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PONTE VEDRA



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June 24, 2021

Volume 51, No. 86

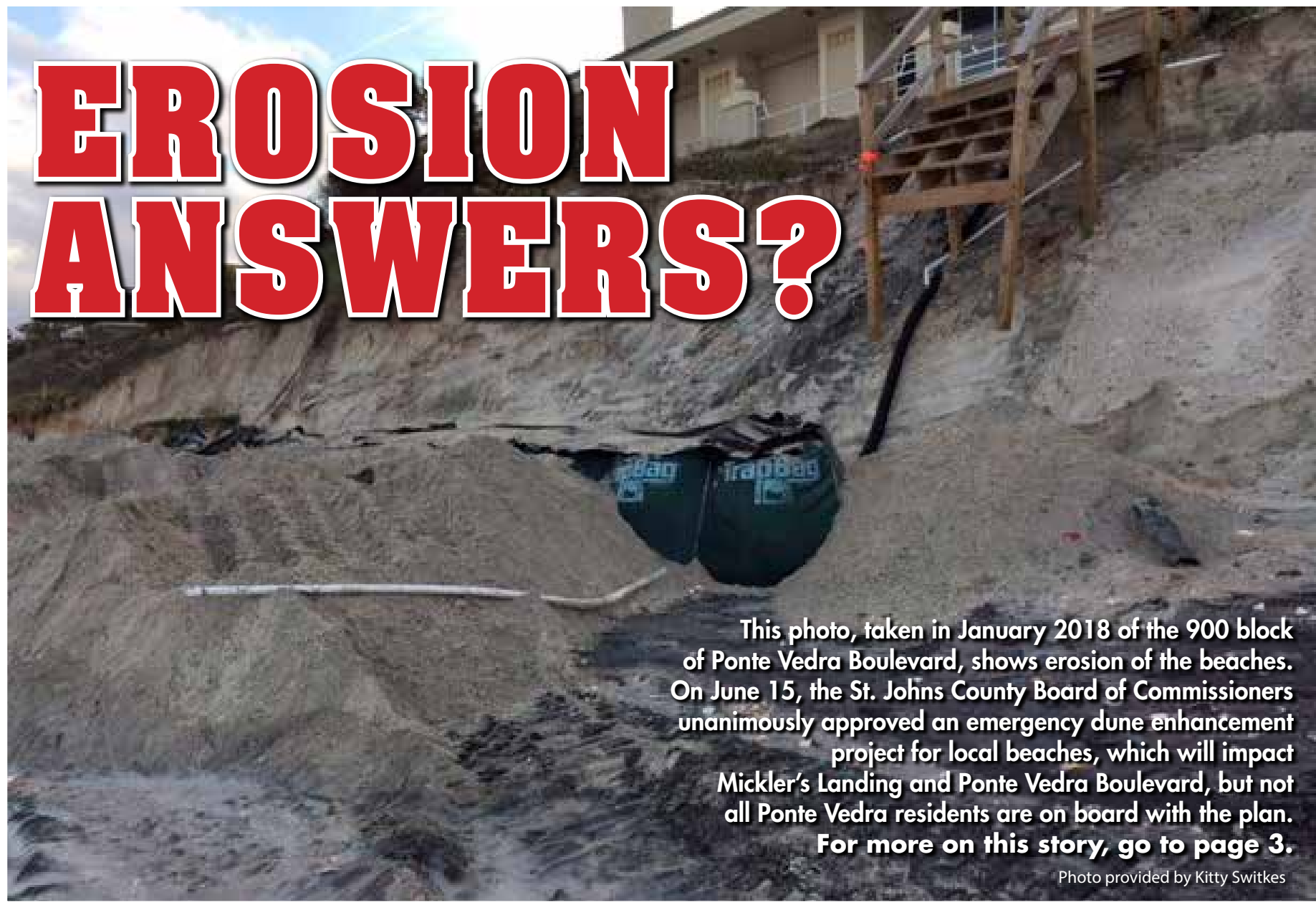
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Recorder

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EROSION ANSWERS?



This photo, taken in January 2018 of the 900 block of Ponte Vedra Boulevard, shows erosion of the beaches. On June 15, the St. Johns County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved an emergency dune enhancement project for local beaches, which will impact Mickler's Landing and Ponte Vedra Boulevard, but not all Ponte Vedra residents are on board with the plan. For more on this story, go to page 3.

Photo provided by Kitty Switkes



INSIDE: CHECK IT OUT!

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



Connections

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First Coast Register

INSIDE



READY FOR IMMEDIATE DELIVERY

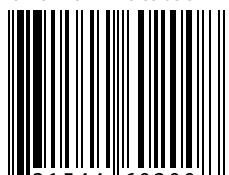


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Send us your news

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.

Visit our website at www.pontevedrarecorder.com



Find the Recorder on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ThePVRecorder

ADOPT A PET

RABBIT OF THE WEEK

Hello my name is Lightening. I am an 8-month-old male American grey rabbit. I am very sweet and guess what? I am housetrained! That's right, I use a litter box and am very clean about my area. I love fresh vegetables and regular rabbit food, too. I enjoy being petted and held even though, at first, I'm a little shy. I am a great first pet as I require very little care. #59108
Note: The Pet Center does not have set fees for the adoption of rabbits, a suitable donation is preferred.



DOG OF THE WEEK



Hi! My name is Nosey. I am an 8-month-old male blood-hound-mix. I am very energetic and playful as I am only a puppy. I will require some obedience training and someone willing to be patient with me as I learn and grow. I am slowly getting used to being on a leash, but I am learning. Come visit me at the Pet Center today! # 59001

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.**

Voting is now open for Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra contest

The Ponte Vedra Recorder is holding its third annual Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra contest, covering ZIP codes 32082 and 32081.

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

Votes can be made on the website at pontevedrarecorder.com/bestof2021.

Voting will take place until July 26, during which each person can vote once per day in as many categories as he or she wants. The nominees who receive the most votes will be named 2021 Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra. Nominations and voting are completely free and open to the public.

The Best Of platform on The Recorder's

website will feature lists of nominees in an easy-to-use format.

Winners will receive a free framed certificate and a Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra window cling.

Each winner will also be listed in our Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra special section and on the winner's website.

Winners will be notified by Recorder staff after votes are counted.

Nominees can participate in advertising packages that promote their entry by expanding their listing to feature additional details on the business. For more information or to find out how to get your nominated business or product involved in promotions that will be going on throughout the contest cycle, email susan@opcfla.com or call (904) 686-3938.

Vote for your favorite business, service, person, restaurant or product now at www.pontevedrarecorder.com/bestof2021.



PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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Solutions correspond to last week's puzzles.

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Emergency berm restoration project approved for local beaches

Mickler's Landing OK'd for access to Ponte Vedra portion

By Shaun Ryan

Access to Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park will be restricted in the fall so that berms along Ponte Vedra Beach can be fortified against erosion.

But beachgoers should not expect to see a repeat of the kind of closure that prompted a public outcry two years ago.

On June 15, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved the Federal Emergency Management Agency dune enhancement project, which is expected to put the first sand on the beach sometime in September. The exact date hasn't been determined yet, as permitting is being sought from the state Department of Environmental Protection, the state Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The project will restore sand berms along 8.9 miles of the beach and is part of a larger project encompassing 11.5 miles of dunes between the Duval County line and an area in the southern part of Crescent Beach. The Ponte Vedra Beach segment is expected to be complete 76 working days after sand is first placed.

A total of 380,000 cubic yards of sand is expected to be delivered to the Ponte Vedra section during that time.

Participation is optional for the total 788 oceanfront properties located within the entire range of the project, but not everyone



Photo by Shaun Ryan

Robert Quinney, St. Johns County deputy director of disaster recovery, speaks to residents at a town hall meeting Tuesday, June 22, at the Ponte Vedra Branch Library. The meeting addressed the upcoming emergency berm project.

in Ponte Vedra has agreed to participate. At last count, an average of 79% of the eligible property owners in the Ponte Vedra portion have granted easements.

Homeowners in the project area may opt in up to two weeks prior to the work reaching their properties; work will be carried out in segments of about 2,000 feet. Conversely, homeowners can rescind easements up to July 1.

According to Ryan Purvis, vice president of engineering for the contractor, Continental Heavy Civil Corp., participants having a 100-foot lot will receive about \$40,000 to \$50,000 of "FEMA-funded sand."

The project has been a source of concern among several residents of Ponte Vedra Boulevard because it will involve trucking large amounts of sand along

the narrow road. Because there are no sidewalks along the affected length of the boulevard and a high presence of cyclists and pedestrians, residents have expressed concerns for safety.

In addition, some have pointed out that the trucks would mean noise, disruption in traffic and a potential for structural damage.

Initially, the plan called for 300-500 truckloads of sand to travel the boulevard daily between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. five days a week. The trucks would haul the sand from their staging area in Cornerstone Park behind the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall south along State Road A1A to Mickler Road and then north to a lot at 965 Ponte Vedra Boulevard, where they would cross over to the beach.

At a public meeting June 14 in the Cultural Center room of Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church, residents asked project officials why they hadn't considered accessing the beach from Mickler's Landing instead of hauling the sand up the boulevard.

Purvis indicated that the project could not be completed on schedule if only Mickler's Landing was used. Still, officials left the option open as a supplemental access point.

The final decision was made June 15 by the County Commission, which was no doubt still smarting from a decision in 2019 that allowed Mickler's Landing to be closed to the public so that geotextile tubes could be installed on 13 privately owned lots.

Commissioner Henry Dean distinguished between the two projects, saying there would be no use for the parking lot if there was no beach.

"If there's ever a case, ever a reason that we should consider using Mickler's Landing parking lot as additional access for this project, for beach restoration, it's now," said Dean, who had joined Commissioner Jeremiah Blocker at the June 14 public meeting and heard the safety concerns expressed by residents, as well as their questions about use of the lot.

But the commission had learned a hard lesson from the 2019 controversy. The board agreed to allow use of Mickler's, but only on weekdays. A portion of the park and adjoining beach walkway are to remain open on weekends.

According to the contractor, use of Mickler's will reduce truck traffic along Ponte Vedra Boulevard by 40-50%.

The project is not expected to impact the portion of Ponte Vedra Boulevard included in the JEA water project, as it is north of the access point at No. 965. All trucks servicing that stretch of beach will have already crossed over to the sand before they would get to the JEA work area.

One of the main factors in setting up the project's logistics was a mandate by FEMA that all work would have to be complete by Dec. 31. Prior to this, the county had until June 30, 2022, to qualify for FEMA

BERM continues on Page 5

ST. AUGUSTINE'S GREAT JULY 4TH TRADITION
Fireworks Over the Matanzas
SUNDAY, JULY 4
9:30 PM

St. Augustine's Historic Downtown Bayfront
 The All Star Orchestra in the Plaza at 6:00 p.m.

A stunning fireworks display with a stirring soundtrack. See it from the downtown Bayfront, the Bridge of Lions, Villano Beach and more!

www.CityStAug.com/Fireworks
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Fireworks over the Matanzas is produced by the City of St. Augustine with funding support from the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council. Visit www.FloridaHistoricCoast.com for St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and the Beaches visitor information.

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Rutherford, Lighthouse executive director testify before subcommittee

Tout Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area Act

U.S. Rep. John Rutherford and Kathy Fleming, executive director of the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum, recently testified before a House subcommittee in support of the Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area Act, which was reintroduced by Rutherford earlier this year.

They spoke at a meeting of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands.

The legislation would designate portions of Nassau, Duval, St. Johns and Flagler counties as a National Heritage Area (NHA). NHAs, which are designated by Congress and protected by the National Park Service, recognize important natural, cultural and historic landscapes and help celebrate the nation's diverse heritage.

"I am optimistic the committee will soon take a vote on HR 2107 and send it to the House floor for final consideration," said Rutherford. "Thank you to



John Rutherford



Kathy Fleming

Kathy Fleming and the entire team at the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Maritime Museum, who have been working tirelessly for years to establish a National Heritage Area on the First Coast."

"The Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area Act would protect a nationally significant and special place in the American landscape," said Fleming. "It is special not only for its great diversity of peoples sustained by connection to the land and to the sea, but also for its unique ability to last as a community for centuries despite many obstacles. Like America itself, our Northeast Florida community is stronger because of our diversity. We are deeply grateful to representatives Rutherford, Lawson and Waltz

for introducing this bill. Their support will allow us to tell the whole story of the beginning of our nation and how we have persevered and prospered together."

The Nation's Oldest Port region of Northeast Florida has been home to a mosaic of cultures and maritime heritage, including indigenous Floridians, African slaves and European and American explorers and settlers.

Through public-private partnerships, NHAs provide federal support for historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation and heritage tourism.

They also provide significant positive impact on the local economies in which they reside. A 2012 study by the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and the National Park Service showed NHAs contribute nearly \$13 billion annually to the national economy and support 148,000 jobs.

There are 55 designated National Heritage Areas in 34 states across the country that support a diversity of conservation, recreation, education and preservation activities.

BRIEFS

L'Atrium Circle sidewalk project public meeting is July 1

St. Johns County is hosting a public meeting regarding the upcoming L'Atrium Circle sidewalk project from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 1, at the L'Atrium Community Pool Gazebo, 2639 L'Atrium Circle South. The meeting will provide an overview of the upcoming sidewalk project and allow participants the opportunity to ask staff questions. For more information, call (904) 209-0142.

PV Women's Civic Alliance accepting applications for \$10,000 grant

The Ponte Vedra Women's Civic Alliance is accepting applications through June 30 for a \$10,000 grant.

The grant will be awarded to a 501(c)3 in St. John's County or an organization that serves the beaches area, including Ponte Vedra Beach, Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach and Atlantic Beach.

Access the PVWCA website to request an application and review the guidelines at www.pvwca.com.

Big Brothers Big Sisters looking for mentors

Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Johns County is in need of positive role models to be matched one-on-one with a child, either in a school setting or out in the community. This opportunity provides children in the community with friendship and personal support which can help facilitate success in their future.

BBBS offers both site and community-based mentoring programs for children ("Littles") who are between 6-12 years old. Volunteers either visit their Littles at school or participate in activities out in the community. By simply changing their perspective of what the world can offer, volunteers can start changing a young person's life by just playing a board game or having lunch together.

Call (904) 829-9986 or go to the website at bbbsstjohns.org to complete a short online inquiry form. A Big Brothers Big Sisters staff member will contact you to schedule an orientation.

New veterans' clinic opens in St. Augustine

The new St. Augustine Veterans Affairs Clinic of the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System opened Tuesday, June 22. It has been renamed the Leo C. Chase Jr. VA Clinic.

Private First-Class Leo C. Chase Jr. was the first man from St. Johns County to be killed during the Vietnam War.

The new facility is located at 100 Deerfield Preserve Blvd., St. Augustine. It replaces the Southpark Boulevard location.

The new state-of-the-art clinic is 16,595 square feet and has ample parking. The latest design standards for PACT (Patient Aligned Care Teams) and VA Community

Based Clinics will allow for efficiency, functionality and future growth and capacity. Existing services will remain to include primary care, mental health, phlebotomy, podiatry, physical therapy and virtual care.

"The modern facility is larger than our previous locations in St. John's County and will provide the needed resources for us to continue to care for our nation's heroes," said Health System Director Thomas Wisnieski.

Veterans interested in enrolling for VA health care who are not currently established patients at the clinic can call

904-823-2960 between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and ask for eligibility and enrollment.

The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System is one of the nation's leading VA healthcare systems, employing more than 5,800 medical professionals and support staff dedicated to providing high quality care to veterans residing throughout North Florida and South Georgia. The organization operates 14 facilities to include two medical centers located in Gainesville and Lake City, a domiciliary and clinics located throughout a 50-county area.

Beaches Energy Services renews collaboration to protect sea turtles

Sea turtle nesting season is in full swing, and Beaches Energy Services, the City of Jacksonville Beach and the Beaches Sea Turtle Patrol launched their 2021 public awareness campaign on World Sea Turtle Day, June 16, to ensure that as many turtles as possible succeed.

This is the second year for the collaboration. Called #CleanDarkFlat, the hashtag is an easy way to remember and share on social media what people can do to help the threatened species.

In order for sea turtles to successfully build nests, hatch and return to the ocean, their nesting grounds — the beaches — should be free of litter (including trash, chairs, umbrellas and other debris); free of artificial light; and free of holes or sandcastles that trap turtles.

"Beaches Energy is proud to continue our efforts to



Photo provided by metrocreativeconnection.com

protect local sea turtles by supporting the Beaches Sea Turtle Patrol through this annual awareness campaign and efforts such as making streetlamps go dark during nesting season," said Allen Putnam, director of Beaches

Energy Services. "We hope by getting the word out about the simple steps we can all take to protect the sea turtles, it will encourage our neighbors and visitors alike to keep our beaches #CleanDarkFlat."

Several Jacksonville Beach coffee shops are helping to spread the word with limited edition #CleanDarkFlat coffee mugs. With a \$10 donation at participating coffee shops or the Beaches Energy Services office at City Hall, people can support the nonprofit Beaches Sea Turtle Patrol and receive a collectible mug that features a graphic design incorporating a colorful sea turtle. Stickers are also available at each coffee shop.

For a complete list of participating coffee shops and more details about #CleanDarkFlat, go to www.BeachesEnergy.com/CleanDarkFlat.

Boys & Girls Clubs, Flagler Health+ announce partnership

Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida and Flagler Health+ have announced a partnership to connect more than 2,400 club youth and families across Duval, St. Johns and Alachua counties to available services and resources that address the social determinants of health in a coordinated way — establishing Care Connect+, a social health organization led by Flagler Health+, as the club’s exclusive social health partner.

“We are so excited to extend our partnership with Flagler Health+ and establish Care Connect+ as our exclusive social-health partner,” said Paul Martinez, president and CEO at Boys and Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida. “Thanks to Flagler Health+, we’re able to continue creating a safe place for the families we serve, as well as start to break down the social barriers and health disparities by providing

immediate access to resources and services in more of a holistic approach.”

As part of the extended partnership, Care Connect+ will provide club families with single-point access to community resource navigation and case management services — including establishing a medical home for primary care services, prescription assistance, dental services, rental and utility payment assistance, transportation, access to local food banks and homeless prevention services.

Research shows that up to 60% of a person’s overall health is determined by social and environmental factors, known as the social determinants of health.

Additionally, club members and families will have access to youth behavioral resources through BRAVE (Be Resilient and Voice Emotions).

The program, which was first launched

in St. Johns County with support from THE PLAYERS, encourages area youth to get in touch with their mental health early on, be open to receiving help and access the care they need right away.

BRAVE includes resources such as a 24-hour crisis text line, care coordination and navigation services, virtual mental health counseling and more.

“I am thrilled that our partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida will help Care Connect+ bring vital mental health and social services to even more children and their families, particularly those who may not otherwise have access,” said Jason Barrett, president and CEO of Care Connect+. “The Boys & Girls Clubs organization has a tremendous legacy of success and I look forward to seeing this collaboration have an even bigger impact on improving the health and

well-being of the families they serve.”

The partnership will support Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida’s mission by launching Care Connect+ services across its 37 clubs. Twelve clubs will serve as access points, connecting members and families to services via Care Connect+ kiosks located in the club lobbies.

In addition, two of those clubs will serve as access points for expanded health services, connecting members and families to the delivery of clinical services through Flagler Health+ Telehealth Kiosks.

Twelve Boys & Girls Club community sites in Duval, St. Johns and Alachua counties will serve as access points with Care Connect+ kiosks located in the clubs.

Two Boys & Girls Club community sites in Duval and St. Johns counties will offer expanded health care services through telehealth kiosks.

NEWCOMERS OF THE BEACHES WELCOMES LARGE GROUP OF MEMBERS



Photo provided by Bonnie Evans

The outside pavilion at Marsh Landing Country Club was the perfect place on a windy May 14 for the Newcomers of The Beaches to celebrate its first in-person luncheon and game-day event since March 2020. The club introduced a large class of new members who joined during the pandemic. The club also unanimously voted in the new president, Penny Dollar, and her board of directors for 2021-22 term. Recent new female residents in the Beaches area or women who have had a life-changing event are welcome to join the active social group. For more information, go to www.newcomersofthebeaches.com.

Leadership Jacksonville honors 6 ‘Unsung COVID Leaders’ at celebration

Leadership Jacksonville hosted Celebration 2021 to honor six “unsung COVID leaders” who have had a positive impact in Northeast Florida during the pandemic.

The virtual event was held Tuesday, May 25, on the Leadership Jacksonville YouTube Channel.



Lexi Magnano of the SmartArt Club at Ponte Vedra High School was one of the six “Unsung COVID Leaders” honored May 25.

Unsung COVID leaders demonstrate action taken for the greater good, which is a value of Leadership Jacksonville. The mission of Leadership Jacksonville is to educate, connect and inspire diverse leaders to build and strengthen their communities.

Celebration 2021 benefits Youth Leadership Jacksonville and celebrates the contributions of six community leaders.

Honorees were Jim Culbert, Duval County Public Schools; Jon Insetta, Black Sheep Restaurant Group; Lexi Magnano, SmartArt Club at Ponte Vedra High School; Chandra Manning, Jacksonville Speech & Hearing Center; Alberto H. Romero, UF Health Department of Emergency and Leofric Thomas Jr., The Straight & Narrow Project, Inc.

Berm

Continued from 3

funds, which were earmarked for beach restoration following damage by Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

But in February, FEMA notified the county that it would also provide funding for a Hurricane Irma project if the county combined it with the Matthew project and met the new deadline.

Because of the truncated timeline and the fact that work will have to begin before hurricane or sea turtle hatching seasons are over, the county has appealed for a return to the previous deadline. It has not yet

heard back from FEMA.

In view of that, the contractor plans to watch for nests and mark them. If they cannot be worked around, they will be moved by a group of experts.

Even in the midst of debate over when, where and how the project should be implemented, most everyone agreed something needed to be done.

Matthew caused severe damage to the beach. In St. Johns County, there was an estimated \$100 million in structural damage to about 265 homes, and the storm eroded an average of 30 feet of beach. Irma made the situation worse when it swept through the following year.

Erosion from the storms endangered

coastal properties and also threatened S.R. A1A.

Purvis addressed the urgency of the project during a second town hall meeting, held Tuesday, June 22, at the Ponte Vedra Branch of the St. Johns County Library. He said FEMA considered it an “emergency project.”

Emphasizing that he was speaking for himself and not the county, Purvis said St. Johns County was “one Matthew or one Irma away from major destruction if this project doesn’t go through.”

Though the berm project will help protect the beach from erosion, it will not be a full 50-year renourishment project. That is being considered by the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers, which was allocated \$500,000 in January to conduct a study to determine whether such a renourishment would be feasible. That study is expected to take three years.

The cost of the FEMA project is an estimated \$34 million, with \$23 million of that for the Ponte Vedra portion alone. FEMA will fund 90% of the project cost, with the county and state matching 5% each.

Included in the cost is approximately \$200,000 to \$260,000 to repair damages to Mickler’s Landing parking lot after the FEMA project is complete.

For further information on the project, go to sjcfl.us/coastalprojects/FEMADunes.aspx or email coastalprojects@sjcfl.us.

Steve and Shaun Lourie are the proprietors of Coastal Wine Market & Tasting Room, located in the Nocatee Town Center. Together, they have created a haven where local residents can gather for a good time, relaxed conversation and personal connection.

Steve & Shaun Lourie

As told to Shaun Ryan

Where do you come from originally, and how did you meet?

Shaun: I'm from Northern New Jersey, and Steve is originally from Boston. We met at The University of Florida in Gainesville from where we each graduated. After going our separate ways after college and pursuing our respective careers, we reconnected several years later, both of us realizing that we still retained the same values and ideals that first brought us together.

Tell us about your experience and what prompted you to bring Coastal Wine to Ponte Vedra?

Shaun: I have over 20 years' experience as a marketing and strategic planning leader in the pharmaceutical client services industry, and Steve has more than 27 years of experience in the restaurant and hospitality industry.

Steve: We relocated in 2013 to Nocatee in Ponte Vedra, Florida, and really got a feel of the area. In 2014, we realized that there was a void for a casual gathering place for adults. With that (and being newly married with a baby on the way) we decided to combine our respective career experience and our passion for wine and conversation into creating our first small business endeavor, Coastal Wine Market & tasting room.

Tell us about your personal journeys of discovery. How did you develop an interest in wines?

Steve: Upon visiting the wineries and tasting rooms in Los Olivos, California, I was inspired by the ambiance each winery created to ensure their guests felt comfortable and at home. And we wanted to bring that kind of elevated charm to the area. Upon returning to the East Coast, I studied to become a Sommelier through the Court of Master Sommeliers. In addition to the ambiance, we also wanted to introduce a chef-curated food and wine experience. I have always been intrigued by the complimentary relationships between food and beverage pairing and the importance of providing the right aesthetics to enhance the overall tasting experience.

Shaun: We are always intrigued with discovering the personalities behind each wine and the great social connections inspired by the wines we enjoy. The winemakers that have visited our shop and have interacted with our guests are a testament to that!

Do you have a favorite wine?

Steve: We have many favorites, all for a variety of reasons. At the moment, we're exploring The Crane Assembly, a 1.2-acre vineyard located in the heart of Napa Valley owned by Dave Phinney of Orin Swift notoriety, a summer-friendly Italian white blend, Soave, by Pieropan in addition to Pierre Moncuit Blanc de Blanc Champagne.

Shaun: One of my favorites right now is a single vineyard Chardonnay, Saralee Vineyard from the Russian River Valley, created by La Crema.

Tell us about what Coastal Wine offers in terms of its menu, its beverages and any special events or gatherings.

Shaun: We offer Happy Hour 4-6 p.m. Tuesday through Thursdays. Plus, enjoy our authentic Maine Lobster Roll (inspired by Steve's Boston roots), delicious Flatbreads, Gourmet Cheese & Charcuterie Boards, Chef-Inspired Tapas, Wines by the Glass or Bottle, and an array of Craft beer, Wine



Steve and Shaun Lourie,
Coastal Wine Proprietors.
Contributed photo

Club Memberships and Private and Special Events. One of our favorite ticketed events is our Meet the Winemaker Series where we host well-known vintners for unforgettable evenings of food and wine pairings. Our recent pairing was with Bryan Page, vintner of Revolver Wine Co & Page Cellars, Napa Valley, California.

Steve: We have also recently launched some really fun evenings where we focus on some different food and wine offerings. Take Flight Tuesdays pairs three small chef-curated bites with three Sommelier-selected wines to convey the symbiotic relationship between food and wine. Dive-In Wednesdays features a fresh-from-the-sea, chef-curated dish for one night only and Super Sip Saturdays takes our regular by the glass pours up higher to truly kick off your Saturday!

I recall that you have had some charitable fundraisers. Tell us about them and your interest in supporting these causes.

Shaun: We were humbled during the pandemic to be able to donate \$10,000 to the American Red Cross Northeast Chapter through a portion of all of our sales to help with much needed healthcare assistance. Additionally, we have sponsored fund raisers for Type 1 Diabetes Foundation and Alzheimer's Association to name a few along with numerous local charitable fundraisers for worthy causes.

What changes have you made to your location and vision since first opening your doors in 2016?

Steve: We were very fortunate to have been blessed with the opportunity to expand our current space into the adjacent space next door allowing for us to double our footprint. Construction commenced in May of 2020 and we opened our doors in February 2021. We implemented full table service, expanded our kitchen in order to accommodate more creativity and efficiency and doubled the size of our patio amongst other enhancements. On June 17th, we celebrated our fifth anniversary quietly but gratefully.

Shaun: And we can't talk about our expansion without mentioning Gladstone, our inverted grapevine chandelier art installation. She is a one-of-a-kind commissioned sculpture adorned with 2,000 Cut to Perfection Austrian Crystals created by the incomparable Jonquil LeMaster. Gladstone is truly an artistic masterpiece whose grandeur must be seen in person!

What do you like best about living in this area?

Steve: We would say the people, simply stated. Their unwavering support over the past five years has been immeasurable. We would not continue to grow if it was not for the support of our surrounding communities. We look forward to serving our wonderful guests, familiar faces and new faces alike, well into the future!

NOCATEE HAPPENINGS: FARMERS MARKET HOLDS KICKOFF TO SUMMER



The Nocatee Farmers Market: Kickoff to Summer took place Saturday, June 19, and featured a special free concert from the band Who Rescued Who. Along with this fun theme, the Farmers Market featured many local vendors selling fresh produce, crafts, jewelry, herbs, unique foods and more. Flagler Health+ was the primary sponsor for the event.

Photos by Susan Griffin



The best way to spend a Thursday night in St. Augustine!

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 Bring a lawn chair. Alcohol prohibited.

Concerts in the Plaza is a free cultural event presented by the City of St. Augustine

Jewish Federation & Foundation awards scholarships to 4 teens

Scholarship named for Ponte Vedra residents

The Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida is bestowing the 2021 Len & Judy Elikan Young Leader Camp Scholarship Award to four teens in the Northeast Florida Jewish community this summer.

In his youth, Len Elikan's Jewish faith and identity strengthened when he was given the opportunity to attend a sleep-away Jewish camp by his rabbi. When Len and his wife Judy settled in Ponte Vedra from Cincinnati more than 25 years ago, they became pivotal members of the Northeast Florida Jewish community. Judy Elikan was a founding member and president of Hadassah's Yamit Chapter of Beth El the Beaches Synagogue.

In 2011, in further service to the Jewish community, the couple decided to contribute the funding of a scholarship to the Jewish Foundation (formerly the Northeast Florida Jewish Community Foundation).

"When Len and I decided to create our Jewish legacy, we felt this was the way for our dream of helping young people experience Jewish summer camps to become a



Abigail Fixel



Macy Pargman



Aiden Smolensky



Evan Wolpoff

reality," said Judy Elikan.

Since its creation, the scholarship fund has awarded more than 50 scholarships to outstanding and motivated youth.

This year, the amount of the four awards totals \$10,000. Additionally, three awards will be given based on COVID-related financial hardships.

SCHOLARSHIPS continues on Page 8

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FREE ESTIMATES



The Recorder's garden columnist Kathy Esfahani, of Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery, shares her tips for growing gorgeous gardens in Northeast Florida

KATHY'S GARDENING GUIDE

"When life throws thorns, hunt for roses!"



Kathy Esfahani
Columnist

Over the last few weeks, we have been highlighting some of the most popular landscaping genres that I see here in Northeast Florida. Many homeowners choose to stay within one type of landscaping design to create the beautiful ambience they are picturing. Lastly, you will learn what plants, palms and flowers are used to create a tropical landscape, Mediterranean landscape, traditional landscape and coastal landscape!



Photos provided by Kathy Esfahani

A traditional landscape makes use of clean lines, abundant color.



Flower of the Week: Knockout Roses

add seasonal color to your gorgeous design.
Happy planting!

Email Kathy at kathys.creative.gardens@gmail.com for any questions or gardening tips you would like to see in the future.

Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery is located at 196 N. Roscoe Blvd. in Ponte Vedra Beach. (904) 655-7373.

TRADITIONAL LANDSCAPE

What do we think of with traditional landscaping?

We think of a structured garden, very neat and tidy. Shrubbery is typically rectangular or square in shape to create an organized boxy look. Traditional landscaping is similar to an English garden in style, adding many roses and creating abundant color. Some like to add gravel pathways to secret gardens that may include a bench for peaceful rest or even an herb garden. This type of landscaping requires high maintenance to keep all of the lines looking clean, but it is a beautiful addition to any landscape and very magical.

When creating a traditional landscape, we can use a mixture of the following:

Palms: Canary palms, medjool palms, robellini palms and sylvester palms

Plants and flowers: Boxwoods, Ilex shillings, Italian cypress, Ligustrum patio trees, podocarpus, juniper, Asiatic jasmine, knockout roses among many roses and more.

With all landscapes, the key to success is knowing the sun/shade ratios in your yards, as well as what each plant requires and planting accordingly. Annuals are always welcome in any landscape to

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Scholarships

Continued from 7

■ Abigail Fixel, a graduate of the Martin J. Gottlieb Day School, attends Mandarin High School and is the founder of the school's Jewish Student Union, B'nai B'rith Youth Organization Jacksonville Chapter and Camp Fixel in 2017.

■ Macy Pargman attends The Bolles High School, has participated in Hebrew school for more than 10 years and attended religious camps.

■ Aiden Smolensky, a graduate of the

Martin J. Gottlieb Day School, attends Samuel W. Wolfson High School. She has been involved with StandWithUs, last year's Jewish Federation's Israel Advocacy Program, and was the youth group Shabbat leader at Etz Chaim Synagogue from 2019 to 2020.

■ Evan Wolpoff, a graduate of the Martin J. Gottlieb Day School, attends The Bolles High School and has been active in the Jewish community since 2016. Evan has been vice president of the Jacksonville Jewish Center Chalutzim and Kadima groups, and is a member of the Jewish Student Union at The Bolles School.

OBITUARIES

Ruzica P. Ciric

Ruzica P. Ciric, 83, of Jacksonville, Florida, died June 21, 2021. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre, (904) 249-1100, www.quinn-shalz.com.

Regina M. Dowd

Regina M. Dowd, 72, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died June 16, 2021. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre, (904) 249-1100, www.quinn-shalz.com.

Bruce M. Drinkwater

Bruce M. Drinkwater, 78, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died June 8, 2021. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre, (904) 249-1100, www.quinn-shalz.com

Marshall A. Gibbs

Marshall A. Gibbs, 82, of Jacksonville, Florida, died June 17, 2021. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre, (904) 249-1100, www.quinn-shalz.com

Amos Patterson Jarman

Amos Patterson Jarman, 98, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died June 19, 2021. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre, (904) 249-1100, www.quinn-shalz.com.

Sandra Kress

Sandra Kress, 77, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died June 20, 2021. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre, (904) 249-1100, www.quinn-shalz.com.

Margaret M. Sedgwick

Margaret M. Sedgwick, 95, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died June 19, 2021. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. (904) 249-1100 www.quinn-shalz.com

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Local REAL ESTATE Spotlight

PAGES 9-14



Photo provided by Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty announces its 22nd annual Backpack Challenge. The company is collecting new backpacks and school supplies through July 19.

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices FNR holding Backpack Challenge

Company is collecting backpacks, school supplies at branch office locations

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty recently announced its 22nd annual Backpack Challenge.

The Northeast Florida real estate firm

is collecting new backpacks and school supplies for local children at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty offices beginning through July 19. The backpacks and school supplies will be donated to local charities that serve Northeast Florida children.

“We know that beginning the school

BACKPACK continues on **Page 12**



Ultimate Atlantic Beach Lifestyle

Live the ultimate beach lifestyle in this midcentury modern on double corner lot just one block from the ocean and only 6 blocks from Atlantic Beach Town Center. Large open great room and kitchen with barn door pantry looks onto private backyard with pool and outdoor kitchen. Spacious master, 3 additional bedrooms & bathrooms plus laundry upstairs.

4 Bedrooms, 4 Bathrooms, 1 Half Bathroom. \$3,600,000



Stunning Riverfront Estate

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5 Bedroom, 6 Bathrooms, 5 Half Bathrooms \$6,200,000



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3 Bedrooms, 2 Full Baths, 1 Half Bath. \$890,000.



Oceanfront Estate in Ponte Vedra Beach

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6 Bedrooms, 6 Bathrooms, 1 Half Bathroom. \$10,500,000



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Hot Northeast Florida housing market shows no sign of cooling

Robust buyer demand fueled by low interest rates, historically low residential inventory and the continued desire of out-of-staters to move to the Sunshine State has caused Northeast Florida's housing prices to surge.

In May, the average sale price jumped to \$363,044, a 26.1% increase from a year ago, and a marked change from April's average of \$357,438. In similar fashion, Northeast Florida's median sales price rose 16.9% from a year ago to \$290,000, a significant gain from April's median price of \$284,941.

Since May 2020, new listings in the region rose 12.7% to 3,785. Pending sales leapt 18.5% to 3,672. Meanwhile, residential inventory levels fell 57.9% from May 2020's level of 9,147 units to 3,847 units.

"The frenetic spring home buying season continued through May, with 41% of closed sales receiving more than the original listing price," said Missi Howell, president of the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors. This represents a 188.7% increase over a year ago, when the percentage was 14.2.

"Realtors report that most listings are receiving double-digit multiple offers, and Florida Realtors has reported that

closed cash sales in the Greater Jacksonville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) increased 161% compared to same time last year," Howell said. "Even though our inventory compared to last year has increased, the demand has increased more, reducing to 1.1 months overall supply of homes available to purchase."

As prices go up, the region becomes increasingly less affordable as represented by a housing affordability index of 121, which is a 12.3% decline from May 2020. This means that the region's median household income was 121% of what is necessary to qualify for the median-priced home under prevailing interest rates.

"In the \$100,000-to-\$300,000 price range, which is where our population of the low- to moderate-income buyers would look, we have less than a one-month supply of inventory, putting the dream of homeownership for many out of a competitive reach," Howell said. "The trend of high demand and low inventory is expected to continue through the year, as new construction supply lines continue to lag and existing homeowners are reluctant to sell due to higher

MARKET continues on Page 12

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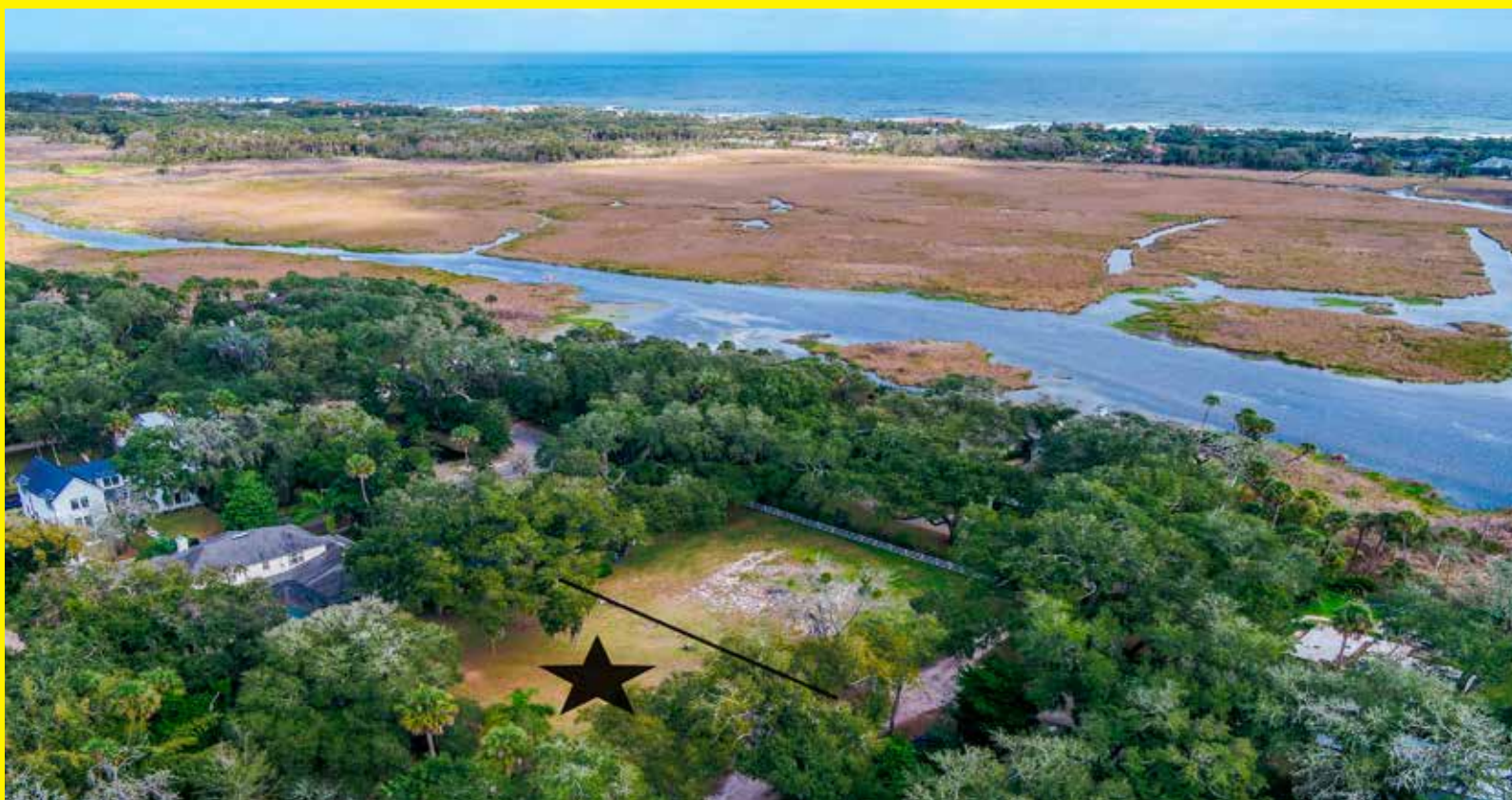


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Backpack

Continued from 9

year with a new backpack filled with supplies makes a difference in the lives of children living in our communities,” said Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty CEO Kevin Waugaman. “We appreciate the numerous donations we have received from our team members and the community in the past, and we encourage everyone to support this worthy cause and important company tradition.”

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty is collecting new backpacks and school supplies for students, kindergarten through grade 12. Donations may be dropped off at the following office locations:

- Home Office – 4190 Belfort Road, Suite 475, Jacksonville

- Avondale/Ortega/San Marco – 3627 St. Johns Ave., Jacksonville
 - Beaches/Intracoastal West/Southside – 375-1 Atlantic Blvd., Atlantic Beach
 - Fleming Island/Orange Park – 3535 Highway 17, Suite 10, Fleming Island
 - Mandarin/St. Johns – 11576 San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville (through July 1)
 - Mandarin/St. Johns – 12636 San Jose Blvd., Units 1-2, Jacksonville (after July 1)
 - MuraBella at World Golf Village – 96 Capulet Drive, Suite 3, St. Augustine
 - Ponte Vedra/Nocatee – 333 Village Main St., Suite 670, Ponte Vedra Beach
 - St. Augustine – 112 Sea Grove Main St., Suite 210, St. Augustine Beach
- Mesh and clear backpacks are greatly appreciated since some schools have adopted a clear bag policy. A list of recommended school supplies by grade level is available at FloridaNetworkRealty.com/Backpack.

Market

Continued from 10

purchase prices, unless they are moving out of the area.”

Because there is a limited supply of existing homes for sale, some hope that builders will provide a boost of inventory to help meet demand. However, the increasing cost of construction materials

and labor, along with supply chain challenges, is contributing to higher construction costs, which many builders are passing along to homebuyers.

Although rising sales prices and the reopening of the economy may draw more sellers to the market, it is anticipated that there will be a low level of inventory in the Northeast Florida region for the foreseeable future, according to the Realtors association.

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*Source: Keller Williams Multi-Trend Report & MLS



HOMEBUILDER HOLDS OPEN HOUSE AT SILVERLEAF

Riverside Homes held an open house event and open-air luncheon at the newly completed SilverLeaf Amenity Center on Thursday, June 17. Attendees were able to enjoy lunch, tour the new Ortega Model Home in SilverLeaf Village and win some prizes. SilverLeaf Village amenities include tennis and pickleball courts and small and big dog areas as well as bark park. Additional resort-style amenities include Resident's Club, spray park, family and adult pools, field house, flag court, event pavilion and more. For more information, go to myriversidehome.com.

Photos by Susan Griffin

PulteGroup announces new active adult community in St. Johns County

PulteGroup, one of the nation's leading home builders, has announced plans for its newest 55-plus active adult community, Summer Bay at Grand Oaks. The community will consist of 306 single-family home sites within the Grand Oaks master-planned community.

"Based on the significant growth in St. Johns County and the market demand for new homes, we expect strong home buyer interest for Summer Bay at Grand Oaks, our newest active adult community under the Pulte Homes Active Adult name," said Tony Nason, vice president of operations of PulteGroup's North Florida Division. "This will be a special 55-plus community with its intimate size, sought-after location and consumer inspired homes."

Summer Bay at Grand Oaks will consist of 40-, 50- and 65-foot wide home sites that are thoughtfully designed to showcase conservation, lake and park views. Development is currently underway with models projected to open in early 2022 and new homes starting in the low \$300,000s.

The gated neighborhood will have approximately 1.5 acres of planned recreational areas. Designed exclusively



Map provided by PulteGroup

PulteGroup has announced plans for its newest 55-plus active adult community, Summer Bay at Grand Oaks.

for Summer Bay at Grand Oaks residents, community amenities will be conveniently located near the entrance of the neighborhood and nestled among the natural pre-

serve area and community lake.

The thoughtfully designed resident's club will include outdoor sport activities, a fitness center, a social room and a multi-faceted pool and lounge area for active and relaxed pursuits. The party room will include a catering kitchen and veranda with outdoor seating for social events and gatherings. The fitness center will offer a stretch/yoga area and active fitness equipment overlooking the pool. The pool will feature lap lanes and a resort lounge area with cabanas and a spa. Pickleball and bocce courts will be located adjacent the grand lawn and outdoor kitchen.

Summer Bay at Grand Oaks will have a dog park for the neighborhood's furry residents and a community garden. Retail, dining, grocery and medical facilities are all within four miles of the community.

Summer Bay at Grand Oaks is the latest of new active adult communities for PulteGroup in Northeast Florida. Early this year, the company announced its Del Webb-brand is coming to Wildlight in Nassau County.

For more information, go to www.pulte.com/jacksonville.

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Chamber Connections



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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Ponte Vedra Beach Division

SJC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HOSTS FIRST LUNCHEON SINCE PANDEMIC!



Pictured above: Anna Washington, Jim Browning, Kelly Wilson, Dr. Erika Hamer, Matt Price, Karen Everett and Aaron Mong. More inside on 6.16 Chamber event.

June 2021



ST. JOHNS COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Ponte Vedra Recorder



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



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

During a tumultuous year, the St. Johns County Chamber remained focused on the legislative process. The Chamber's Public Policy Committee, led by Chairman Beth Sweeny of Flagler College, is pleased to report:

Gov. Ron DeSantis recently signed the \$101.5 billion Florida FY 2021/2022 Budget into law and included in the budget was one of the major objectives of the SJC Chamber's Legislative Agenda for 2021 — the approval of and funding for an additional county judge for SJC. The new judgeship was approved and funded for the fiscal year beginning July 1. This is important to the business community as it will significantly cut down the waiting times to schedule trials and hearings that businesses have faced in civil trials, saving money and expense.

On June 2, the governor signed into

law another Chamber priority bill that would dedicate \$200 million annually to the affordable housing funds under the Sadowski Trust Fund. Under the new law, the \$200 million would be placed in a trust fund.

And on June 15, the Board of County Commissioners for St. Johns County discussed the option of increasing the "bed tax" from 4 cents to 5 cents. The ultimate vote required for approval is four out of five commissioners to add the additional 1% tax and will receive a second reading on July 20.

The Chamber's Public Policy Committee works hard on your behalf; the members of this committee are on the website under the Public Policy tab. The Business Advocacy Agendas for the state, region, county and City of St. Augustine are also located here.

Thanks again for your support!

Chamber will host legislative update at EDC breakfast on June 25

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce will present the next Quarterly Economic Development Breakfast from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. on Friday, June 25, at the Embassy Suites by Hilton St. Augustine Beach Oceanfront Resort at 300 A1A Beach Blvd. The event will provide a timely opportunity for the St. Johns County business community to receive a legislative update.

State and local legislators have been invited and the confirmed panelists are: Sen. Travis Hutson, Reps. Paul Renner and Cyndi Stevenson, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners Vice-Chair Henry Dean, the City of St. Augustine Beach Mayor Margaret England and the City of St. Augustine Mayor Tracy Upchurch. This in-person event offers local businesses and residents the chance to hear directly from the county's elected officials on the recently concluded legislative session in Tallahassee and the upcoming budget discussions at the county and municipal levels.

"We are so fortunate that our elected leaders are available to join us to discuss important legislative updates and priorities and for our Public Policy Committee to share the outcome of the state bills the Chamber supported," said Isabelle Renault, Chamber president and CEO.

Registration is available at the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce website. Go to www.sjcchamber.com and click on Events. The registration fee for Chamber members at the Economic Development Council level is \$50; \$70 for other Chamber members and the fee for guests is \$85. Future chamber members are invited to contact Lauren Clark at lauren.clark@sjcchamber.com to register.

The Chamber is grateful to the many local businesses who have pledged support for the June 25 event including: the St. Augustine and St. Johns County Board of Realtors MLS, Ameris Bank, Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete, LLP, Florida Power & Light, Jackson Law Group, the Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship, Mudflower Creative Media, North Avenue Capital, the Northeast Florida Regional Airport, PuroClean Emergency Restoration Services, PIP Marketing, Signs Print and Sight & Sound Productions.

A limited number of additional sponsorships remain available for the event. Call or email Cathy Newman, Economic



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Members of the 2021 Leadership St. Johns program, coordinated by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, gather at a new home built by the St. Johns County Habitat for Humanity organization.

Members of Chamber's Leadership St. Johns class of 2021 selected

The members of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce's Leadership St. Johns class of 2021 began its class year on April 9-10 with the opening retreat at Guy Harvey Resort in St. Augustine Beach.

The 23 program members hail from all sectors of industry, commerce and public service in St. Johns County. The leadership development program was started in 2001 and has more than 300 alumni including the former St. Johns County School District Superintendent of Schools and current Flagler College President Dr. Joseph G. Joyner; the new St. Johns

County Sheriff, Rob Hardwick; St. Johns County School District Superintendent of Schools Tim Forson; Flagler Health+ President and CEO Jason Barrett; local entrepreneur and St. Augustine Distillery co-founder CEO Phillip McDaniel; and City of St. Augustine City Manager John Regan.

The Leadership St. Johns Program was established to educate, connect and encourage elite and emerging professionals as they strive to make a positive impact on the local economy and community.

According to Bob Porter, the Chamber's LSJ program director, the class of

2021 will be a historic one. "Following a year of pandemic restrictions, this class began its work following CDC guidelines for safe gatherings," he said.

The 2021 program runs from April through September. Class members are committed to meeting each program day. The program will provide an in-depth overview of the challenges and opportunities faced by St. Johns County's many industries, government agencies and nonprofits.

Class members who successfully grad-



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

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hope your summer is off to a bright and prosperous start! Nothing can slow us now — except for a hurricane!

Those of you able to join us last Wednesday for the first in-person Chamber at Noon at the Hilton Garden Inn in Ponte Vedra Beach got an early start on preparation. Kelly Wilson, deputy director, St. Johns County Emergency Department, has been through several hurricanes and the pandemic, so her advice to businesses is relevant and timely.

She urged all of us to register with Alert St. Johns Emergency Notification Systems, Know My Zone and review

the 2021 Hurricane Preparedness Guide. All three tools are on the home page of the St. Johns County Emergency Operations Center at www.sjcemergencymanagement.com.

All Chamber members are encouraged to text SJCC to 313131 to receive text message alerts from the Chamber, including hurricane and storm-related emergency alerts. Prepare and stay informed. Success is all about preparedness. Watchwords to live by during this season.

Regards,
Karen

UPCOMING PONTE VEDRA BEACH DIVISION EVENTS

CHAMBER BEFORE HOURS

Date: Wednesday, July 7

Time: 8-9 a.m.

Location/Sponsor: Amara Med Spa
115 Professional Drive,
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

CHAMBER AT NOON

Date: Wednesday, July 14

Time: 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

Location: the link
425 Town Plaza Ave.,
Ponte Vedra FL 32081

Info: Join us to visit the new link — a new building and a new concept — or Chamber at Noon in Nocatee!

Sponsors: Fields Auto Group, wtec, Inc.

CHAMBER AFTER HOURS

Date: Wednesday, July 21

Time: 5:30-7 p.m.

Location: TBD

Info: Join us for this great networking event and meet business owners in the area! The host will provide beverages and delicious bites. Bring your business cards!

UPCOMING ANNUAL EVENT

ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER'S ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

When: Monday, Sept. 27

Where: Slammer & Squire at World Golf Village

Notes: Registration opens Monday, June 28. For sponsorship opportunities, call Lauren Clark at (904) 687-2056 or email her at lauren.clark@sjcchamber.com

For more information and/or to register for events, go to www.sjcchamber.com or call (904) 285-2004

Chamber announces new website to promote Ponte Vedra Naturally

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce has announced the launch of a new website designed to showcase natural assets found in the Ponte Vedra and Palm Valley communities.

Depicting activities under five different themes, the website can be found at pontevedranaturally.com. The themes are: hiking, biking, kayaking, birding and fishing.

“The intent of the site is to offer visitors additional attractive experiences beyond golf and history enticing them to extend their stay in our county, which in turn brings more revenue to our community,” said Isabelle Renault, president and CEO, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce. “Our research shows that 81% of overnighters visiting our region are at the front door of Ponte Vedra but never make it to the destination, and only 13% of day visi-



tors coming to St. Johns County experienced Ponte Vedra.”

The members of the Naturally Ponte Vedra Product Development Working Group met to decide on the themes and direction of the site.

The main proponents of the site are the GTM Research Reserve, the St. Augustine/Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau, the St. Johns

County Tourist Development Council, St. Johns County Cultural Council and the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

“The timing of the launch of this website couldn’t be better,” said Renault. “After more than a year of stress and isolation, now is the time to explore the outdoors. This area is not defined by busy highways, but by the many planned pockets of natural paradise. The region features miles of ocean shoreline, acres of intra-coastal waterways and lakes, a wildlife management area and one of the country’s protected estuarine reserves at the GTM Research Reserve.”

For further information, call the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce at 904-285-2004 or visit the Ponte Vedra Beach Visitor Information Center at 200 Solana Road, Suite B.

Leadership

Continued from 16

uate from the program are accepted into the prestigious ranks of leadership alumni in St. Johns County and across Florida, and many LSJ graduates have been accepted into the statewide Leadership Florida program. For additional information and to register when nominations are open for the 2022 program, go to www.sjcchamber.com/leadership-st.-johns.

The members of the Leadership St. Johns Class of 2021 are: Trish Becker, Anastasia Mosquito Control Board; Randy Bradley, Northrop/Grumman; Jason Caban, St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office; Jennifer Michaux, St. Augustine Police Department; Diane Denholm, Supporting Strategies,

Northeast Florida; Melissa Derrick, St. Augustine Youth Services; Tres Edenfield III, St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office; Melissa Cecil, Flagler Health+; Whitney Kersey Graves, St. Johns County Tax Collector; Bonnie Hayflick, Bonnie Hayflick PR ; Meghan Holder, Independent Agent, PrimERICA; Dawn Infanti, United Way; Lauren Howington, Herbie Wiles Insurance; Heidi Jameson, JAXUSA Partnership; Gurpreet Misra, self-employed entrepreneur; Vicky Ann Oliveri, St. Johns Title, LLC; Dianne Pittman, Watson Realty; Jennifer Ravan, St. Johns County Tax Collector; Christina Parrish Stone, St. Johns County Cultural Council; Josh Underwood, St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office; Greg Wells, K9s for Warriors; Meredith Breidenstein, City of St. Augustine; and Casey Woolsey, Woolsey/Morcom PLLC.

Isabelle Renault, the Chamber’s president/CEO and a graduate of Leadership St. Johns and Leadership Florida, suggested involvement in LSJ can be a stepping stone to participating in nonprofit and volunteer government advisory boards as well as potential involvement in future elected office.

“We also want our class members to consider using the skills honed through the LSJ experience to engage actively in the governing of St. Johns County,” said Renault.

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit business membership organization. The Chamber is the second largest business networking organization in Northeast Florida.

For more information about the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, go to www.sjcchamber.com.

EDC Breakfast

Continued from 16

Development manager, at (904) 829-5681 or cathy.newman@sjcchamber.com for more details.

The Chamber will be following current CDC guideline regarding gatherings. For more on the guidelines, go to www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html. In addition, the Chamber is following the guidelines set by the Embassy Suites for this event.

Experts discuss future of transportation in area at EDC breakfast

By Shaun Ryan

Originally ran April 1

At its first indoor, in-person event in more than a year, the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce welcomed area transportation experts to participate in a panel discussion. The Chamber's Economic Development Council held its quarterly breakfast Friday, March 26.

Panelists included Florida Department of Transportation District 2 Secretary Greg Evans, Jacksonville Transportation Authority CEO Nat Ford and St. Johns County Transportation Development Manager Phong Ngyuen.

Ford said that he and Mayor Lenny Curry have announced a plan to increase the gas tax in Jacksonville from its current 6 cents to 12 cents to address "an exhaustive list of transportation infrastructure projects."

One of those projects is rehabilitation of the city's aging skyway, which would be expanded from 2.5 miles to 10 miles.

Ford said the tax plan would need support from the Jacksonville City Council and, if implemented, would generate about \$1



Photo provided by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Area transportation professionals participated in a panel discussion March 26 during a meeting of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Council. From left are: moderator Shannan Schuessler of The Fiorentino Group, St. Johns County Transportation Development Manager Phong Ngyuen, Florida Department of Transportation District 2 Secretary Greg Evans and Jacksonville Transportation Authority CEO Nat Ford.

billion to be evenly split between JTA and the city.

The expanded tax would also fund about 30% of the design for commuter rail between St. Augustine and downtown Jacksonville.

"That's a long journey; I want to be very careful with expectations here," said Ford. "But we need to start talking about other

modes of transportation, as we're all interconnected in Northeast Florida."

Indeed regional transportation beyond the city's limits occupied a significant portion of the program. Ford noted that the St. Johns Express Select Service, which provides rides between the county's Government Center and downtown Jacksonville is now operational.

Evans gave an update on the First Coast Expressway, a multi-lane, limited-access toll road that will eventually cross parts of Duval, Clay and St. Johns counties.

"We're coming your way," he said.

In addition, construction on a new bridge over the St. Johns River just south of the Shands Bridge is expected to begin later this year and be completed in 2029. The cost of that project is about \$334 million.

Construction on a new road from east of the County Road 16A spur to Interstate 95 in St. Johns County is expected to begin in early 2023, with completion projected for 2030. The cost of that project is \$303 million.

Emerging technology, too, is demanding the attention of transportation officials. One area of concern is the so-called self-driving car.

"Autonomous vehicles," said Ford, "it's not a question of if; it's a question of when."

Evans said this would require development of technology connecting these vehicles to the necessary systems.

TRANSPORTATION continues on Page 19

Representatives of Body 20 workout studio and the St. Johns County Chamber PVB Division, hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 29 for the new fitness studio now open in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Photo by Susan Griffin



Boutique fitness studio offers unique 20-minute workouts that pack a punch

By Holly Tishfield

Originally ran April 8

Amy Yorio, a physician and fitness instructor from Ponte Vedra, recently accomplished her goal of bringing more health and wellness options to the community by opening a new franchise of the Body 20 workout studio in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Body 20 is a boutique fitness studio with a unique take on a fast yet effective workout routine, which only takes 20 minutes and provides the effect of 3-5 hours at the gym.

How is this possible? Thanks to new EMF electro-muscular stimulation. EMF, or electric and magnetic fields, that recruits more muscle fibers to localized areas of the body to create a full body workout. The impulses from the EMF are customizable, ranging from high to low depending on the person and the desired effect. Since it recruits more body fibers, it is effective

at recruiting lean muscle mass, as well as strengthening your core, relieving low back pain, helping improve posture, and reduce overall body fat.

The Body 20 studio also offers its members a special in-body analysis, which is used both to prescribe the best fitness program for the specific member, but also to keep members accountable at their six-week check-ins. Additionally, the analysis can show muscular imbalances, which can help decrease injuries based on muscle-related issues.

"This is basically a new, revolutionary fitness concept," said Yorio.

When deciding to open a Body 20 franchise, Yorio was extremely devoted to ensuring the scientific proof of the method.

"I really did the research on the science behind it," she said, "just to make sure it was not something that was a gimmick."

STUDIO continues on Page 20

ART STUDIO HOLDS GRAND RE-OPENING



Originally ran April 15

Painting with a Twist new owners Lesley Vitel (second from left) and Libbi Poole (front, third from left) celebrate with employees and representatives from the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division during a ribbon-cutting ceremony April 8. The ceremony celebrated the grand re-opening of the new Ponte Vedra Beach business with food, drinks and music. Painting with a Twist offers unique art-related events including Girls' Night, Date Night, Trivia Night and Paint your Pet, as well as private events and specialized art categories and design. The studio also encourages patrons to make the memories more special by bringing a favorite bottle of wine or snack. Painting with a Twist is located at 268 Solana Road in Ponte Vedra Beach. To learn more about classes and events, go to painting-withatwist.com/studio/ponte-vedra-beach.

Photos by Susan Griffin



Refreshments are served at the After Hours event.



Chris Smith and Malcolm Anthony.

Photos by Susan Griffin

Olea at Nocatee hosts Chamber After Hours

Originally ran April 15

Olea at Nocatee host an After Hours event with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division on March 24.

The outdoor event gave Chamber

members and guests the opportunity to network as well as enjoy refreshments and gifts.

Olea at Nocatee is a luxury apartment community that offers resort-style amenities, spacious grounds and an active community.

Transportation

Continued from 18

And, as electric vehicles become more prevalent, there will need to be a new way to ensure those motorists pay their fair share of the cost of road maintenance. Right now, that is funded through the gas tax, but that revenue stream will dry up as fewer vehicles rely upon fossil fuels.

That will probably mean a transition to a different type of road usage tax.

Also, as transportation evolves, so too will the need for professionals trained in the field.

“We need to start developing our next generation of transportation professionals,” said Ford. “We also partner with (Florida State College at Jacksonville), where we’re actually going to be creating a curriculum around autonomous vehicles.”

Business lending options explored during recent panel discussion

By Shaun Ryan

Originally ran April 22

As business owners — or prospective business owners — look ahead to the post-COVID period, many are asking how they might best finance improvements or a start-up.

On Wednesday, April 14, the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Council hosted a panel discussion on the many forms of lending available.

“Here in St. Johns County, we have the

whole realm of capital access through different types of lending programs that most people are not aware of,” said moderator Ed Dwyer, who is a business consultant for the UNF Small Business Development Center.

Matt Price, vice president of commercial banking for Regions Bank, offered a look at traditional bank loans.

“We need a business to have been established for at least two or three years before we could take a look at it, for the most part,” he said.

PANEL continues on Page 23



Photo provided by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

The St. Johns County Chamber PVB Division and the Economic Development Council held a panel discussion on lending recently at the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse. From left are Joseph Rowell, North Avenue Capital chief operating officer; Ed Dwyer, president of Vigeo Alliance and business consultant for the UNF Small Business Development Center; Karen Everett, Ponte Vedra Beach Division director; Marius Dobren, president of Sawgrass Finance; and Matt Price, vice president, Regions Bank.

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New workout studio comes to Nocatee

Fit20 offers high-intensity 20-minute training sessions

By Holly Tishfield

Originally ran May 6

On April 29, the St. John's County Chamber of Commerce held an official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Fit20 workout studio in Nocatee — Northeast Florida's third Fit20 location.

The 1,100-square-foot workout studio in Nocatee is one of the 160 studios spanned over eight countries.

Welcoming its third Northeast Florida franchise, Fit20 provides an opportunity to bring the fast and effective workout training to the Nocatee area. The other Northeast Florida studios are in Jacksonville Beach and Tapestry Park,

"We have always thought Nocatee was a great area," said Conner Battreall, new franchise owner and son of regional developer Cathy Battreall.

Conner Battreall, a longtime Jacksonville resident and University of North Florida graduate, said becoming the franchise owner of the Nocatee location was a no-brainer. He had worked with his mother on other location projects and was heavily involved with the development of the Jacksonville Beach Fit20 location.

Battreall received his Fit20 certification



Conner Battreall, with representatives of Fit20 and the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, cuts the ribbon during the grand opening of the new Fit20 workout studio on April 29 in Nocatee.

Photo by Susan Griffin

and training at the Jacksonville Beach location and is now excited to bring the magic of Fit20 directly to the Nocatee area.

"Our workouts are only 20 minutes, but we didn't want it to take 30 minutes or more to get to the studio," Cathy Battreall said in a website posting. "We are now within golf cart reach for residents in the Nocatee community."

Fit20's unique appeal comes from its quick and simple workout format, with scientific evidence to back it up. Members experience an intense, full-body workout with strength-training machines for only 20 minutes, once or twice per week. The company also utilizes advanced sensor technology to provide with live accurate

feedback of their performance and help perfect a member's form to virtually eliminate the risk of injury, post-exercise muscle soreness, and maximize results.

"I think that the benefits of strength training and what it really does for your overall health and well-being really speaks to the people of Nocatee," said Conner Battreall.

The Fit20 Nocatee location is already open and accepting membership opportunities. All new members receive their first training for free, including a health assessment and a 45-minute in-studio session with a certified Fit20 trainer. The Fit20 locations are following COVID-19 guidelines, as per CDC recommendation.

Studio

Continued from 18

After taking some classes, and doing her research, Yorio opened the new studio and held an official ribbon cutting on March 29.

The workouts are one-on-one based with a nationally certified EMF coach, and offered in two methods: strength mode and cardio mode. Membership options come in three packages, with each increasing the number of classes per month. "Activate" comes with four classes per month, all of which are strength mode. "Amplify" comes with six classes per month, four of which are strength mode and two are cardio mode. "Transform" comes with eight classes per month, with an equal number of strength mode and cardio mode classes.

So far, member and community reaction has been overwhelmingly positive, with many customers signing on for additional classes and upgraded memberships.

"Almost everyone can agree on the benefits of exercise on over health and wellness," said Yorio. "To be able to bring that to my own community and see people benefiting from it is really rewarding."

For more information, go to body20.com.

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Source: *Real Value of Joining a Local Chamber of Commerce*
Shapiro Group, 2012.

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Goodwill helps those with barriers to find work, CEO says

By Shaun Ryan

Originally ran May 20

Ask someone what they know about Goodwill, and they will likely tell you it's a thrift store.

And that's not incorrect. But it is incomplete.

In fact, Goodwill is a source of employment opportunities for many people, especially those who face challenges in getting hired.

"We're a local not-for-profit organization dedicated to removing barriers to employment," according to David Rey, CEO and president for Goodwill Industries of North Florida. "We do that through education, training, placement services and career opportunities. We have a vision of a community where every person finds meaningful employment and career opportunities."

Rey spoke Wednesday, May 12, at a virtual Chamber at Noon meeting of the Ponte Vedra Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

Goodwill of North Florida operates 19 retail stores and 20 donation centers in its 14-county territory, as well as a 19,000-square-foot e-commerce distribution center, and employs nearly 850 people.

Through military contracts, about 33 people with severe disabilities are employed to serve food at NAS Jacksonville and Naval Station Mayport.

In 2012, the organization acquired Landscape Consultants Inc., which employs 45.

"We're always looking to employ, and offer that opportunity to anyone with a barrier," said Rey.

But Goodwill is more than an employer. It is also a resource.

It operates free career centers, where people can search for a job, work on a resume, use a computer and apply to positions. Last year, 30,000 people took advantage of these services.

In addition, 300 high school students have gotten work through internship programs in Duval County.

The organization has also added the Goodwill Temps program, a community-based, nonprofit, alternative staffing organization that provides soft skills and industry-specific training, education and employment services.

It offers temporary, temporary-to-permanent and direct-hire opportunities and serves 15 organizations.

"Anyone looking for an immediate position, a quick job right away, we can put them to work," Rey said.

In Duval County, Goodwill is the lead

agency for Take Stock In Children, providing mentorship to about 360 high school students. The program's success can be gauged by the students' graduation rate: 98%.

One of its big successes is the Academic Support Through the Employment Process (A-STEP) program. It helps working adults access higher education in order to raise earning potentials and job security.

The program helps to get people enrolled in a vocational school or certification program. So far, almost 190 adults have graduated through A-STEP.

These opportunities are made available due to the thrift stores for which Goodwill is most well-known. Donations to the stores essentially turn into jobs.

"This is all we ask of the community: To support Goodwill by donating their gently used items," said Rey.

LONGTIME LOCAL BARBER SHOP CELEBRATES NEW OWNERSHIP



Originally ran May 20

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Wednesday, May 12, for a change in ownership for Don's Barber Shop, 226 Solana Road in Ponte Vedra Beach. Raquel Turnbull, a third-generation master barber with 25 years of experience in the profession officially bought the shop March 10. Don Brown opened the barbershop in 1990 and was joined by wife Ann Brown and daughter Shirley Dutcher in the family business. Brown has retired after 59 years of barbering.

Photos by Susan Griffin

Wellness center celebrates 5 years at Nocatee location

Originally ran May 27

Ponte Vedra Wellness Center has been in Nocatee for five years, and this week Dr. Erika Hamer celebrated the anniversary in collaboration with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and the Ponte Vedra Division.

She opened her second location in February 2016.

Asked her reaction to the accomplishment, she said it felt "great!"

"It's a great milestone to have," she said, "and it's a wonderful community to be a part of."

The Nocatee location is at 205 Markside Ave., suite 200. The other location is 100 Corridor Road, No. 220, Ponte Vedra Beach.



ABOVE: Ponte Vedra Wellness owner Dr. Erika Hamer speaks to guests at a Chamber After Hours event and the celebration of her clinic's fifth anniversary at its Nocatee location on May 19.

LEFT: Elaine Raby, Raghu Misra, Blake Wise and Isabelle Renault

Photos by Susan Griffin



Photos by Susan Griffin

ABOVE: Food is served aboard the Sabrage during the event.

RIGHT: Capt. Glen Davis (front) and Ian Barlett of Sabrage Charters interact with guests during the St. Johns County Tourism and Hospitality Council and Chamber of Commerce event May 20.



SJC Tourism and Hospitality Council, Chamber hold networking event aboard catamaran in St. Augustine

Originally ran May 27

Sabrage Charters in St. Augustine hosted members of the Tourism and Hospitality Council as well as St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce members for a cruise along the Matanzas Bay.

The May 20 event featured food and the opportunity to network while on the water among the scenery of historic St. Augustine.

Sabrage is a 2017 63-foot custom Cooper catamaran that specializes in daily excursions for individuals and group charter events. For more information, go to sabragestaugustine.com.

Panel

Continued from 19

Traditional banks are cash-flow lenders. And Price typically works with very large loans.

Joseph Rowell, chief operating officer with North Avenue Capital, explained how his organization is different from the traditional bank.

North Avenue Capital, which lends to businesses across the nation, underwrites commercial loans to rural businesses only. These loans are backed by a U.S. Depart-

ment of Agriculture program similar to that of the Small Business Administration.

The loans tend to be between \$1 million and \$25 million, with an average of about \$5 million. In deciding the make a loan, the organization looks at cash flow and fixed assets, such as real estate, machinery and equipment.

One question borrowers might have is whether or not they are considered “rural,” and thus eligible for the loan.

Rowell said a population of 50,000 or fewer is considered to be rural. He estimated that about 97% of the country — and 85% of St. Johns County — falls in that

category.

The third member of the panel was Marius Dobren, co-owner of Sawgrass Finance.

“Our mission at Sawgrass Finance is just to help the small and medium-sized businesses secure their working capital by helping them use their assets to work for them,” he said.

The focus of the organization is collateral. The quality of the collateral determines the borrowing power.

“Cash flow is not really very important to us,” Dobren said. “We’re in a business to improve that cash flow. It’s not the determi-

nant factor, but we’re paying close attention on the financial statements and how much skin in the game do the owners have.”

Loans at Sawgrass Finance tend to be smaller: \$500,000 to \$1.5 million.

One thing the panelists emphasized was how they can work with one another when it’s in the best interest of the client. Because their clients have different sets of circumstances, the lenders are not necessarily competitors. But they can help clients borrow in different ways to meet their goals.

The panel discussion was held at the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse and virtually via Zoom.

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ABOVE: Dr. Edward Secunda (center), with other representatives of Bluewater Health & Wellness and members of the St. Johns County Chamber-PVB Division, cuts the ribbon to officially celebrate the opening of Bluewater Health & Wellness on Wednesday, June 9.



RIGHT: Dr. Secunda, Karen Everett, Brittney Schmidt and Jaclyn Taylor.
Photos by Susan Griffin

Bluewater Health & Wellness holds ribbon cutting, Before Hours event

Bluewater Health & Wellness held a official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the business Wednesday, June 9, and hosted a Before Hours event for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber.

The event gave Chamber members and guests the opportunity to network, enjoy refreshments and learn more about the new business.

Bluewater Health & Wellness is located at 340 Town Plaza Ave., in Ponte Vedra.



Conner Battreall, Krista Patrick and Anna Washington



Photos by Susan Griffin

St. Johns County Emergency Management Deputy Director Kelly Wilson (third from left) stands with members of the St. Johns County Chamber PVB Division and sponsors.

Chamber at Noon event offers info on hurricane preparedness

The Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce held a Chamber at Noon event Wednesday, June 16, to help members and businesses prepare for hurricane season.

Kelly Wilson, the deputy director of Emergency Management for St. Johns County, was the guest speaker at the event held at the Hilton Garden Inn Ponte Vedra.

Wilson shared tools and tips to keep people and businesses safe during hurricane season, which runs through Nov. 30.



Karina Coryell and Kari Zerrahn



Wilson discusses hurricane preparedness during a St. Johns County Chamber at Noon event on Wednesday, June 16.

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Chamber partners with First Coast Technical College, Goodwill to promote Get There program

New Workforce Education Initiative to raise awareness of career and technical education programs

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce is partnering with the First Coast Technical College, Goodwill Industries of North Florida and the Florida Prepaid College Foundation to promote awareness and accessibility of the new Get There, a new workforce education initiative aimed at raising awareness and availability of short-term, but high-value, career and technical education programs.

St. Johns County's plan is the first in the state to roll out and assist low-income students to enroll in rapid credentialing programs at First Coast Technical College. Students in grades K-12 will be exposed to career opportunities through year-round workshops held at First Coast Technical College. Upon high school graduation, participating low-income students will be eligible to apply for the Get There Faster Scholarship, a one-year Florida Prepaid College Foundation Plan. The approximate



Photo provided by the St. Johns County Chamber
Rulon International owner Wayne Robison introduces the Get There educational program at a reception in May.

\$3,600 plan's value will cover most, if not all, of the tuition costs for workforce certification programs.

"The Get There initiative provides additional power for our students," said Chris Force, principal, First Coast Technical College. "Rapid credentialing programs increase our capacity to enroll and graduate students in short term, in-demand, high

wage occupation workforce programs."

"As an employer, I commend this collaboration. The graduates will allow us to sustain and grow our business," said Wayne Robison, owner, Rulon International, and host of a May reception to introduce the program.

Orv Dothage, senior manager, Northrop Grumman, added that the programs at First Coast Technical College graduate many qualified workers for the manufacturing industry in St. Johns and surrounding counties.

"We hire our entry level mechanics from FCTC's airframe program for our facility at the St. Augustine Airport," said Dothage.

Both Isabelle Renault, president and CEO, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, and Leah Lynch, Goodwill, praised Get There for accelerating recovery for our economy.

"These rapid credentialing programs will increase capacity at FCTC so students can enroll and graduate on an accelerated basis," said Renault. "In addition, it is important to mention that these programs align with our targeted industries for St. Johns County."

"Programs include advanced manufacturing, transportation and logistics, healthcare, public safety and information technology," added Lynch. "This program validates that Career and Technical Education (CTE) is an engine for economic recovery and prosperity and removes additional barriers to employment."

The Get There program is partially funded by a Florida Prepaid scholarship program. Additional funding is needed from employers to continue the availability of this program in our community. Every donation to help a student attend First Coast Technical College will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Florida Prepaid College Foundation.

For more information on joining the employers who have already donated to this program, contact Arleen Dennison, college advancement coordinator, First Coast Technical College at (904) 547-3386 or Arleen.Dennison@fctc.edu. To donate directly, go to www.goodwilljax.org.

For additional information about the credentialing programs at First Coast Technical College or the Get There program, go to www.fctc.edu, www.goodwilljax.org or www.GetThereFL.com.



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ON A MISSION: NONPROFITS & CHARITIES

PAGES 27-30

'Bespoke on the Boulevard' event benefits artists, veterans

By Shaun Ryan

Thursday, June 17, was a night of fashion for a good cause as The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach and Dr. Arun Gulani of The Gulani Vision Institute presented "Bespoke on the Boulevard."

The event featured Gulani's personally re-designed and curated selection of gently used men's and women's suits collected from local business leaders and philanthropists to benefit area artists and veterans who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. The high-quality suits will prove beneficial to recipients as they attend job interviews.

The event also generated funding for the Wounded Warrior Project.

In all, 50 people received suit donations either in person or, in cases where the recipient could not attend, by intermediary. The event was held at The Gulani Vision Institute, 8075 Gate Pkwy. W., Suites 102 and 103, Jacksonville.

"It was fabulous," said Donna Guzzo, president and executive director of the Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach. She called the event a very memorable evening for the suit recipients.

Known as the "da Vinci" of eye surgery, Gulani is founding director and chief eye surgeon of the Gulani Vision Institute, where he has pioneered NextGen LASIK and custom cataract surgery with patients from around the world.

With more than 30 years of experience, Gulani is the founder of breakthrough technologies and award-winning inventions, research, publications and protocols establishing the world's first cataract surgery spa in Jacksonville as a global destination.

In addition to his medical practice,



Photos provided by The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach

'Bespoke on the Boulevard' was an opportunity to help artists and veterans who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Fifty people received high-quality suits that will prove useful in their search for new positions. Pictured from left: Dr. Arun Gulani, also known as 'Dr. GQ'; Dr. Suparna Gulani; Donna Guzzo, president and executive director of the Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach; and Armon Lee, one of the event's guests.

Gulani has been called "Dr. GQ" for his global fashions and exotic fabrics. He maintains a fashion design studio in Jacksonville, and his creations include the men's and women's business suits for the fundraiser.

The concept of "Bespoke on the Boulevard" originated during the planning of this year's Beaches — A Celebration of the Arts annual fundraising event held on May 23 at The Surf Club Patio at Ponte Vedra



ABOVE: Dr. Arun Gulani (in blue at the center) is surrounded by some of the recipients of new suits during the event.



LEFT: 'Bespoke on the Boulevard' was an opportunity to help artists and veterans who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Here, one of the recipients tries on a new jacket.

Inn & Club. That event raised \$81,000 to support educational programs at The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach and included a fashion show curated by Gulani.

At the June 17 event, those who received the new suits had an opportunity to model them on the red carpet during a fashion show of their own. Violin and cello players provided music for the event, and artists gave live demonstrations of their painting, adding to the ambiance.

The featured artist was Charlotte Chastain. "It was really cool that she agreed to do that for free," said Guzzo, "and people just loved looking at her art."

The Cultural Center serves as a gathering place to learn, experience and appreciate the arts and culture in its many forms. It provides opportunities for adults, children and families through classes, exhibits, programs and music therapy services for children with special needs.

Monique Burr Foundation for Children applauds Florida Lawmakers for passing bill providing comprehensive prevention education in schools

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children, Inc. (MBF) commended Florida lawmakers for passing HB519, legislation that will provide comprehensive, age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate K-12 prevention health education instruction in all Florida schools.

The law amends Florida Statute 1003.42, expanding and clarifying existing law with additional requirements for health education with an emphasis on prevention educa-

tion. According to research, 95% of child sexual abuse is preventable with education. The legislation takes effect July 1.

The bill provides health education instruction that addresses the prevention of child sexual abuse, exploitation and human trafficking. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Clay Yarborough, Jacksonville, and Sen. Aaron Bean, Fernandina Beach.

"We are grateful to all of Florida's lawmakers, Attorney General Ashley Moody,

and Gov. Ron DeSantis for their ongoing support of prevention education," said Lynn Layton, MBF president and CEO. "While many schools across Florida are implementing prevention education, the legislation clearly defines the requirements and quality to ensure all students in Florida will receive the same comprehensive, research-based prevention education to address all forms of childhood abuse."

MBF can assist schools with programs

to meet these changes at no cost through a generous grant provided by Florida's Attorney General. MBF Prevention Education Programs are a series of comprehensive, evidence-based/evidence-informed prevention programs that educate and empower children and teens with strategies to prevent, recognize, and respond appropriately to bullying, cyberbullying, online dangers,

United Way 'shakes, not stirs' things up at James Bond-themed 004th Givers Gala

By Jennifer Logue
Special to the Recorder

The dress code was black tie, the martinis were shaken (not stirred) and the atmosphere was pure James Bond at the United Way of St. Johns County's recent 004th Givers Gala.

Held May 7 at the Casa Monica Hotel in St. Augustine, the annual benefit presented by The Hutson Companies featured a number of modifications to encourage social distancing while still enabling guests to get in the spirit of 007. In addition to "Casino Royale"-type table games, a martini luge and spy "clues," the gala featured cocktails, gourmet delights, entertainment and both live and silent auctions to support the organization's work in the community.

"James Bond has his Money Penny and Q, but we have each of you," United Way Campaign Chairman Dick Williams told attendees and sponsors, who together helped raise approximately \$100,000 for the organization's mission. "And for that, I can't thank you enough."

While the theme was all James Bond, United Way-SJC Board Chair Beverly Slough emphasized the goal of the event was to raise funds to support those in need, particularly after the economic hardships many experienced as a result of the pandemic.

"I must stress that we are here because our community needs us," Slough said. "Not only has this year been catastrophic for individuals and families, but also for our partner nonprofits that count on our financial support."

United Way-SJC CEO and President Melissa Nelson agreed. "Life is just messy," she said. "In real life, we aren't given a prewritten script with a Hollywood ending. We all need a safety net."

Nelson shared several stories of local individuals and families aided by United Way-SJC in the past year — among them, a young couple whose baby was born with serious heart complications after the couple had both lost their jobs in the restaurant industry due to COVID-19.

GALA continues on Page 29



ABOVE: Cody Hutson, Emily Parker, Kendall Herrin, David Hutson, Brooke Hutson, Kristen Hutson, Trevor Hutson, Tanya Hutson, Travis Hutson. The Hutson Companies was presenting sponsor for the gala.

Photo by Wayne Fusco



LEFT: United Way CEO Melissa Nelson, Campaign Chair Dick Williams and Board Chair Beverly Slough.

Photo by Jennifer Logue

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St. Johns County Clerk of Court Brandon Patty, state Rep. Cyndi Stephenson and state Sen. Travis Hutson attend the May 7 fundraiser in St. Augustine.

Gala

Continued from 28

The organization also worked closely with several area nonprofits to renovate a dilapidated home that will now provide safe housing for homeless veterans.

“Lately, I’ve wondered what it would be like to have M’s support network, Q’s gadgets and technology, the resolve of the double-O (agents) and a license to get away with anything,” Nelson said. “But I believe with your support, this can be a reality. Together, we are the force that keeps those in our midst safe from what lurks in the shadows.”



Photos by Jennifer Logue

‘James Bond’ rappels down the side of the Casa Monica at the United Way’s 007-themed gala.



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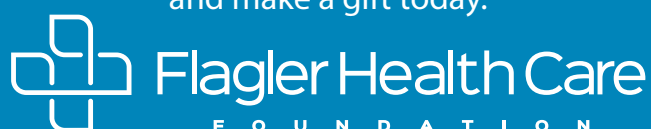
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Photos provided by MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation

Mikaila Shaw, recipient of THE PLAYERS Championship Driven to Succeed Scholarship, stands with MaliVai Washington (left) and Marsha Oliver.

MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation awards scholarships

For over 25 years, the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation has been making higher education more accessible by awarding scholarships to low-income students. Last week, it awarded nearly \$50,000 to 46 students at a scholarship ceremony, bringing the total throughout the foundation's history to more than \$1.3 million.

All of the recipients participated in a lengthy application and interview process and were awarded scholarships based on their merit as successful students, athletes and community members.

The highest honor, the George M. Soper Student Athlete of the Year Award, was given to 10th grade student Taifa Kumalo. She was chosen for this award based on her excellent sportsmanship and her dedication to succeeding in the classroom and on the tennis court.

A full list of scholarship recipients follows.

George M. Soper Student Athlete of the Year Award: Taifa Kumalo, 10th grade, Andrew Jackson High School. This \$5,000 award is given to the student athlete who best exemplifies the foundation's ideals.

Zoe Gaudet Scholarship & Agassi Advantage Award: Mya Sudduth, 12th grade, Andrew Jackson High School. Graduating seniors who are serious about continuing their education receive a \$5,000 scholarship and a laptop courtesy of the (Andre) Agassi Advantage Award.

Rick Murray "Don't Quit" Scholarship: This \$1,000 award was given to acknowledge students who have persevered through adversity. Recipients are: Jayden Critten, 7th grade, John E. Ford K-8 School; Alphonso Pascal, 7th grade, John E. Ford K-8 School; Kahmani Clark, 7th grade, Kirby Smith Middle School; Tre Bridgeman, 10th grade, Andrew Jackson High School; Sydney Foster, 9th grade, Jean Ribault High School; Neemah Owens, 7th grade, Young Women's Leadership Academy.

iMethods Meaningful Work Scholarship: This \$2,000 award was given to students who participated in monthly work readiness and career preparation. Recipients are: Ny'Reon Shuman, 11th, Bishop Kenny High School; Deshai Bell, 11th, Robert E. Lee High School.

THE PLAYERS Championship Driven to Succeed Scholarship: Mikaila Shaw, 6th, Darnell Cookman Middle-High School. This \$1,000 scholarship is awarded to a student who demonstrates champion-level behavior throughout the year.

Sherry Murray Extra Mile Scholarship: Students who made an extra effort in academics, behavior and/or tennis received between \$250 and \$1,500 dollars. Six fifth-graders, five sixth-graders, seven seventh-graders, four eighth-graders, six ninth-graders, seven 10th-graders, three 11th-graders received the scholarship.

Legislation

Continued from 27

child abuse, exploitation, and child trafficking. In response to requirements established in 2019 by the Florida Department of Education, MBF has also added MBF Mental Health Matters and lessons on substance abuse prevention. To date, MBF has trained more than 5,000 facilitators who

have delivered MBF Child Safety Matters and MBF Teen Safety Matters lessons to more than 5 million students across the United States and three countries.

In the 2020-21 school year, MBF will reach even more students with the expansion of new programs, MBF Athlete Safety Matters and MBF After-School Safety Matters. For more information, go to www.mbfpreventioneducation.org or call (904) 642-0210.

Business Weekly

PAGE 31

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 2021

www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

Who's Who in Interior Design:
This is the time to add bold colors, creativity to home

Page 33



Store manager Leslie Anderson (front row, second from right) and staff celebrate the one-year anniversary of the GreenWise Market in Nocatee.

GreenWise Market in Nocatee celebrates 1-year anniversary

GreenWise Market in Nocatee Town Center celebrated its one-year anniversary with a big party on Thursday, June 17.

The event featured DJ Clarence Kelly providing the entertainment, Veterans United beers on tap, games and raffle prizes.

The Nocatee GreenWise, located at 250 Pine Lake Drive, became Publix Super Markets' ninth GreenWise Market and its fifth in Florida when it officially opened on June 20, 2020.

For more photos from the celebration, go to page 34



Anderson chats with DJ Clarence Kelly during the June 17 event.

Artificial intelligence to bring security, safety, health monitoring to smart building

By Shaun Ryan

When the link opens this summer, the 22,000-square-foot co-working space and innovation incubator in Nocatee Town Center will be among the marquee facilities to incorporate the very latest in safety and security technology.

Visionary entrepreneur Raghu Misra has announced that the link team is working with technology leader Matias Klein and his company, Kognition, to assemble an environment that tracks and automates many health and safety measures in the building at 425 Town Plaza Ave.

Kognition's AI — artificial intelligence — software platform processes



Raghu Misra



Matias Klein

data from cameras, video analytics, sensors and connected devices in real time to detect suspicious human activity, threats, irregularities and other health and security policy violations.

"We are pleased to have Matias and his team create a safer, smarter and more secure campus," said Misra. "The link's

overarching and innovative connectivity in Northeast Florida combined with Kognition's state-of-the-art solutions will unlock significant value for us as property owners and operators. The link will be the first facility in the area designed at the same level as many of the world's largest companies with building intelligence and sustainability."

Data from the many devices installed in a building are fed into the artificial intelligence system for analysis. The fusion of artificial intelligence and the network of devices, sometimes called the Internet of Things, creates a higher-level intelligence and automation through

SECURITY continues on Page 34

What is your 'hate language?'



Harry Pappas
Columnist

I would argue that just about everyone has heard about or read the insightful book by marriage counselor and speaker, Gary Chapman, "The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts." The idea behind the

"love language" concept is that if we know our primary love's "personality," we could create a stronger bond in our relationship with others.

Chapman argues that a successful marriage happens when we speak the same love language as our partner. How does one know their love language? If you have access to a computer, head on over to www.5lovelanguages.com and take the five-minute or so multiple choice quiz ... hit send and ... bingo, you got your love language! It's never too late to start loving better!

Any chance that you care what my love languages are? I didn't think so, but I am going to share anyway, since this is my column. My primary love language is "words of affirmation (37%)," which suggests that unsolicited compliments mean the world to me. Hearing the words, "I love you," are important and hearing the reasons behind that love will make me feel exceptionally good. However, to the contrary, insults will leave me shattered and are not easily forgotten. My other love languages rank as follows: acts of service (23%), quality time (17%), physical touch (13%) and receiving gifts (10%).

Arguably, more important than knowing our love languages, is knowing what are our "hate languages." While there are no books on such a topic or anyone touring the country speaking about the hate languages, there is a well-respected Christian psychologist, Dominic Herbst, who put together a 30-minute YouTube video titled, "What is Your Hate Language?" Herbst's conviction and enthusiasm, not only on this subject matter but with all of his teaching, make it a joy to listen to his complimentary teaching

PAPPAS continues on Page 34

The art of buying art for your home

Designing a home's interior can be fun. Whether furnishing a first apartment or a newly purchased family home, many people feel that the art they put on the walls of their homes is an expression of their individuality, and that a home isn't truly a home until its interior reflects their personalities.

Furnishing a home with art can be intimidating, especially for people doing so for the first time. But a few tricks of the trade can help men and women turn the interiors of their homes into spaces that reflect who they are.

■ **Embrace your personal taste.** Don't hesitate to decorate your walls with art you like. When buying furniture for a home, it can make sense to follow certain rules. For example, parents of young children might want to purchase dark-colored furnishings that can hide stains. But no such rules should govern your choices of artwork. Art reflects the person who made it, but it also reflects the person who buys it, so buyers should embrace their personal taste when furnishing their homes with art.

■ **Shop around.** Thanks to the internet, billions of pieces of art, from tapestries to photographs to paintings, are at your fingertips. Comparison shopping can be fun and help novices discover their personal tastes. It also can be a great way to support artists. For ex-

ample, 90 percent of all image royalties on art purchased from YourArtGallery.com goes directly to the artist, ensuring much of buyers' money is going toward supporting the people responsible for the art they plan to hang in their homes. That can give people a greater sense of pride in their home's decor.

■ **Seek inspiration.** If you're unfamiliar with art, don't hesitate to seek inspiration. Art is everywhere, from the hotels you stay in while traveling to the billboards you pass while driving to work to the local art museum near your home. If you're uncertain of what you like, make a concerted effort to recognize the art you see but may not stop to notice each day. As you expose yourself to more and more art, you will gain a greater knowledge of what you like and dislike. Use that knowledge to inform your decisions when buying art for your home.

■ **Switch things up.** Your entire home does not need to follow a theme. If your taste in art is eclectic, embrace that and have different rooms throughout your home reflect your different tastes. This can give each room its own unique feel and make for a colorful home.

The art people hang in their homes is a personal choice, and the process of finding that art can be fun and eye-opening.

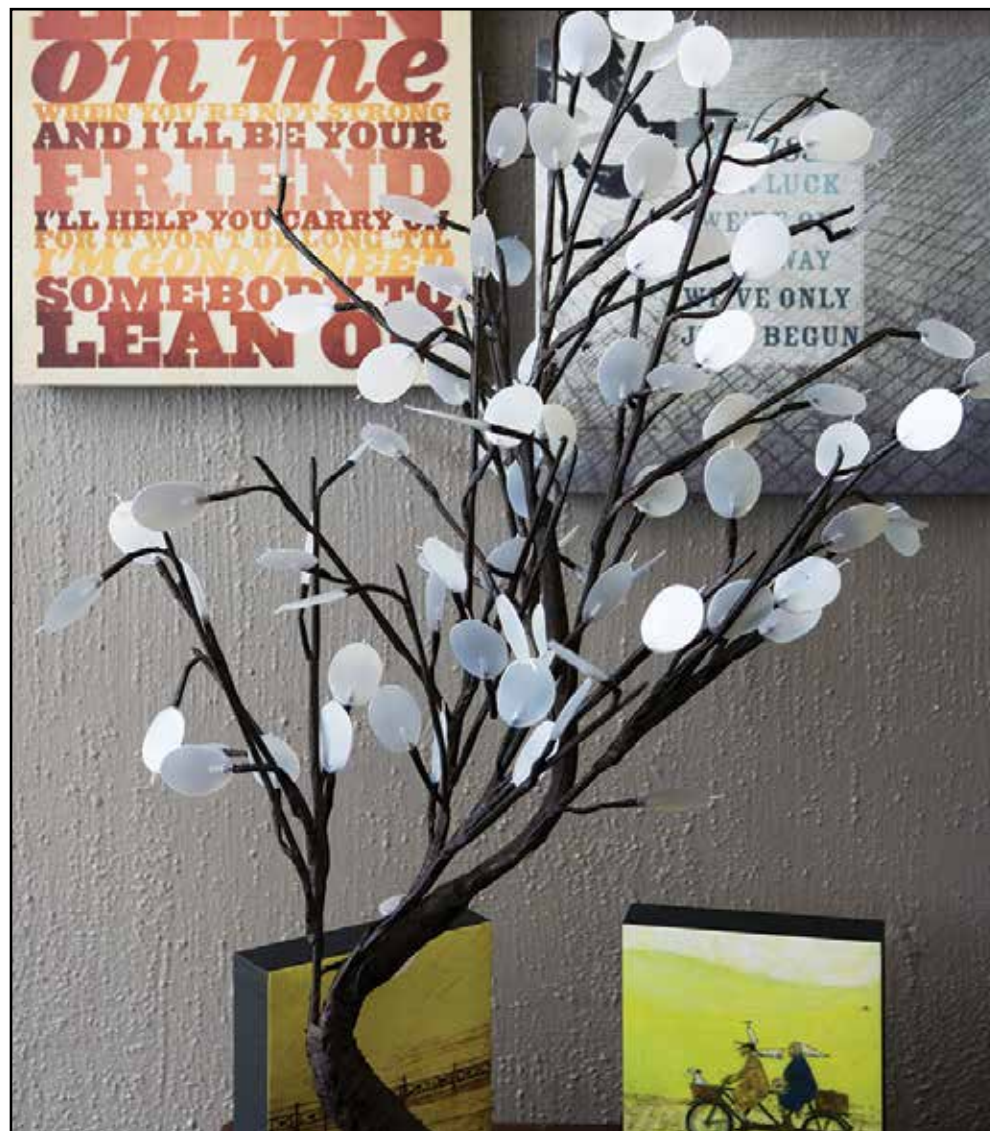


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Goodbye white. Hello color and creativity

Post-COVID interior design moves forward into the bold

Submitted by Hugo's Interiors

Summer is here, and plants are in bloom, their bright spots of color feeding our spirits. The same can be true in our homes. In an effort to “convey a message of calm, resilience, and hope for a brighter 2021,” the Pantone Color Institute named two colors of the year — a soft pebble gray and a bright, cheerful yellow.

Yellow isn't the only bright color trending up; shades of orange, aqua and green are also stepping up into the light. Interior Designer Jennie Hugo says these days, people are more thoughtful about color and texture when refreshing their homes.

“They're willing to be bolder and more creative,” she said, “they're leaning more into color and creative wallpaper.” This year, fourth-generation interior designer Hugo and her family are celebrating 100 years in the interior furnishings industry.

“This last year gave people a chance to better know their families and their interests,” she said, “and they want their homes to reflect those interests. That's where we come in,” she said. “Interior designers can help our clients take their vision to the next level.”



Photo provided by metrocreativeconnection.com

For example, Hugo says she's over white laundry rooms and kitchens. “Why not add a splash of color with a vibrant wallpaper that can bring some joy into your day?” she said. “Mix-and-match accessories in complementary colors can brighten a room tremendously.”

Hugo also pointed out that last year's natural disasters greatly affected the furniture business, creating a supply shortage — especially when it comes to foam for

cushioning. The Texas snowstorm halted petroleum production, which, in turn, ended foam manufacturing which, in turn, created a shortage of materials necessary for building and reupholstering furniture. “I know of a North Carolina furniture manufacturer with a 22-week wait,” she said. In some cases, people are waiting nine months to a year.

“That's why they should talk to their local experts before ordering furniture and

other interior display items,” Hugo said. “We have access to information that might not otherwise be available to the general public.”

As experts in the field, she said her family paid attention in 2020 and stocked up on supplies. “Our typical wait is 8-10 weeks,” she said.

Hugo also offers reupholstering services for those looking to refresh a favorite sofa or family heirloom. “When we reupholster an item, we take it back to the frame,” she said. “We check the bones and apply all new padding or down. That's the difference between recovering and reupholstering an item.”

That's not the only benefit local professionals bring. In addition to boosting your local economy, they have sample rooms where you can feel and see the items that interest you and expose you to others you might not have considered. “We know the best quality. When you order online, you can never be really sure of what you're going to get,” said Hugo. “The lamp may be smaller, the fabric not as textured as it looked online. We can provide insight regarding quality. It's what we do.”

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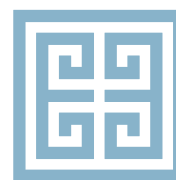
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GREENWISE MARKET CELEBRATES 1 YEAR AT NOCATEE TOWN CENTER



Ricardo and Ilona DeSilva enjoy the festivities at the anniversary celebration on June 17.



Photos by Susan Griffin
DJ Clarence Kelley, of Sunshine Soirees, entertains the guests at the anniversary celebration.



Ron Gamble, founder and brew master of Veterans United, and Sheryl Gamble, co-founder and charity coordinator of Veterans United, attend the one-year celebration for GreenWise's Nocatee location.

Pappas

Continued from 31

moments. Dominic suggests there are primarily eight hate languages that one might levy on another when that person hurts us intently or unintentionally. Here they are in no particular order.

1. Accuser (one who claims that another has done something wrong, illegal, or unkind)

2. Abuser (one who treats another person repeatedly with emotional or physical cruelty)

3. Yeller (one who communicates in a very loud voice. A Screamer)

4. Profaner (one who uses dirty words, bad words or foul language)

5. Curser (one who expresses a wish of evil or misfortune on another)

6. Demon Starer (evil in one's eyes)

7. Condemner (one who criticizes or belittles)

8. Blasphemer (one who speaks disrespectfully of sacred things).

Unlike the 5 Love Languages, there is

no quiz or book to help us determine our hate language. Instead, we must get inside our heart and call it for what it is. Since I am all about being real, transparent and authentic, which makes me vulnerable, I will nonetheless crack open my chest again and show you what is/was going on inside of me. As reluctant as I am to admit, my No. 1 hate language is the accuser (50%), then the condemner (25%) followed by the yellor (20%) and finally the profaner (5%). Fortunately, the abuser, curser, demon starer and blasphemer were never part of my arsenal.

Most of us believe that when we employ one of the hate languages, our behavior, which might appear like an out-of-control explosion, is a justified response to being hurt or misunderstood. What I find ironic is that we may feel good in the moment when trying to prove our point by utilizing one of the love personalities, but deep inside our heart, we know how wrong and inappropriate our behavior is. For example, I have been told too many times that when I "argue" I am often right on the issue in question, but it is how I

Security

Continued from 31

an interdisciplinary approach, thus performing tasks that would normally require human intelligence, but at a fraction of the cost.

"Advancements in deep learning and smart spaces AI are creating a paradigm shift in virtually every facet of the built environment," said Klein. "We are pleased to provide the link with an intelligent enterprise software infrastructure that promotes safety, security and health for its members, visitors and employees — especially during the pandemic environment and beyond."

Basically, the artificial intelligence monitors the data 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, looking for security violations and safety threats. If any such violation or threat is discovered, the system alerts human operators so that they can take action.

It can identify the presence of anyone who's been banned from the building or anyone against whom there is a restraining order. It can identify suspected hackers, connect to watch lists and detect possible firearms. Then, it can prevent suspicious people from entering the building.

Audio functions can detect glass breaking, people screaming or even noise from a party.

On the health side, the platform can take the temperatures of anyone entering the facility or detect whether the person is wearing a mask if that is mandated. Violators would not be admitted to the premises.

The system can also monitor for adherence to social distancing norms and incorporate contact tracing.

Klein expressed enthusiasm for the link and his company's involvement.

"It's exciting here in Nocatee with the link and Raghu Misra, what's he doing here," he said. "He's creating a next-generation smart building, where everything is state-of-the-art ... He wants people to come to the link and feel safe, feel secure and more secure, more safe than they would be anywhere else."

Klein sees a greater role for this type of technology in the years ahead.

"I believe that AI in the future will run all buildings," he said. "The core functions: security, safety, energy savings like lighting, HVAC, maintenance — even logistics and customer experience. It's all going to be run by AI."

Misra also plans to collaborate with Kognition to train a group of young people in the emerging field of innovative sciences and leadership studies with a focus on mindsets and behaviors essential to improvement and practice with video tagging; machine learning; economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts; and more.

Misra said the Nocatee community merits infrastructure that includes elements like the link.

"As businesses adjust, prepare and continue to operate safely, building owners and operators are looking for opportunities to incorporate secure technology solutions that adhere to changing health safety measures," he said. "We are dedicated to proactively improving the security for all who are in the internal and external proximity of our building. The outpouring of support, interest and collaboration from potential technologists, partners, members and users of the space is very encouraging. We affirm the need for this type of model project and innovators like Matias and Kognition to position the one-of-a-kind venue for our members."

For further information, go to thelink.zone.

was right (my behavior) that made me so wrong! Moreover, I steadfastly put forth that we all know that we will feel much better and be happier if we apply kindness instead of a hate language. I could not agree more, perhaps like you, with the following quote from the insightful book, "A Year of Living Kindly: Choices That Will Change Your Life and the World Around You" by Donna Cameron, "When I experience kindness, I am happy. It really is as simple as that. If I extend a kindness, it makes me happy. If I am on the receiving end of kindness, it makes me happy. And if I witness kindness, or even read about it, it makes me happy." So the next time that we are in a position to want to prove our point in a way that might engage one of the hate languages, I suggest that we all remember this anonymous quote, "If you have to choose between being kind and being right, choose being kind and you will always be right." Nuff said!

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In the Arts



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Lightner Museum announces 2nd exhibition in its Lightner Local series

“Inner Light: In a Time of Pandemic,” a new exhibition featuring the work of artist Anna Miller, will open Friday, July 2, at the Lightner Museum in St. Augustine.

It has been described as a celebration of the human spirit through abstraction. Filled with bright colors and energized forms, Miller’s paintings represent an exploration of the artist’s personal development in the midst of struggle.

Inspired by the natural beauty of St. Johns County, “Inner Light” interprets these surroundings through the poetic and metaphorical expression of semi-abstract imagery. Sub-tropical flowers and plants, stormy skies and the drama and power of the ocean and sun inform the artist’s visual language consisting of geometric shapes, refracted light patterns and dynamic lines.

“In my work, I explore rhythm, movement and composition in order to express feelings,” said Miller. “The process is very



“Tropical” by Anna Miller is oil on canvas.

Photo provided by the Lightner Museum

similar to instrumental music composition, where the sounds of different instruments or groups of instruments, represent different emotions.”

“Inner Light: In a Time of Pandemic” is the second exhibition in the museum’s 2021 Lightner Local series. Created to showcase the extraordinary talents of artists who live in the Northeast and Central Florida regions, Lightner Local is supported by the Benjamin

and Jean Troemel Arts Foundation.

The exhibition opening will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. July 2, coinciding with St. Augustine’s First Friday Art Walk. The work will be on display until Aug. 13.

The Lightner Museum is open seven days a week, 363 days a year, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 75 King St., St. Augustine. For more information, go to www.lightnermuseum.org or call (904) 824-2874.

Jacksonville Symphony opens new season in September

After a season filled with challenges and triumphs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Music Director Courtney Lewis and the Jacksonville Symphony recently announced the upcoming 2021-22 season. For the first time since March 2020, Jacoby Symphony Hall will open without physical distancing when the season begins in September 2021.

“We have all spent the last year adjusting our day-to-day life for the sake of getting to a safer tomorrow where we can once again enjoy each other’s company,” said President and CEO Steven Libman. “Although the Jacksonville Symphony was able to successfully open last season in a physically distanced space, there is nothing like the energy created in a packed symphony hall. There is an intangible bond between artist and audience that feeds off this energy.”

SYMPHONY continues on Page 36

Apex Theatre Studio presents 'Godspell' at Amphitheatre

On Monday, June 28, and Tuesday, June 29, Apex Theatre Studio will present the Off-Broadway classic “Godspell” at the Backyard Stage at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre for limited-capacity performances with distanced seating.

An instant hit when it was produced Off Broadway in 1971, “Godspell” offers a variety of musical styles and theatrical formats to make the Gospel of St. Matthew

GODSPELL continues on Page 36

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Sports

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THE PLAYERS Championship names new chairman

Matt Welch vows for return to normalcy — and change

By Don Coble

As a volunteer for THE PLAYERS Championship, Matt Welch has helped park cars, helped players make reservations and picked up trash.

But when the tournament returns to the Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass next March, Welch will have his most significant role yet as the new tournament chairman.

The retired construction executive from Fleming Island will be the front man for more than 1,500 volunteers when THE PLAYERS return to Northeast Florida on March 8-13.

Next year's PLAYERS won't be like any other. Welch said organizers will fold in what they learned a year ago when crowds were limited by the COVID-19 pandemic to the popular aspects of tournaments past.

"It will be a lot like it was," he said. "There will be some things that will change, some things that we'll keep. We will always be changing. We're always working to make it better. That will be the new normal from now on."

As the chairman, Welch will greet players, dignitaries and fans for the first full return to golf after struggling through the virus for the past two years. He will shuttle the winner to their post-tournament commitments and share the stage when the golden trophy is presented in front of the clubhouse.



Photos provided by The PGA TOUR

Matt Welch (left) has been named 2022 tournament chairman for THE PLAYERS Championship, and Kevin Copeland (right) is vice chairman for the 2022 PLAYERS Championship.

But most importantly, he will continue to offer support and encouragement to everyone who works thanklessly behind the scenes.

"The one thing I ask the volunteers to remember is we're trying to help Northeast Florida, both financially and with our nonprofit organizations," Welch said. "It takes a village of volunteers, so let's make it work."

When Welch served as the first vice-chairman earlier this year, he played a prominent part in organizing volunteers, players, patrons and hospitality.

"The first vice-chairman is the one who gets down in the weeds," he said. "The chairman is the guy who shakes hands. That's what I'm doing this year. That's

certainly not my strong part."

Welch was working with players' services in 2020 when the PGA TOUR and tournament organizers decided to cancel the event after the first round, a day after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said its data showed the virus had spread throughout the state.

"That was the lowest point," Welch said, "seeing players trying to make reservations to get home. Everyone wanted to get out."

This year's tournament limited crowds to reduce the chances of spreading the virus.

Next year, the gates will be open to anyone with a ticket, and that will keep Welch — and the rest of the volunteers — busy for the next nine months.

"There's a lot more to a golf tournament

than meets the eye," he said. "At each stage, you see the amount of work. We ask our people to go above and beyond, and everyone understands the big picture. We're already in discussions on what we need to accomplish."

Organizers already are conducting meetings, creating committees, meeting with staff and delegating leadership roles for next year. There already are plans for Saturday workdays, Welch said, and shortly after the new year, "you can basically write off your weekends."

Welch moved to Fleming Island in 1981 from Augusta, Georgia — another Southern city with a rich pedigree in golf. He immediately transplanted his passion for golf to THE PLAYERS Championship.

"The most important thing about this golf tournament is what it means to our nonprofits in Northeast Florida," Welch said. "When the tournament was canceled in 2020, and then we had limited galleries this year, revenues to our nonprofits went down, too."

"I'm glad I'm going to be part of when we're back at full force next year. It's going to be back to like it was — even if it's a little bit different."

In addition, Kevin Copeland has been appointed vice chairman (Blue Coat), joining Houston Bowles, Lee Nimnicht, Tyler Oldenburg and Marc Hassan.

Copeland began volunteering with THE PLAYERS in 2017 and has directed the efforts of numerous committees, including volunteer shuttle, golf cart management and hospitality services at Benefactor and The Patio locations.

Field set for 2021 First Coast Women's Amateur at Sawgrass CC

9 past champions returning

The field is set for the 2021 First Coast Women's Amateur at Sawgrass Country Club, June 24-25. Northeast Florida's premier annual women's golf championship will feature 74 amateur female golfers competing across three championship divisions — Amateur (36 players), Senior (25) and Super Senior (13) — via a 36-hole individual, stroke play competition.

Brooks Rehabilitation is returning for the sixth year as the championship's presenting sponsor, along with continued support from the Jacksonville Area Golf Association (JAGA).

Twenty-four of the players have handicap indexes of 2.0 and below, and 37 have indexes of 4.0 and below.

Nine past champions are also in the field (amateur championship division: Christina Steffen, Kristen Schupak and Ramya Meenakshisundaram; senior division: Debbie Drabinski Caruso, Susie Fonde, Therese Quinn, Sara Phillips-Durst and Tama Caldabaugh; super senior division: Helen Short).

"We are so excited for an incredible two days of competition at Sawgrass Country Club," said Susie Fonde, 2021 FCWA committee chair. "The strength and depth of the 2021 First Coast Women's Amateur field is a testament to the strength of women's golf in Northeast Florida, and we hope to continue to use the FCWA as a vehicle to promote female participation in this great game across all age ranges."

"On behalf of the entire team at

Sawgrass Country Club, we are thrilled to serve as host of the 2021 First Coast Women's Amateur Championship," said Stefan Brunt, director of golf at Sawgrass Country Club. "We are passionate about promoting women's golf and equally excited to have the top women golfers from the First Coast and beyond compete on our course and enjoy our newly renovated clubhouse."

The championship starts on Thursday, June 24, with tee times beginning at 8 a.m. on both tees. Second round play on Friday, June 25, will begin with a shotgun start at 8:30 a.m., with the awards ceremony immediately following play at 1:30 p.m. Spectators are welcome to attend the competition on both days.

Founded in 1990, the First Coast Wom-

en's Amateur attracts the top high school, college and amateur golfers in Northeast Florida and boasts a strong list of past champions, including former LPGA players, collegiate champions and leaders in the golf industry.

Additionally, the FCWA will support the following nonprofit organizations this year: Moore-Myers Children's Fund, the JAGA Scholarship Fund and North Florida Junior Golf Foundation.

The 2021 FCWA Tournament Committee includes Sarah Phillips, tournament chair; Susie Fonde, committee chair; and committee members at large Melissa Gotfredson and Emily Tillo.

More information about the field and schedule of events can be found at jax.bluegolf.com/bluegolf/jax21

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