

# Chamber Connections



ST. JOHNS COUNTY  
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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:lauren.clark@sjcchamber.com)

**For more information and/or to register for events, go to [www.sjcchamber.com](http://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](http://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](http://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, Primercia; 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](http://www.sjcchamber.com).

## EDC Breakfast

Continued from 16

Development manager, at (904) 829-5681 or [cathy.newman@sjcchamber.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://body20.com).

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[sjcchamber.com](http://sjcchamber.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

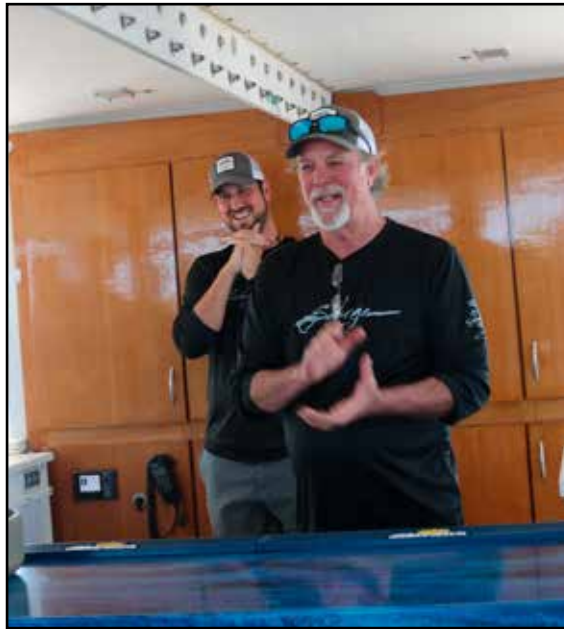




Photos by Susan Griffin

**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](http://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](http://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](http://www.fctc.edu), [www.goodwilljax.org](http://www.goodwilljax.org) or [www.GetThereFL.com](http://www.GetThereFL.com).



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