Nease during last Friday's game.

Mayer is simply a ‘gamer’ who scored from all depths on the court, distributed, rebounded (nine total), and locked down some great offensive weapons. Polian was our “in the Arena” award recipient for his play and he now has a timeless memory by hitting four three pointers against his archrival.”

Although many of the Shark shooters had an off night, certainly their defense

didn't take the day off. Trailing 30-27 heading into the final quarter, the Sharks held the Panthers to two field goals over the final eight minutes, while piling up 21 points to pull away from their rival.

“Defense is the backbone of our program and our guys take tremendous pride in working to perfect their craft,” Whirity said following the contest.

Both teams were tentative in the game's first four minutes of play with the only a single point displayed on the Nease scoreboard — a free throw from the Sharks' Luke Pirris. Shortly thereafter, the Panthers' Logan Ryan swished a pair of long 3-pointers, and his teammate Kevin Fifield added another as Nease enjoyed its biggest lead of the night at 9-1.

The Sharks battled all the way back to tie the score at 15 midway through the second quarter when Polian netted the second of his four 3-point shots. It was Polian again who delivered the biggest shots of the game by drilling a pair of triples in the final quarter to make a tied game at 34, now a six-point 40-34 Sharks advantage, a lead they would not surrender.

“The Panthers are extremely well-coached, disciplined and compel their opponents to step up to the challenge. I couldn't be more proud of how our guys responded,” Whirity said.

Earlier last week, Nease defeated Oakleaf 50-47 with junior Matt Guzie leading a balanced offensive attack with 10 points. After a road game this past Tuesday at Palm Coast, coach Josh Bailen's team will travel to St. Augustine Friday, Dec. 18, to play the Yellowjackets.

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- Like Second Testament
- Archipelago unit
- Fool's Day mo.
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- Russian mountain range
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- Spiral-horned African antelope
- Aggressive remark
- 10 percent to charity, e.g.
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- Burnt _____
- “Nobody _____ It Better”
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- Evening party
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- Dianne Feinstein, abbr.
- Windmill blade
- “... _____ he drove out of sight”
- *It's battered and fried
- *Cheese and potato dumplings
- Loudspeaker noise
- Sheep sound
- Frank Wright's middle name
- Atones, archaic
- Days of _____
- Containing fat
- Cut the crop
- College degrees
- Stainless material

DOWN

- Catchall abbr.
- Gung-ho about
- DEA agent
- Jimmy Hoffa's organization
- Position while landing
- A few
- *Vietnamese soup
- Accumulate
- Done in loads
- Opposing prefix
- Unit on a list
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- In the thick of
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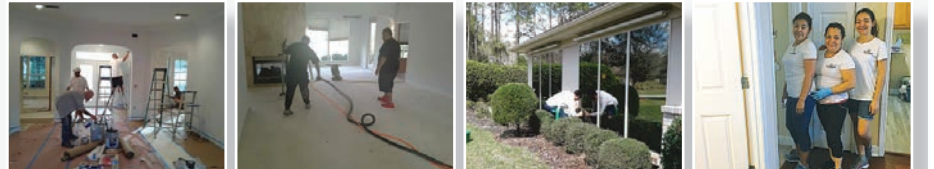
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