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PONTE VEDRA



# Recorder

February 17, 2022

Volume 53, No. 16

75 cents

PonteVedraRecorder.com

Not your average newspaper, not your average reader



Photo by Anthony Richards

Cookie season has begun, and members of Girl Scout Troop 52017 took to the streets of Nocatee in golf carts Feb. 9 selling cookies to help raise money for the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund. Read the story on page 12.



### INSIDE: CHECK IT OUT!

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



### Gift of Giving

Pages 11-22



Sports  
Page 28



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# INSIDE

One of Us

Page 6

Business Weekly

Pages 23-26

In the Arts

Page 27

Sports

Pages 28-30

## Send us your news

We welcome submissions of photos, stories, columns and letters to the editor. Let us know what's happening. If you have hard copies of photos you want us to feature, feel free to bring them to our office — we'll scan them and hand them right back. E-mail submissions to [news@pontevedrarecorder.com](mailto:news@pontevedrarecorder.com) or bring them by our office at **1102 A1A N., Unit 108, Ponte Vedra Beach.**



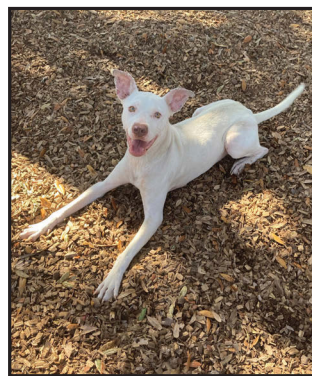
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Plus, find the Recorder on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ThePVRecorder](https://www.facebook.com/ThePVRecorder)

## ADOPT A PET

### Maize

Hi, I'm Maize. I'm an 8-month-old female American pit bull terrier. I love to go for walks, play in the yard with toys and do all kinds of fun puppy things. If you want to add a friendly, sweet, girl to your family, stop by the Pet Center to see if we're a match.



### Bella

Hi, I'm Bella. I'm a 2-year-old female terrier mix. I'm sweet, friendly and happy. In my previous home I was raised outside, so I will need some help with house-training and learning to live indoors.

If you think we might be a match, please stop by the Pet Center for a meet-and-greet with me.

## St. Johns County Pet Center

Cat adoptions at the St. Johns County Pet Center 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 off U.S. 1 between County Road 210 and International Golf Parkway. Business hours are 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. 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, call the **St. Johns County Pet Center at (904) 209-6190.**

## BRIEFS

### Dune project expected to miss deadline

Sand placement operations of the FEMA Dune Enhancement Project are now complete in Crescent and South Ponte Vedra beaches, leaving only Ponte Vedra Beach to complete.

The contractor, Continental Heavy Civil, formally notified the county of its inability to complete the project for Ponte Vedra Beach by the contracted date of March 31. Reasons cited for the delay include a nationwide trucker shortage. Despite this news, the plan is to reopen Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park to the public by spring 2022, according to the county.

At its March 1 board meeting, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners will discuss and decide on options available to complete the project expeditiously while mitigating the risk to the county.

After March 31, sand placement operations will access the beach through alternate locations. The priority is to complete the section of beach from the northern boundary of Guana State Park to Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park. Resources from the recently concluded South Ponte Vedra Beach sand placement were redirected to the southern section of Ponte Vedra Beach.

In the meantime, the county reminds beachgoers that Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park and parking

lot remain closed Monday through Friday. A portion of the parking lot and the beach walkway will remain open on Saturdays and Sundays. A section of Cornerstone Park remains occupied by the contractor to stage heavy equipment.

### St. Johns County to host American Rescue Plan Act Workshop

St. Johns County is hosting an American Rescue Plan Act workshop to allow an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on how the federal funds should be utilized. During the workshop, county staff will provide an overview of the law and solicit input to help prioritize impacted areas. All feedback collected at the workshop and through an online survey will be aggregated and analyzed before the county considers more funding allocations.

The workshop will be held at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 22, at the Health and Human Services Building, Muscovy Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine.

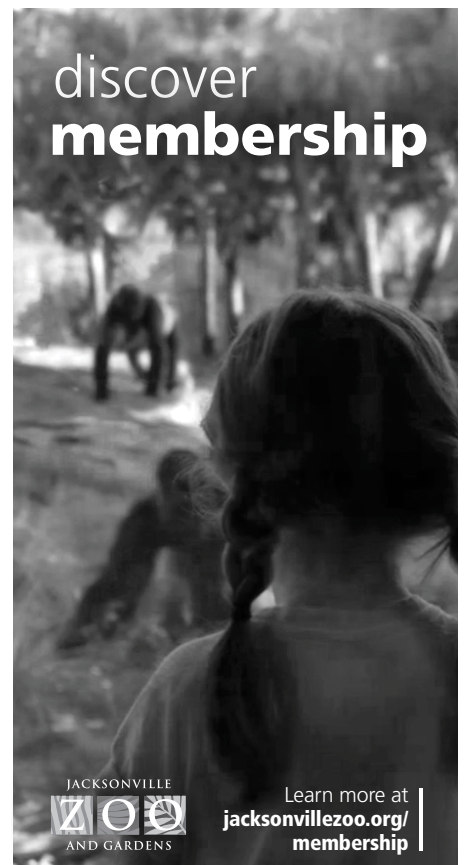
No action will be taken during the workshop.

## PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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# Briefs

Continued from 2

For those who cannot attend the workshop, St. Johns County has established an online survey to garner additional community input. To find the survey and more information, go to [sjcfl.us/SJCARPA](http://sjcfl.us/SJCARPA).

## Presentation to focus on starting a business

Job hunters are invited to a Zoom meeting on “How to STARTUP Your Own Business,” presented by Melinda Powers, small business consultant, Florida Small Business

Development Center at University of North Florida.

Powers will explain the seven basic requirements for starting a business: selecting an idea, testing the market, acquiring capital, writing a plan, turning for help, understanding legal requirements and putting it all together.

The presentation, part of Christ Episcopal Church’s Savvy Job Hunters Ministry, will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Feb. 25. Sign-in begins at 9:50 a.m.

To register in advance, go to [https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZlIdOrqT8uHtZwEf\\_QOUV7B\\_hJ\\_okka6vH](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZlIdOrqT8uHtZwEf_QOUV7B_hJ_okka6vH)

Registrants will receive a confirmation

email containing information about joining the meeting.

## Gallery plans Earth Day community art project

Butterfield Garage Art Gallery, 137 King St., St. Augustine, is hosting its second annual Open Community Art Project as a way to celebrate artists in the community. Anyone interested is invited to celebrate Earth Day 2022 by creating and exhibiting artworks related to the beauty of the planet and protecting its environment in the gallery’s “Celebrating EARTH” open invitational exhibition.


Draw it, paint it, collage it ... your

choice. Canvases and entry forms can be picked up at Butterfield Garage Art Gallery. Entry fee is \$10 per entry and includes an 8-by-8-inch canvas. Works created with materials other than the canvas must conform to the 8-by-8-inch dimensions.


Entry forms are available at the gallery, or on the Butterfield Garage website [butterfieldgarage.com](http://butterfieldgarage.com). The gallery is open every day, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

All entries must be received at Butterfield Garage Art Gallery no later than March 27. The opening reception will take place April 1, and the exhibit will continue through April 30.


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- Christine



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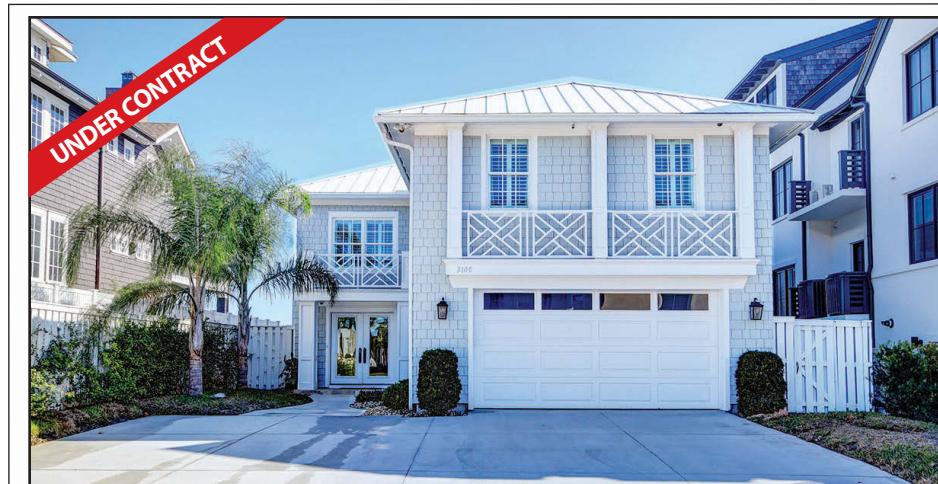
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## OBITUARIES

### Willa Birks McDougall

Willa Birks McDougall, 91, of Ponte Vedra Beach, and till recently also of Georgeville, Quebec, died peacefully in her home on January 30, 2022.

Willa was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, Canada in a large and loving extended family. After attending McGill University, she met and married her life-long “best beau,” Jim.

Willa and Jim raised their 3 beloved children in Montreal, and also in nearby Mt. Bruno where Willa’s extended family had gathered for years to enjoy each other and the beautiful Canadian outdoors. Innumerable sporting activities, multi-generational family gatherings and celebrations ... these were the stuff of “Bruno life,” and they constituted Willa’s absolutely most favorite memories.

Willa was an accomplished athlete. She won many local tennis tournaments. She was ladies’ golf champion at Mt. Bruno Country Club an unprecedented 10 times over 14 years, and racked up 11 holes-in-one over her lifetime. She never spoke of her natural prowess, but she passed on the love of sports, outdoor life, and fair play to her children and grandchildren alike.

Willa was also known for the beauty of her prolific handiwork: homemade meals,



Willa Birks McDougall

colorful sweaters and quilts, needlepointed pillows, fresh flower arrangements, and more. For Willa, life was to be richly shared. She also took on significant volunteer leadership roles including several years each as President of all volunteers for the Montreal Junior League and Montreal General Hospital.

In 1977, Willa and Jim relocated their primary home to Ponte Vedra. They loved their new life and their many friends here. Still, they returned to Canada annu-

ally for months at a time. Willa continued to travel north even after Jim passed in 2002, and, with the help of her family, on to her 90th year.

Four years ago, Willa’s grandson Ben moved in with her to become her full-time caregiver. Thanks to him, Willa was able to stay in her home and maintain as normal, full, and happy a life as possible right to the end. Willa loved her Ben!

Willa is survived by her three children and their families: Sandy (Paolo, Ben, Jordan, Seth, Bianca, Nicole), Carrie (Lincoln, Morgan, Vince), and Duncan (Belle, Jesse). She will also be dearly missed by many, both north and south.

A memorial gathering will be announced at a later date.

Special thanks to those who were invaluable in Willa’s end-of-life care, including Dr Tea Stephens, Casie Cole, Debbie Greene, Mary Annabi, the ProMedica Hospice team, and Nikki Helm.

Donations in Willa’s name may be made to Children’s Literacy Foundation, a non-profit founded and directed by her son Duncan (CLiF, 1536 Loomis Hill Rd, Waterbury Center, VT 05677), or to ProMedica Hospice, (8130 Baymeadows Way West, Unit 201, Jacksonville, FL 32256).

## DEATH NOTICES

### Generoso Baroso

Generoso Baroso, 77, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Feb. 4, 2022. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

### Anne T. Blackburn

Anne T. Blackburn, 96, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Feb. 7, 2022. Arrangements by Quinn Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com 904-249-1100

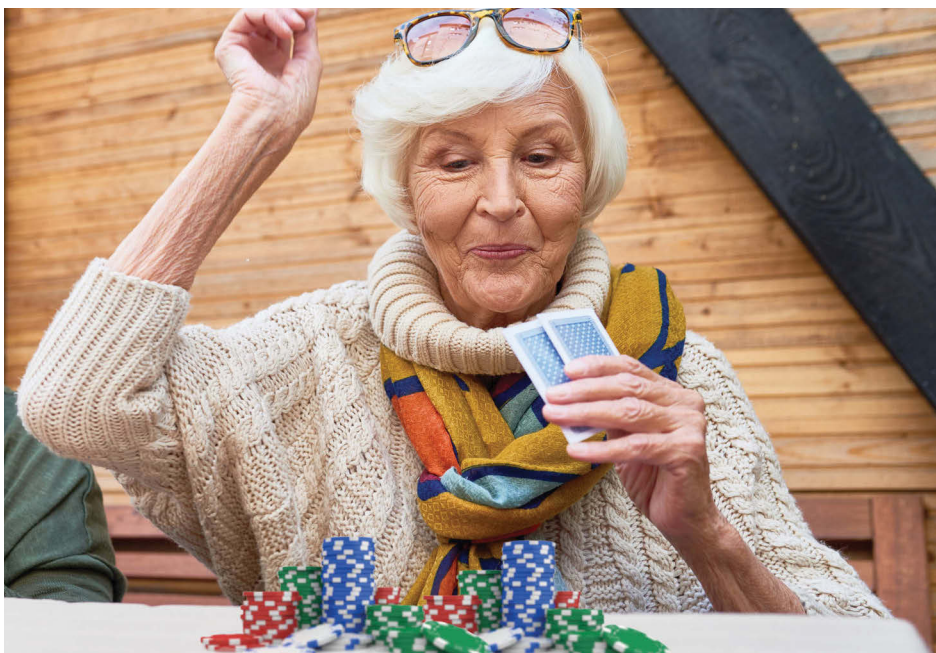
### Edward Cooke

Edward Cooke, 86, of St. Augustine, Florida, died Feb. 6, 2022. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

### Walter “Ski” Czyzewski

Walter “Ski” Czyzewski, 88, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Feb. 7, 2022. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

DEATH NOTICES continue on Page 5



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## OBITUARIES

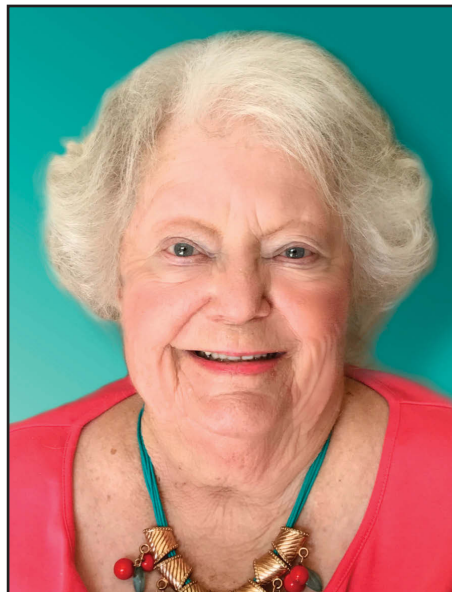
### Mary Alice Hackney Sanders

Mary Alice Hackney Sanders was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi on November 2, 1938 to Paul and Alice Hackney. She attended Hattiesburg High School, where she played in the band and met her sweetheart, Jerry Sanders. Mary Alice attended college at The University of Southern Mississippi and then married her love, Jerry, on May 26, 1957. She worked in the library at Mississippi State University while Jerry completed his engineering degree.

Mary Alice was a wonderful, loving mother and a beloved Mimi. In 1958 Jerry and Mary Alice were blessed with their first child, Sharon Patricia Sanders, followed by the birth of their son, Charles Scott Sanders (Jewell) in 1961 and their daughter, Suzanne Sanders Joyner (John) in 1966. They were blessed with many grandchildren, including Charles Evans (Casey), Allison Leigh Weems (Bo), Justin Sanders (Angie), Mary Margaret Hill (Jamie), Brian Charles Sanders, Anna Claire Dumas (Ben) and CJ Joyner, as well as their great grandchildren Rhett & Bowen Weems and Jack Dumas.

Jerry enjoyed a long career as an engineer and manager with South Central Bell and as a Vice President of BellSouth Corporation. His career took the family to Chicago, Illinois, several parts of Mississippi (Gulfport, Meridian, and Jackson), Birmingham, Alabama, and finally, to Jacksonville, Florida, where they lived in The Plantation in Ponte Vedra Beach. They developed many close friends over the years and they loved spending time golfing, traveling, enjoying the beach and having fun with family and friends.

Mary Alice was a true Southern lady. She was known for her warmth and hospitality. She “never met a stranger” and made friends everywhere she went. Mary Alice loved decorating her home for



Mary Alice Hackney Sanders

every holiday and she was a wonderful hostess. One of her passions was gardening. Her rose garden in Birmingham and her gardens in The Plantation were her pride and joy. She loved giving beautiful bouquets of roses to family and friends.

Mary Alice was always involved in the community, giving generously of her time and finances to organizations such as the American Cancer Society, the Girl Scouts, the Ponte Vedra Women’s Club, and Faithful Servant Ministries. Being involved in church work was a huge part of her life. Mary Alice grew up singing in the choir at Broad Street Methodist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. She taught Sunday School and was a youth leader for many years at Christ United Methodist Church in Jackson, Mississippi and she also helped establish the prayer garden there. Mary Alice and Jerry were early members of Asbury United Methodist Church in Birmingham, Alabama and charter members of Ponte Vedra United Methodist Church in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, where Mary Alice served on the

Altar Guild and sang in the choir.

Mary Alice loved her family and friends deeply and her warmth and kindness will be missed by them every day. They are comforted by the fact that she is with Jesus in Heaven and that they will be together again one day. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but will have everlasting life.” John 3:16

A celebration of Mary Alice’s life will be held at Ponte Vedra Church on February 19, 2022 at 11:30 a.m. (EST). The service will be live streamed for those unable to attend.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Mary Alice’s memory to Ponte Vedra Church, 76 South Roscoe Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, 32082. (website: [pontevedra.church](http://pontevedra.church))



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## DEATH NOTICES

### Roy P. Hatten

Roy P. Hatten, 62, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Feb. 6, 2022. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – [www.pontevedravally.com](http://www.pontevedravally.com)

### Barbara Haun

Barbara Haun, 87, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Feb. 5, 2022. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – [www.pontevedravally.com](http://www.pontevedravally.com)

### Homer Hull Jr.

Homer Hull Jr., 95, of Atlantic Beach, Florida, died Feb. 4, 2022. Arrangements by Quinn Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com) 904-249-1100

### Patricia Hultz

Patricia Hultz, 81, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died Feb. 10, 2022. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – [www.pontevedravally.com](http://www.pontevedravally.com)

# Spring

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*Jonathan Zisser, co-founder and owner of Zisser Family Law in Jacksonville, has practiced in several diverse areas of the law over his career. He is the son of attorneys Elliot and Carolyn Zisser and has been recognized for his work.*

## Jonathan Zisser

### As told to Shaun Ryan

**I see that you have worked as an attorney for Defenders of Wildlife in Washington, D.C. Can you tell me about your experience there and your perspective on protecting endangered species?**

My experience with Defenders of Wildlife was 20 years ago now, but I still remember working with the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S Forest Service and U.S. Department of Justice to protect the northern spotted owl species and its habitat due to the effects of logging and climate change.

**In Jacksonville, you served as an assistant public defender. Can you tell me about your role and its importance to a society that respects the rights of the accused?**

The fundamental role of the Office of the Public Defender is to provide competent legal representation to the criminally accused who cannot afford to hire an attorney. The right to counsel to everyone facing a possible deprivation of liberty is the one of the most fundamental and important constitutional rights we have. My role included representing children in juvenile court, the mentally ill in civil detention court and adults charged with misdemeanors to very serious first degree felonies. There cannot be two systems of justice in this county, one for the wealthy and one for everyone else.

**How did your upbringing influence your interest in law?**

Having two parents who are attorneys definitely kept the idea of being a lawyer in the forefront, but neither of my parents put any pressure on me to become an attorney, or to practice in the areas where they practice. But their passion and interest in the law and in helping people definitely influenced my decision to go to law school and become an attorney.

**Tell me about your current practice. What kinds of cases do you take on, and how do you approach each new one?**

My current practice focuses on family law, and the criminal collateral damage that often follows families in conflict, such as domestic violence, substance abuse and DUI. My focus in family law revolves mostly around representing parties going through divorce proceedings, custody and timesharing evaluations, valuation and distribution of the assets and liabilities acquired during a marriage, post judgment modification and enforcement of final judgments, and non-married parties going through paternity proceedings. I approach each case by analyzing the issues unique to the case, asking the client to evaluate the things that are most important to him/her, and developing a strategy with each client that can result in a successful settlement.

**What are some of the achievements of which you are most proud?**

I'm most proud of my inclusion on the SuperLawyers.com list from 2020-2022 and being named as a SuperLawyers.com rising star in 2013-14. I'm also proud of my annual commitment to pro bono service by providing time to Jacksonville Area Legal Aid in offering family law clinics to those members of the community who can-



not afford to hire a family law attorney.

**What do you like best about living here on the First Coast?**

I love the quality of life that the First Coast provides. I spend much of my free time on the beaches stretching from Atlantic Beach to St. Augustine, riding bikes in the trails of Hannah Park and Guana State Park and enjoying

paddle boarding and kayaking on the Intracoastal Waterway and St. Johns River. My daughter loves the beach and all the playgrounds around town. I also cheer hard for the Jaguars where I've been a season ticket holder since the beginning of the franchise, and enjoy the arts, culture and music that come to the greater Jacksonville area. I also love getting "down" to St. Augustine and "up" to Fernandina Beach and just walking around with friends.



# Exhibit chronicles achievements of African-Americans in golf

As the nation celebrates Black History Month with observances and activities honoring the historic contributions of African-Americans, THE PLAYERS is no exception. This month, THE PLAYERS introduced “Foreward Together,” a new exhibit that highlights and chronicles the milestones and impact of African-Americans in golf.

The exhibit, which also highlights Jacksonville leaders’ contributions to the integration of golf, will be on display at TPC Sawgrass during the month of February and will relocate to the atrium of Jacksonville City Hall for display throughout March.

“Foreward Together” features interactive touch screen displays, timelines and

memorabilia from several of the game’s most celebrated legends and industry trailblazers.

“Calvin (Peete, the first African-American winner of THE PLAYERS Championship) inspired so many young people, especially kids, across the country and across the world to pick up a golf club and start playing this great game,” said Pepper Peete, widow of the late Calvin Peete. “This exhibit is just one way his legacy lives on, and future generations can continue to know that golf is a sport anyone can play.”

“Foreward Together” includes a rich collection of information, stories and items designed to inform and introduce visitors to the many pioneers, trailblazers

and advocates who have contributed to the growth and impact of the sport. The origins of the Foreward Together exhibit stem from a Northeast Florida Golf Exhibit that was on display at the Ritz Theater & LaVilla Museum in 2015.

“It’s such an honor to play a part in bringing this exhibit to life,” said Jared Rice, executive director of THE PLAYERS. “Golf has such a rich history in our community, and this exhibit – as evidenced by its name – demonstrates our commitment to honoring and building a stronger and more inclusive future.”

“We are honored that THE PLAYERS chose to commission this exhibit and have it on display for all of Jacksonville’s citizens to see and explore,” said Jack-

## ‘Foreward Together’ Exhibit

### FEBRUARY

**Where:** TPC Sawgrass Club-house, 110 Championship Way, Ponte Vedra Beach,

**Hours:** 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Sunday

### MARCH

**Where:** Jacksonville City Hall: 117 W Duval St, Jacksonville, FL 32202

**Hours:** Monday through Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

sonville Mayor Lenny Curry. “Jacksonville is home to many African-American trailblazers who worked tirelessly to ensure that the game of golf is more accessible, and this exhibit shines an important spotlight on the leading role our community has played in making sure golf is more inclusive and welcoming to all.”

# Kelsea Ballerini to headline Military Appreciation Day concert

Two-time Grammy Award-nominated, multi-platinum songwriter, producer and ACM Female Vocalist of the Year nominee Kelsea Ballerini will highlight THE PLAYERS Championship’s Military Appreciation Day Concert on March 8.

She will be the first female artist to perform at the Military Appreciation Day Concert.

With the release of her debut album “The First Time” (Black River), she became “the only female country artist to hit No. 1 with her first three consecutive singles from a debut album.”

She has logged four back-to-back Top 10 entries on the Billboard Top Country Albums chart.

With 25 certifications from the RIAA to date, her catalog has a string of essential smashes such as the double-platinum “Miss Me More” and “Peter Pan,” as well as the platinum “hole in the bottle” with Shania Twain — which marked Ballerini’s sixth No. 1.

Ballerini has garnered two Grammy Award nominations, won two ACM Awards, two CMA Awards, took home the iHeartRadio Music Awards honor for “Best New Artist” and received multiple career nominations from the ACM Awards, American Music Awards, CMA Awards, CMT Awards and People’s Choice Awards.

She concluded 2021 as the “No. 3 most-played female artist on country radio” and CMT “Artist of the Year,” in addition to picking up “Musical Event of the Year” and “Video of the Year” at the CMA Awards for the gold-certified “half of my hometown” with Kenny Chesney.

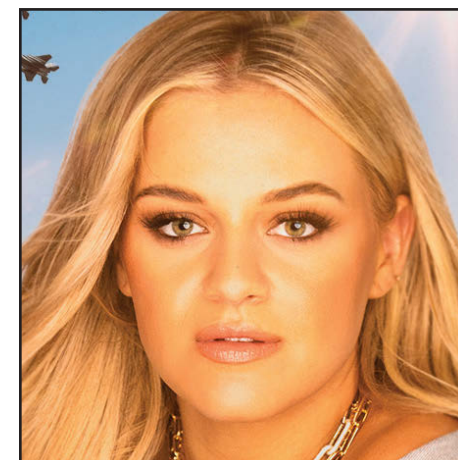
According to NPR, “Kelsea Ballerini is definitely one of the most influential women in country right now ... she’s defining the sound of the genre.”

She also was inducted as a member of the Grand Ole Opry in 2019. At the time, she was the Opry’s youngest member, in its nearly 100-year history.

The performance will take place on the island green par-3 17th hole at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass and headlines several initiatives leading up to, and during, tournament week that will honor military members, veterans and their families.

The concert will immediately follow the Military Appreciation Day Ceremony, which begins at 4:30 p.m. Tickets already include access to the Military Appreciation Day Ceremony and Concert and can only be purchased via THEPLAYERS.com/tickets. Parking is separate and must be purchased in advance.

“We are excited to bring back the Military Appreciation Day Ceremony and Concert that our fans have come to know and love,” said Jared Rice, executive director of THE PLAYERS. “Kelsea is going to bring the star-power, energy and passion that have been staples of our Military Appreciation Day over the last 10-plus years, and we’re looking for-



ward to a strong lineup of initiatives and programs to honor all military members, veterans and their families for everything they do to protect and defend the freedoms we enjoy.”

Refer to the military information page on THE PLAYERS website (<https://www.theplayers.com/military.html>) for a full list of military appreciation offerings and programming at the 2022 championship.

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

Photos provided by Kathy Esfahani

## KATHY'S GARDENING GUIDE: SUCCULENTS FOR WINTER, WHY NOT?

By Kathy Esfahani



Kathy Esfahani

*"Life is like a cactus, prickly but very beautiful."*

Whoever said you couldn't have nice plantings in winter?

Succulents are a perfect choice all-year long, especially during the cooler months when temperatures can dip very low, and the seasonal rain like

we've been experiencing this year often makes planting outside — or indoors — seem like a chore. But, you still have options. Especially when planting succulents in your yard or filling up your favorite container with a variety of colors. Any time of the year in Ponte Vedra Beach is as good a time as any for planting succulents.

Want to bring the beauty of succulents inside? Choose your favorite container. Provided it gives adequate space for soil, drainage and air, of course. Like humans, succulents thrive on lots of oxygen and sunlight. Your favorite container can either be from something you already have lying around your home or something simple you purchased at the local dollar store.

We have created some glorious arrangements of succu-

lents recently gathered at the nursery and planted within a resin seashell purchased at the local home-goods store. Simply clean the container thoroughly, ensuring the item you use is free of insects, larva and debris. Fill approximately halfway, then arrange the succulents you've chosen exactly how you prefer, placing any trailing plant to the edges to provide a more abundant container. No placement is wrong!

When putting your new creation indoors, remember to place near sunlight, but not directly. Ensure the place chosen to feature your new creation provides lots of unobstructed airflow to give the succulents plenty of oxygen to thrive. Succulents do not need much water to survive; in fact, the less the better!

In a few days to a couple of weeks post planting, your succulents' container will flourish. Simply place the container within your home or on a patio and enjoy the beauty of the succulents all year round.

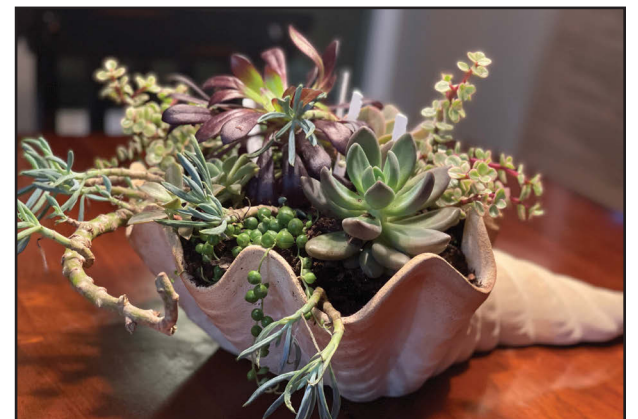
Get creative and happy planting.

*Flower of the Week: Variegated Sun Rose*

**Email Kathy at [kcg.pvr@gmail.com](mailto:kcg.pvr@gmail.com) for any questions or gardening tips you would like to see in the future. For more information and ideas, visit Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery, 196 N. Roscoe Blvd. The phone number is 904-655-7373.**



Baby sun rose



Succulent planter



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# Nease offers students in-depth approach with SAT boot camp

By Anthony Richards

For high school students, this can be a stressful time, especially for upperclassmen, as they prepare to take the SAT, which is part of their path to college.

However, Nease High School is doing its part to take some of that stress away by offering students an opportunity to be as best prepared for the test as possible with a pair of boot camps focusing on the math and verbal aspects of the exam.

“The SAT/ACT is a tough test for many students,” Nease High math teacher Kelli Gebauer said. “Learning how to balance the time constraints and content is crucial to getting a good score. Many students were able to get the Bright Futures Scholarship after taking our boot camp.”

The school will hold two consecutive weekends where students can hone their knowledge and have a greater sense of what to expect heading into the testing.

According to Gebauer, the boot camp was implemented a little more than a year ago after parents asked for help and the school’s parent teacher student organization helped organize the initiative.

The advanced SAT math boot camp will be instructed by Gebauer Feb. 26 and March 6, while Craig Binns and Sandra Strauss will oversee the advanced SAT verbal boot camp Feb. 27 and March 5.

Each of the camps will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the respective days.

What separates the boot camp from a typical prep course is the amount of material that is covered, and the approach taken.

“It’s more in-depth,” said Binns, who has taught SAT prep courses for 15 years. “I do it that way to cover every measure and question type they will see. It’s a deeper analytical mindset to understand not just why an answer is right but to also know why the other three are wrong.”

Problem solving and time management strategies will be the focus of the math boot camp and reading comprehension, writing concepts and grammar rules will be the talking points for the verbal boot camp.

“Pacing, in my opinion, is the hardest part,” Gebauer said. “Kids sit on questions too long when they don’t know how to do them and then run out of time. Learning how to approach multiple choice questions can be a time saver.”

The math test will include a 38-question calculator section and a 20-question portion without a calculator that instead asks questions pertaining to concepts and topics within the field.

The verbal portion of the test will include sections pertaining to a student’s writing, language and reading skills.

“This is a test that more or less has not

changed in 60 years,” Binns said. “It’s the same types of concepts. Once students find that out it tends to calm them down.”

Both camps are \$225 to register and part of the fee will include handouts, a sample test and instruction.

Students will also need to buy and bring with them the 2020 edition of “The Official SAT Study Guide” by The College Board. The school website informed that it can be found on Amazon.com for about \$15.

According to Binns, he recently heard that Florida State University and the University of North Florida are both requiring a 4.2 weighted GPA for high school students enrolling.

“These numbers have increased exponentially,” Binns said. “It’s a competitive world we’re in, and these kids that take these boot camps are trying to gain every advantage they can.”



A 30-minute lunch break will be provided for those in attendance.

Some scholarships will be available to help pay for the camps for students who need the assistance.

The camps are fundraisers of the Nease High School PTO and any questions about the camps can be sent to nhs.ptso.board@gmail.com.

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# Submissions being accepted 'A Day Without Violence' contest

Betty Griffin Center is accepting submissions from St. Johns County students for the 2023 "A Day Without Violence" art and poetry contest.

The project is open to students in kindergarten through 12th grade, whether they attend public school or private school or are home-schooled. All entries are due by April 20.

Prizes are awarded for the winners, who are selected by a group of independent artists: first place, \$50; second place, \$25; and 11 honorable mentions will be presented \$10 each.

All 13 winning artists and 12 poets will have their work reproduced in the Betty Griffin Center "A Day Without Violence 2023 Calendar." The agency prints more than 3,000 calendars for distribution throughout the county.

"We received more than 1,000 art and poetry entries during last year's contest," said Betty Griffin Center CEO Kelly Franklin. "We're grateful for the continued support of the by St. Johns County school teachers, despite all the challenges they faced during the pandemic last year, and also want to thank Hartley Print, our print sponsor for the 2022 calendar."

Contest winners will be recognized during a School Board meeting and have their artwork displayed at a local art gal-

lery in October during Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Student artists and poets can drop off their submissions at the following locations:

- Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd.
- Betty Griffin Center Thrift Shoppe locations at 445 S.R. 13 North, St. Johns (corner of Race Track Road and S.R. 13) or 1961 A1A South, St. Augustine
- Bartram Trail Branch Library, 60 Davis Pond Blvd., Fruit Cove
- Hastings Branch Library, 6195 S. Main St., Hastings
- Main Library, 1960 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd., St. Augustine
- Southeast Branch Library, 6670 U.S. 1 South, St. Augustine
- Anastasia Island Branch Library, 124 Sea Grove Main St., St. Augustine Beach

To be eligible, artwork must be in color and able to be reproduced at 8-by-10 and suitable for framing (horizontal format only). All original 2D media is acceptable. The theme "A Day Without Violence" must be reflected in the art or words. An entry form must accompany each piece of art, which can be downloaded from the Betty Griffin Center website at <https://bettygriffincenter.org/day-without-violence-calendar-contest>.



Contributed photo

The first-place winning art from the 2022 "A Day Without Violence" calendar was created by Ailani Valencia from Ponte Vedra High School.

Any businesses or other donors interested in sponsoring the printing of the calendar should contact contest

coordinator Kenlie Kubart at 904-808-8544, extension 207, or email [kenliek@bettygriffincenter.org](mailto:kenliek@bettygriffincenter.org).

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# Recorder *Gift of Giving*

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022



**GATE Foundation launches campaign to support K9s For Warriors**  
[PAGE 13](#)

**Luminaria event raises \$24,577 for local charities**  
[PAGE 14](#)

**4,000 take part in DONNA Marathon Weekend**  
[PAGE 15](#)

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida Honors Young Leaders**  
[PAGE 16](#)

**Beaches Habitat holds annual CEO Build event**  
[PAGE 18](#)

**RSM donates \$352K to INK! through Birdies Fore Love**  
[PAGE 19](#)



# Local Girl Scout troop seeks to benefit Jay Fund with cookie sales

By Anthony Richards

It is officially cookie season for the Girl Scouts and Troop 52017 of Nocatee held its inaugural “Cookies on Carts” event Feb. 9 to raise money for the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund.

The event took place in the Twenty Mile community and is extremely unique to Nocatee in its nature because instead of walking around going door to door, the girls rode in golf carts.

“We have our meetings once a month, and we thought this would be a fun way to do something like this all together,” said Lauren Gainor, who has a daughter in the troop. “The Girl Scouts call them ‘walkabouts,’ but we’re just doing a ‘cart-about.’ We just love the Nocatee lifestyle that allows you to do this.”

According to Gainor, the Jay Fund was chosen as the charity to benefit because it holds a special place in her family’s heart, as their neighbor, a 6-year-old child, has been battling brain cancer and his family has received support from the foundation, which aims to help families dealing with childhood cancer.

The child traveled to Boston for brain surgery in May and the Jay Fund has offered a helping hand to the family during the difficult time.

“Our neighbor has been through a lot, so we wanted to help him get through it,”

10-year-old Clara Gainor said.

“We are driving awareness for the organization and their upcoming Wine Tasting Gala, which will be hosted in the beginning of March,” Lauren Gainor said. “It’s good to teach the girls to support these causes.”

The Jay Fund’s wine tasting gala is scheduled for March 3 on the riverfront in downtown Jacksonville.

This is not the first time the troop has had the Jay Fund in mind. During the holidays, the troop made cards and mailed them to all the Jay Fund families, and they also taken part in a 5K to support the foundation.

“Three of their six patches this year have been related to the Jay Fund in some way,” Lauren Gainor said.

Girl Scout troops all around the Ponte Vedra and Nocatee areas are currently involved in the organization’s annual “cookie season” which lasts through the end of February.

“You’ll start to see the different booths popping up around the community,” Lauren Gainor said.

Emily Vinitimilla and Gabby Gambino are both in their first year with Girl Scouts, but they are loving the experience to this point.

“I was looking at all the patches, and I saw horseback riding and was like ‘yes,



Photo by Anthony Richards

Members of Girl Scouts Troop 52017 ride off in golf carts to sell cookies in the Twenty Mile community of Nocatee Feb. 9.

yes, yes,” Gambino said.

Clara Gainor has been part of Girl Scouts since she was 4 years old.

“Selling the cookies is my favorite part,” Clara Gainor said. “It’s just really great to talk to people and just have fun.”

Each of the girls have their favorite cookie.

Gainor and Vinitimilla like Samoas but Vinitimilla prefers them frozen, while Gambino likes Adventurefuls, which is a new cookie this year.

“My friend let me have some and it’s like caramel and chocolate,” Gambino said. “They are so good.”

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# Hard work pays off

## Keller named 2022 Cameron Impact Scholar

By Anthony Richards

Earning a scholarship to help pay for college is always a big deal but being one of 15 students in the nation to receive one makes it even more memorable.

That is what Ponte Vedra High senior Anna Grace Keller felt when she first heard the news that she had been chosen as a 2022 Cameron Impact Scholar by the Bryan Cameron Foundation.

Keller missed the first call with the news because she was in class, but the phone rang again when she got home, and she was filled with joy that all her dedication was coming to fruition.

“I didn’t even know how to respond, expect to scream,” Keller chuckled. “It’s super affirming because I’ve worked hard throughout my high school career. It was just good to hear a ‘yes.’”

It was the sixth class of scholarships awarded by the foundation, which was established in 2015. Keller was the lone recipient from Florida.

“We couldn’t be more thrilled to have Anna Grace join our family of Cameron Impact Scholars,” said Amie Lucas, Bryan Cameron Foundation executive director. “She has such a bright future ahead of her and has the potential to really positively impact so many.”

She initially heard about the foundation’s scholarship program from PVHS alum and family friend Harrison

Snowden, who had been a past scholarship recipient.

“I put out an application in the summer, which is available for juniors, and it was a pretty lengthy essay process,” Keller said.

She heard she was a finalist in October and that she was among the recipients in mid-December.

The process included a variety of short- and long-form essays, and applicants were also asked to describe themselves in the length of a tweet.

“I thought that (the tweet) was really cool,” Keller said. “The process started before I started doing my college essays, so it was good practice and really got the brain juices flowing.”

It is a full-merit scholarship that Keller is open to use toward tuition at the college of her choosing.

Keller thanked her time at Ponte Vedra High for helping lay the foundation and prepare her for what the future holds.

“Ponte Vedra has been a great school, and I’ve personally found that I love it,” Keller said. “It’s definitely a competitive environment but I seem to thrive off that. The biggest thing that separates Ponte Vedra is the student-teacher relationships and how they are so accessible. They are free to encourage creative thought and not just stick to curriculum, which I like because it is more application-based.”



Photo by Anthony Richards

**Ponte Vedra High senior Anna Grace Keller is one of 15 recipients nationwide of the 2022 Cameron Impact Scholarship.**

According to Keller, she was one of about 2,700 applicants in the process this year, which was narrowed down to 100 finalists before choosing the final 15.

Each year the foundation holds an in-person banquet. This year it is in Atlanta and will take place in April.

“The tuition is obviously great, but parallel to that, I’m also really excited to see the network of people that you meet,” Keller said.

It is not the first scholarship that Keller has received, having also been awarded an Army ROTC scholarship.

“I’m hoping to go into college and do Army ROTC and train with my bat-

alion,” Keller said. “I want to major in biological sciences on a pre-med track. It totally seems to fit my path, because I love service and having a deeper purpose than just learning biology.”

Keller applied to the University of Notre Dame, which her sister already attends, and has been notified that she got in. She expects to hear back from the other college applications by late March or early April.

“My parents have been instrumental in encouraging me to apply for these things,” Keller said. “They’ve always told me to ‘just go for it.’”

# GATE Foundation launches campaign to support K9s For Warriors

K9s For Warriors, the nation’s largest provider of trained service dogs to military veterans, has announced a new campaign in partnership with The GATE Foundation to support K9s For Warriors’ mission to end veteran suicide.

From now until June, GATE coin boxes are located at cash registers in more than 70 GATE convenience store locations in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

The money collected from each coin box, as well as from difference collected when GATE customers choose to round-up their transaction totals to the nearest dollar, will go directly towards rescuing, training and ultimately pairing a service dog with a veteran struggling with PTSD, traumatic brain injury or military sexual trauma.

Roughly 20 veterans die by suicide every day; The GATE Foundation’s sup-

port will help K9s For Warriors save more lives and alleviate the financial burden of rescuing and training a service dog — which costs \$25,000.

“Our work wouldn’t be possible without the support of our incredible partners,” said Rory Diamond, CEO of K9s For Warriors. “This campaign with The GATE Foundation allows us to pair more warriors with highly trained service dogs. It also connects us with people in

our local communities who may not know about our mission to end veteran suicide.”

“We are so grateful to our customers for their generosity and support of this campaign,” said Kathy Brady, executive director of The GATE Foundation. “K9 For Warriors provides a way for our warriors to heal and rise from their darkest place. It is an honor to support their work.”

To learn more about K9s For Warriors, go to [k9sforwarriors.org](http://k9sforwarriors.org).





Contributed photo

Guests mingle at the 2019 Black & White Ball.

## Catholic Charities Black & White Ball is March 26

Catholic Charities Jacksonville has announced that it will host its Black & White Ball on March 26.

This event will be hosted by the Divine Society members and kicks off its vital Feed a Family fundraiser, which sustains Catholic Charities Jacksonville's food pantry and supports the food-insecure families they serve through the entire year.

Attendees will enjoy a cocktail recep-

tion with heavy hors d'oeuvres and dancing to live music from The KTG Band at the Gallagher Club at TIAA Bank Field. The event will be held from 6 to 9 p.m.

Tickets are \$150 per person or \$300 per couple, and RSVPs are due March 4.

For those interested in attending or becoming members of Catholic Charities Jacksonville's sustainer group, the Divine Society, go to [ccbjax.org](http://ccbjax.org).

## Ocean Palms has some special visitors



Contributed photo

Members of Ponte Vedra High School's Beaches Go Green and Bruce the shark visit Ocean Palms Elementary to talk about reducing waste.

Ponte Vedra High School's Beaches Go Green members visited Ocean Palms Elementary and presented to all of the fifth graders and staff and the 4R's (refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle).

With a focus on refusing and reducing, the teens explained why recycling is not

the answer and why people must create less waste overall to help the planet.

Ocean Palms' fifth graders also got a visit from Bruce, the Ponte Vedra High School shark, and Beaches Go Green's Plastic Monster.

## Luminaria event raises \$24,577 for local charities

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty recently brought a holiday glow to Northeast Florida neighborhoods while helping local charitable organizations. The firm's Luminaria 2021 event raised \$24,577 for Pine Castle and other local charities.

"We are grateful for the support we received from the community, and we are so proud of our dedicated team who helped make our Luminaria a success," said Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty CEO Kevin Waugaman.

For the event, the company purchased and sold 1,865 luminaria kits assembled by Pine Castle. In addition to supporting Pine Castle, the company is donating all of the proceeds from luminaria kit sales to local charities.

This is the sixth year Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty has hosted Luminaria.

"On behalf of everyone at Pine Castle, thank you Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty for all of the support you gave us during the holiday season," said Pine Castle Chief Development Officer Anthony Sutton. "We had our most successful year ever, assembling more than 5,000 luminaria kits, which provided our participants with meaningful work and the opportunity to earn a paycheck. Thank you for being a partner with us. It means so much to our participants."



Photo provided by Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty

**Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty's Luminaria 2021 brought a holiday glow to Northeast Florida neighborhoods with proceeds supporting local charitable organizations.**

Atlantic Beach, Neptune Beach, Ponte Vedra, St. Augustine and Fleming Island neighborhoods took part. Proceeds from Luminaria will support Scouts BSA Troop 15 (Beaches office), K9s For Warriors (Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office), the Matanzas Riverkeeper and Hugs Across America (St. Augustine/Murabella offices) and Pace Center for Girls – Clay County (Fleming Island office).

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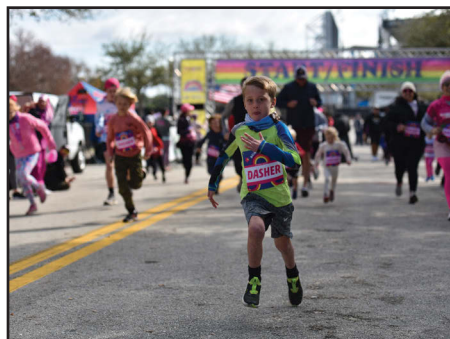
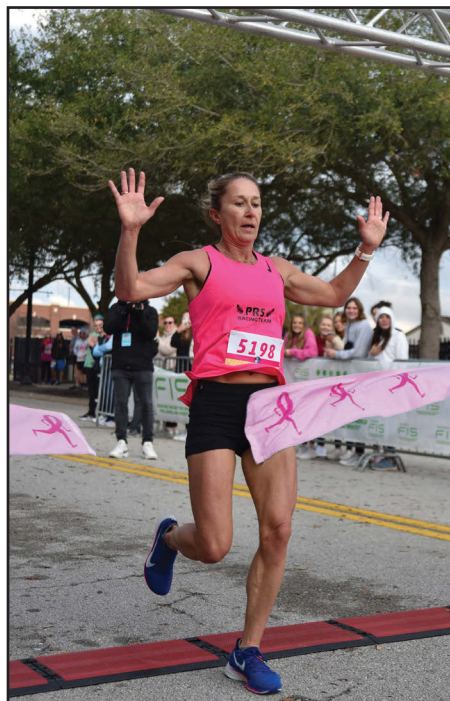
The 15th DONNA Marathon Weekend concluded Feb. 6 with more than 4,000 runners participating in person at events across the First Coast, and thousands more anticipated to participate virtually throughout the month of February in the race's hybrid format. Participants from all 50 states and eight countries laced up for multiple competitive race events, Feb. 4-6.

This year's marathon Sunday, which took runners through a reimagined course across the Jacksonville Beaches, saw new champions and repeat victories for four of the 2022 champions.

DONNA Marathon Weekend's Sunday races extended through several First Coast communities, including Atlantic Beach, Neptune Beach, Jacksonville Beach and Ponte Vedra Beach.

"DONNA Marathon Weekend is such a special time, and we are so grateful we were able to return to an in-person race this year," said Amanda Napolitano, executive director of The DONNA Foundation. "This celebration of survivorship is truly like no other, and we are incredibly proud of all of the athletes who participated this year — as well as all the athletes who will continue logging miles toward finishing breast cancer through our virtual race program."

"In so many ways, the frustrations of being apart for so long and the need to celebrate, grieve and support those we love came together this year for one of the most inspiring races in our 15-year history," said Donna Deegan, founder of The DONNA Foundation. "This race never fails to renew my spirit, my belief in love over fear and my love for this community. Thank you to every person who joined us to run, cheer or support us in this 15th annual race to finish breast cancer."



Contributed photos



**The 15th DONNA Marathon Weekend brought out more than 4,000 runners on Feb. 4-6.**

Runners can still register to run virtually and submit their times for most DONNA race events through Feb. 28. Additional details are available at BreastCancerMarathon.com.

The 16th Annual DONNA Marathon Weekend is set for February 3-5, 2023.



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## PLAYERS gives Episcopal Children's Services \$25K grant

THE PLAYERS Championship has awarded Episcopal Children's Services (ECS) a substantial grant to support the organization's Outdoor Play and Learning Project.

This grant of \$25,000 will fund the outdoor project at one of the organization's Early Head Start centers in Northwest Jacksonville.

The center is located in the heart of one of the most challenging areas of Northwest Jacksonville, where more than 40% of the population earns less than the federal poverty level and the crime rate is among the highest in the city.

Despite these disadvantages, children and families may receive the high-quality early education offered by Episcopal Children's Services so they can enter school ready to learn and succeed.

Outdoor Play is just as important as indoor learning and activities, as both are an integral part of early learning and development. This donation allows the center to have an infant/toddler play area specifically designed to encourage the physical, emotional, creative and mental development of infants and toddlers as well as integrating art, music and nature experiences that build gross and fine motor

skills.

"We are delighted to partner with THE PLAYERS, an organization that has been supportive of our mission for many years," said Connie Stophel, chief executive officer of Episcopal Children's Services. "This generous grant and investment in our community will no doubt improve the lives of the vulnerable young children and families we work so hard to serve. We could not be more thankful."

"THE PLAYERS is so honored to support the development of this play area," said Jared Rice, executive director of THE PLAYERS. "Everything we do as a championship goes back to using our platform to strengthen and improve lives, especially those in underserved areas, particularly our youth. When we heard about this need to give more kids in our community the chance to experience the joy and peace that come from free play, it was obvious we needed to get on board to support this important project. We have a special place in our heart for supporting youth and giving them the tools and resources to succeed, and we can't wait to see this area come to life."

## Real estate company has donated \$343K to Dreams Come True since 2013

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty, which supports more than 50 local charitable organizations, has a long-standing partnership with Dreams Come True of Jacksonville, Northeast Florida's only locally based nonprofit dedicated to fulfilling the dreams of children with life-threatening illnesses.

Since 2013, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty has contributed more than \$342,857 to Dreams Come True of Jacksonville. In 2021, the company donated \$54,584 to the nonprofit organization.

The company has donated to Dreams Come True monthly by contributing a portion of proceeds from every completed home sale. The donations have funded nearly 40 dreams to local children battling life-threatening illnesses. The company has also sponsored Dreams Come True's annual 5K, two employees serve on Dreams Come True's Horizon Board and its Realtors and team members have volunteered, raised funds for and supported numerous Dreams Come True events.

"Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty is truly a dream come true for our organization, and I am so grateful for their partnership," said Dreams Come True of Jacksonville Executive Director Sheri Criswell. "In addition to providing all of these dreams to local children battling life-threatening illnesses, the company has assisted the families we serve with dozens of other things, such as hundreds of backpacks for our dreamers and their siblings, Jacksonville Jaguars game tickets, pool parties and more.



Contributed photo

**Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty's contributions to Dreams Come True have funded nearly 40 dreams to local children battling life-threatening illnesses. Dreamer Toby Austin, age 6, received an adaptive Rifton trike from the company in 2021.**

When I think of impact, I think of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty and its impact on Dreams Come True as an organization and, more importantly, its impact on the precious children we serve."

Founded in 1984, Dreams Come True has made dreams a reality for more than 4,000 children in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia. Because of the generosity of its donors, business partners, program sponsors and the support of its board of directors, Dreams Come True has never turned away an eligible dreamer. The organization directs 100% of all donations to go toward fulfilling dreams, unless otherwise directed by the donor.

For more information about Dreams Come True, go to [dreamscometrue.org](http://dreamscometrue.org).

For more information about Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty, go to [FloridaNetworkRealty.com](http://FloridaNetworkRealty.com)

## Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida Honors Young Leaders

At Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida, Youth of the Year is the highest honor any Boys & Girls Club member can receive. Each of the 38 Boys & Girls Clubs throughout Northeast Florida nominates one Youth of the Year candidate and one Junior Youth of the Year candidate to represent their club in this competition, celebrating club members' academic achievements, leadership abilities and communication skills.

These high school, middle school and elementary school Youth of the Year nominees have worked tirelessly over the past month to be named this year's winner. The rigorous selection process includes personal essays and panel interviews.

The 2021 Youth of the Year winner was Michael J. from the Ed White High School Boys & Girls Club Teen Center.

Michael has represented the organization over the past year at regional Youth of the Year competitions through Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Through the support of his Boys & Girls Club community, Michael pushed through the challenging obstacles of the last year, focusing instead on his bright future and current goals. He is currently studying sociology at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia.

"COVID-19 was not going to stop me from achieving my goals," he said. "I kept my focus on everything that I did. I accomplished so much, such as winning the title of Mr. Ed White 2020-2021, having A/B honor roll the whole year, being recognized as student-athlete of the week, and



Contributed photo

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida's 2021 Youth of the Year winner Michael J. from Ed White High School Boys & Girls Club Teen Center.**

the new title of Youth of the Year for Boys and Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida.

"Having these accomplishments taught me to never give up on my goals and to always see the bright side of things. Just because there was an obstacle in the way does not mean that you cannot overcome that obstacle."

For 60 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida has enabled young people to achieve great futures as productive, caring, responsible citizens. The 38 clubs serve more than 3,500 young people each day in Duval, St. Johns and Alachua counties.

Boys & Girls Clubs provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun and friendship, and high-impact youth development programs during critical non-school hours and during the summer.

Club programs promote academic success, good character and citizenship and healthy lifestyles. Learn more at [bgcnf.org](http://bgcnf.org).

## Rethinking grocery bags

In an effort to create awareness and reduce plastic pollution, more than 30 Ponte Vedra High school Beaches Go Green students got together recently to make "earth valentines" reusable bags.

Contributed photo





# Kate Amato Foundation partners with Northwestern Mutual Jacksonville

The Kate Amato Foundation visited Northwestern Mutual's Jacksonville office in January to accept a donation in the amount of \$15,000 to support its mission to find safer, smarter and more effective treatments for children with cancer.

"This means so much to our organization," said Lisa and Jeff Amato, the organization's founders and parents of the late Kate Amato, who the foundation is named after. "We have been so fortunate to have had the love and support of many businesses near and far, but cemented relationships like this one with Northwestern are true game changers for families with children suffering from cancer."

Lisa and Jeff lost Kate at 11 years old in November 2016, after a long and difficult battle with cancer. She is the inspiration for the Foundation.

Through her illness, Kate's parents discovered how severely underfunded research is for pediatric cancer and witnessed firsthand the brutal effects of outdated, toxic treatments. To honor Kate's life and continue the fight for other children, the Kate Amato Foundation was formed.

The Northwestern Mutual Jacksonville office has also experienced firsthand the effects of childhood cancer with the disease impacting clients and office members.

In response, they have implemented a philanthropic committee to spearhead their efforts as they work to raise awareness for childhood cancer and are advocating for additional research funding.

"Pediatric cancer is something that not only hits close to home for me, but many of those in our Jacksonville office," said Jessica Salazar, managing partner with Northwestern Mutual Jacksonville. "We're incredibly proud of our team for coming together in support of this important cause, and we're honored to donate this grant to the Kate Amato Foundation."

This marks the third year of the corporate partnership between Kate Amato Foundation and Northwestern Mutual Jacksonville. In total, the relationship has yielded \$27,000 to the foundation. Their donation and others like it will help fund transformative research for children.

Each year, the Kate Amato Foundation awards grant funding to cutting edge pediatric cancer research projects at some of the leading immunotherapy and cancer genomics research labs in the country including Duke University, Texas Children's Cancer Center/Baylor College of Medicine, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute/Harvard Medical School.

In four years, the foundation funded \$375,000 in grants to support nine cutting edge pediatric cancer research projects.

"It brings us comfort to know that Kate's life and legacy will bring hope to future children facing cancer," Lisa Amato said. "The only way to advance pediatric cancer research is to give it the time and money it deserves. Something has got to give."

According to the National Cancer Institute, more than 40,000 children receive treatment for cancer each year



and one in five children do not survive, but funding for research is limited. While adult cancer treatments have improved dramatically with hundreds of new therapy options available, only four cancer treatments have been developed and approved for children in the last 20 years.

The foundation is hopeful that more companies like Northwestern Mutual, along with gracious individual donors will join the fight against childhood cancer to give what is desperately needed to develop better treatments for children.

To donate to the Kate Amato Foundation or learn more, go to [KateAmatoFoundation.org](http://KateAmatoFoundation.org).

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# Beaches Habitat holds annual CEO Build event

Beaches Habitat for Humanity held its third annual CEO Build on Jan. 28. A team of Jacksonville's top executives helped to build four homes in Haywood Estates II, a 12-home community near Mayport Road.

Twenty-four local leaders participated, including Brent Paris of Dubin Clark & Company Inc., Phil Porter of Subaru of Jacksonville, Dwight Cooper of Huelman People Solutions, George Godfrey of Super Home Services, Kristin McLaughlan of Legacy Trust Family Wealth, Dana Webb of LandSouth, Michael McNaughton of Sleiman Enterprises and John Bush of Tom Bush Family of Dealerships.

CEO Build provides business leaders an opportunity to work outside the office and help give back to the community. Each company is making a financial contribution, ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000, to support the construction of homes for qualified local families in need of an affordable place to live.

Dubin Clark & Company, presenting sponsor of the CEO Build, is matching all donations up to \$75,000. The proceeds from the event will fund Beaches Habitat's next home construction project, a two-story single-family home to be built on Edgar Street in Atlantic Beach.

Mayor Ellen Glasser of Atlantic Beach joined the executives to kick off build day

activities. Following opening remarks, participants helped to build two wheelchair ramps for residents with physical disabilities and finish interior painting, as well as various other tasks to help complete construction on the four homes.

"We are thrilled to partner with this dynamic group of local leaders for the CEO Build," said Curtis Ford, president and CEO of Beaches Habitat. "Safe and affordable housing is a fundamental part of a healthy community and a healthy economy. Every sponsorship and helping hand have made it possible for our future homeowners to create a place to call home for themselves and their families."

For further information, go to [beacheshabitat.org/ceo-build](http://beacheshabitat.org/ceo-build).

Beaches Habitat for Humanity serves eastern Duval County, including the three Jacksonville Beaches communities.

The group works in partnership with Habitat for Humanity International toward a shared vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Families and individuals in need of a hand up partner with Beaches Habitat to build or improve a place they can call home.

Beaches Habitat also offers educational programs to promote academic achievement and excellence among homeowners and their families.

To learn more, go to [beacheshabitat.org](http://beacheshabitat.org).



Photos provided by Beaches Habitat

**A team of 24 top executives in Jacksonville took part in Beaches Habitat's third annual CEO Build event on Jan. 28. They helped to build four homes.**

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# RSM donates \$352K to INK! through Birdies Fore Love

RSM US LLP, a leading provider of audit, tax and consulting services focused on the middle market, supported the Northeast Florida community with the 2021 Birdies Fore Love charitable giving donation of \$351,721 to the St. Johns County Education Foundation, which operates as INK! (Investing in Kids).

Last year, RSM donated \$303,003 to INK! as part of Birdies Fore Love, a nationwide fundraising initiative related to The RSM Classic, a PGA TOUR tournament event for which RSM is the title sponsor.

“At RSM, we continue to support INK! as our local charity of choice, and we’re committed to giving back to our local community where we live and work,” said Mike Vergo, RSM US LLP office leader in Northeast Florida. “We commend INK! for enriching the lives of teachers and students in the community.”

According to Donna Lueders, INK!’s executive director, the organization leads efforts to directly benefit educators and students in the St. Johns County School District with a mission to provide innovative programs and classroom resources, and to promote the academic success of students. INK! provides the tools and resources for teachers to help each child reach their full potential. “We are very grateful to receive another generous donation from RSM, which will help us continue much needed programs and services in our area,” she said.

RSM supports the 90 cities nationwide and in Canada where its employees, partners and principals live and work through

ongoing volunteer activities and fundraising efforts. These efforts include Birdies Fore Love.

During the past 12 years, RSM has donated \$28 million to national and local charitable organizations that support youth in the areas of education, hunger, housing and health. Each charity benefits from the funds raised locally by employees, clients, family and friends. With a match from the RSM US Foundation, the firm will give \$4.8 million directly to deserving charities designated by RSM offices this year through Birdies Fore Love.



RSM makes a \$351,721 Birdies Fore Love donation to INK! (Investing in Kids).

## Community Hospice & Palliative Care welcomes back volunteers

It has been almost two years since Community Hospice & Palliative Care volunteers were able to visit patients in person, and this past month they were given the green light to begin doing so again in-home and inpatient settings.

This announcement was welcomed as many patients enjoy receiving visits from volunteers. To ensure safety for a healthy visit with patients, the Community Hospice & Palliative Care volunteers were educated on proper safety protocols.

COMMUNITY continues on Page 20



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Second-grade students from Jacksonville Country Day School recently sent Valentines to Feeding Northeast Florida. Pictured from left are Aubrey Johnon, Yusuf Ibrahim, teacher Kristin Szallay, Owen Szallay and Gracie Hightower.



Contributed photos

Second-grade students from Jacksonville Country Day School recently sent Valentines to Feeding Northeast Florida.

# Students make Valentines to send to Feeding Northeast Florida

‘Tis the season of love, and students at Jacksonville Country Day School have been sharing their love with the community this Valentine’s season. Second grade students created heart-shaped cards to send to Feeding Northeast Florida, a

food bank serving counties in Northeast Florida.

The students work on building character while learning about the “7 Mindsets,” a curriculum guide that helps people find happiness, success, meaning and purpose

in life. Students were emboldened by the “attitude of gratitude” mindset and decided to share their gratitude and love with the people at Feeding Northeast Florida and those who use their services.

“We have been discussing all the people and things we are grateful for in our lives, and we thought of them (Feeding Northeast Florida),” said second-grade teacher Kristen Szallay. “They are so special to us; each Thanksgiving our student council hosts a canned food drive to support this organization as well.”

Students spent time during their morning meetings last week creating these cards and were happy to do so.

“It made me feel happy because I am giving something to others,” said second-grader Gracie Hightower. “My heart was rainbow-colored, and it said you are so nice and kind; I wanted to let them know that I was thinking of them.”

The cards were sent to Feeding Northeast Florida over the weekend to arrive in time for Valentine’s Day.

Szallay and the other two second-grade homeroom teachers hope that projects like these will inspire students to give back in other ways outside of school, and that they keep the “attitude of gratitude” mindset at the forefront of their minds.



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## Community

Continued from 19

“One word comes to mind when Roxie and I visit patients: community,” said Steve Piscitelli, a pet therapy volunteer with Community Hospice & Palliative Care. “Each one of these people has helped build communities with their families, friends, colleagues and now within Hospice itself. I can see it on their faces when they smile and share a little piece of their journey with us. Roxie can sense it when they touch her head. We feel it in the eyes and even the tears of the visitors in their rooms. When we hear, ‘Thank you for coming today. It is what we needed,’ both Roxie and I feel we have helped contribute to the community bond.”

During the two years that volunteers were unable to visit patients, they contributed by sewing personal protective equipment items, creating homemade cards to keep spirits up, painting artwork

and sharing their musical talents through video to help put smiles on the faces of families and patients.

“Our volunteers are eager to share their time with our patients,” said Dan Batty, volunteer services manager. “It is truly a pleasure to reconnect the volunteers with families in need. Our care teams are once again supported by loving members of this community who thoroughly enjoy helping others. We have embraced the ‘new normal’ lifestyle and have properly adjusted to operating within the centers for disease control and prevention and Occupation and Health Administration’s best practices. The support we have been able to provide in the home and inpatient setting has been a great reminder of how amazing life can be.”

Those interested in joining the volunteer program at Community Hospice & Palliative Care can apply online at [volunteer.communityhospice.com](http://volunteer.communityhospice.com) or call Tony Ross, volunteer engagement coordinator, at 904-610-7468.



# United Way Givers Gala honors those who inspire

By Jennifer Logue

Inspiration was the theme of the 5th Annual United Way of St. Johns Givers Gala, as community leaders and partners gathered to support and celebrate the agency's service during challenging times.

More than \$200,000 was raised at the black-tie gala held Jan. 28 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton St. Augustine Beach Oceanfront Resort. In addition to both live and silent auctions, the evening featured cocktails, dinner and dancing to the sounds of the Bold City Classics band. But the focus of the evening was on honoring those who provide the inspiration for all United Way of St. Johns does for those in need.

"There's no denying the past couple of years have added some new challenges for so many of our neighbors," United Way Campaign Vice Chair Dick Williams told attendees. "Tonight, we want to shine a light on those that have given us strength and inspiration to meet

those challenges. You know, very often it's the people around us that raise us up – the people who challenge us to do more and give more."

Kelly Green, chairman of the United Way board of directors, agreed. "Tonight, this very room is filled with those whose generosity inspires us and fuels our belief that together we can do so much more," she said, noting that in the past fiscal year, the organization had a \$2.37 million impact on the local community. "Because of you, we celebrate the givers."

Receiving the organization's annual Corporate Award was The St. Augustine Distillery and its co-founders Phil McDaniel and Mike Diaz.

"A real community partner from its founding, this company has contributed greatly to the revitalization of one of the most historic sections of St. Augustine," United Way CEO Melissa Nelson said. "By working together with the residents they serve, the distillery shows us that a generous company and a successful company

are not mutually exclusive."

MasterCraft Founder and CEO Chris Shee received the Nancy Burns Trailblazer Award that recognizes an individual who creates new opportunities for "Living United," while the Legacy Award was presented to David and Nancy Hutson, whose son, state Sen. Travis Hutson accepted the award on their behalf. The Hutson Companies was the presenting sponsor for the gala.

The John and Peggy Bailey Sr. Community Leadership Award, meanwhile, was presented to Len and Jean Tucker in recognition of their fundraising efforts for both public and private schools throughout the Southeast and military.

"Len and Jean have made a mark not just on this community, but on a far larger scale," Nelson said. "Because of their leadership and enthusiastic support for an extended list of causes and organizations, our community will be positively impacted for years to come."

Photos by Jennifer Logue



United Way CEO Melissa Nelson and the evening's guest auctioneer, state Sen. Aaron Bean



United Way Campaign Vice Chair Dick Williams and Honoree Chris Shee



Henry Stevenson and wife, state Rep. Cyndi Stevenson, with Brad Nelson



United Way Campaign Vice Chair Dick Williams and wife Linda



Claire and Jay Owen



Doug and Vanessa Langenbahn



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School Board Member Kelly Barrera and husband Gil Barrera



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**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS  
OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA**



# Business Weekly

PAGE 23 THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022

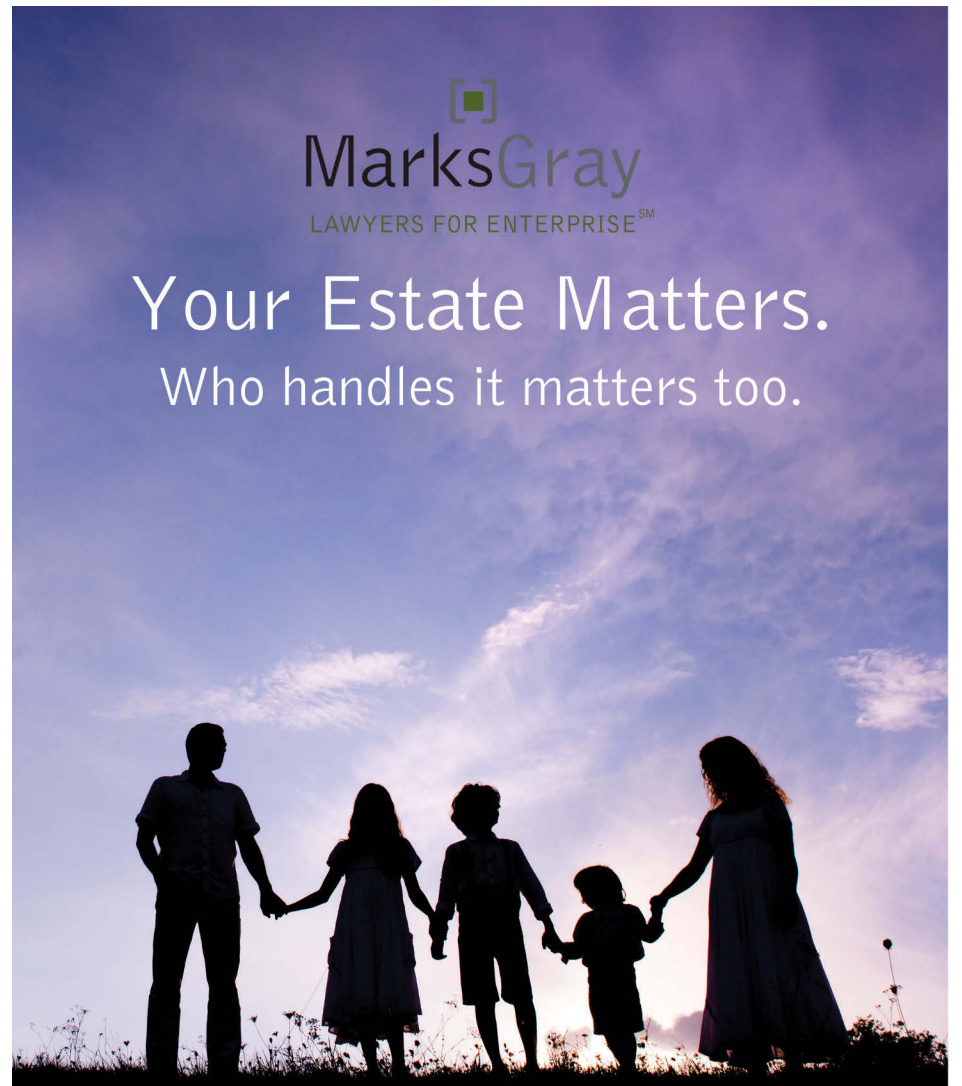
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### What Happens in some divorces should be criminal

Hi, I'm Johnathan Zisser, co-founder and managing partner at Zisser Family Law.

I cut my teeth in Criminal Law and have a ravenous desire to protect my client's rights. So, I'm in my element here practicing Family Law. I help families with tactful negotiations and amicable divorce proceedings. But when it's not so polite, my Criminal Law training can have a bite.

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Scott Costantino is Board Certified by the Florida Bar in Civil Trial Law. He is also Board Certified in Civil Trial Advocacy by the National Board of Trial Advocacy. He has received an AV rating from the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory and has over 33 years experience in civil trial practice.

Mr. Costantino has been inducted into the International Society of Barristers and serves on its Board of Governors. He is also a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates and was selected as the ABOTA~ Jacksonville Chapter's Lawyer of the Year for 2012. He served as the statewide President for FLABOTA in 2019 and is currently an ABOTA National Board Representative.

Mr. Costantino has been selected by his peers for inclusion in the publication The Best Lawyers in America.

The Costantino Law Firm, P.A. has also been named a Best Law Firm in Jacksonville by U.S. News - Best Lawyers® "Best Law Firms" for 2022. Mr. Costantino has also been selected for inclusion in Super Lawyers magazine.

The Chester Bedell Inn of Court has designated Mr. Costantino as a Master of the Bench. He has also been named a Life Member of the Million Dollar Advocates Forum.

Mr. Costantino represents clients in complex personal injury matters, including wrongful death, professional liability as well as car, trucking, motorcycle, and bicycle accident cases.

Mr. Costantino received his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Florida. He is the managing shareholder of The Costantino Law Firm, P.A.





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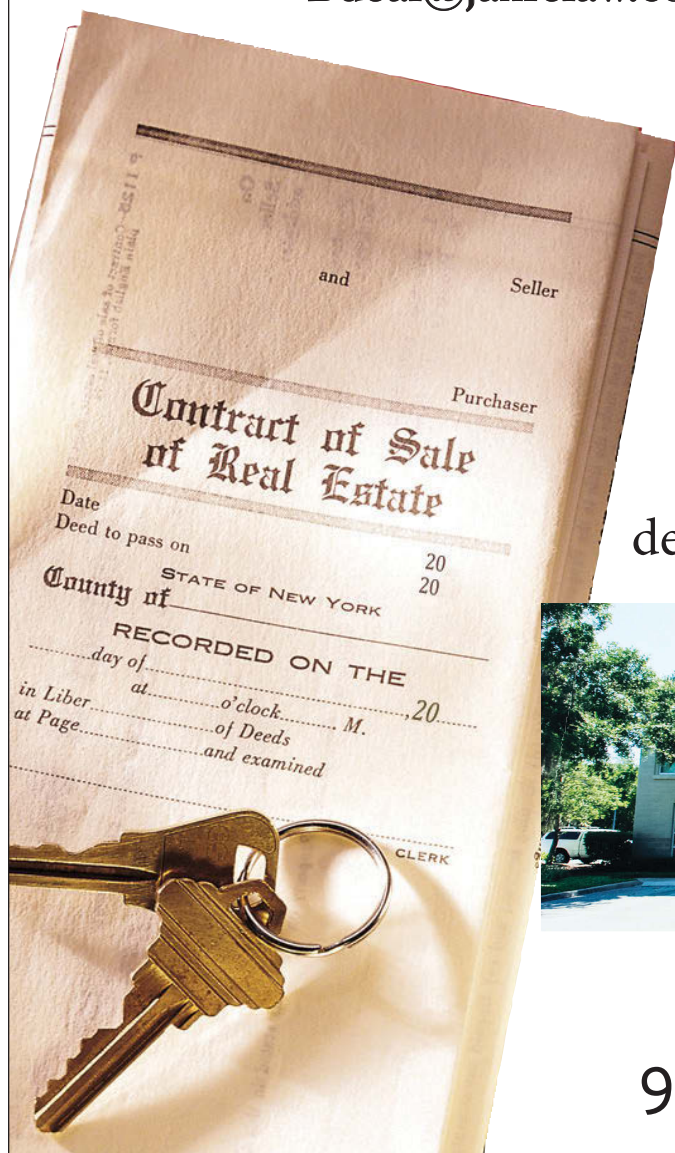
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## Judge Blocker takes oath

Judge Lauren P. Blocker of the 7th Circuit took her oath of office Jan. 21 in an investiture ceremony at TPC Sawgrass.

“I promise as a judge to remember the support of everyone that got me to this place, to treat everyone with respect, to always be impartial, and to be prepared for every proceeding,” she said.

The Honorable Terence R. Perkins presided over the ceremony. Sheriff Robert

Hardwick opened the proceedings, and Judge Howard M. Maltz administered the oath of office.

Blocker’s husband, Jeremiah Blocker, performed the enrobing and escort to the bench, and Judge Charles J. Tinlin officially welcomed her to the bench.

A highlight of the ceremony was her two children reciting the pledge of allegiance with the help of Hardwick.

## Flagler College education program ranks first in state

Flagler College is preparing the next generation of teachers for success with their top-tier education program, which tied for first place in the state of Florida.

Flagler College’s Elementary/Exceptional Student Education/ESOL/Reading program was ranked No. 1 in Florida with four other colleges and universities based on the 2021 “Florida Teacher Preparation Programs” annual performance report by the state Department of Education. ESOL stands for “English to Speakers of Other Languages.”

In addition, Flagler College and Florida Atlantic University received the highest score for student learning and growth.

The rankings were based on placement rate, retention rate, student performance on statewide assessments and teacher evaluations.

The education program, which is offered at both the St. Augustine campus and the Tallahassee campus, prepares the future teachers of Florida to successfully transition into a full-time teaching position and lead a classroom of young students to promising futures. The Flagler College Elementary Education program provides a state-of-the-art curriculum paired with hands-on experiences that

link content, theory and practice from day one.

“This highest ranking for Flagler College is evidence that our students go on to teach, stay as teachers in their field and have high annual evaluations by their principals,” said Shelly Haser, education professor and department chair at the Tallahassee campus. “The Flagler College Education Department faculty is proud of our students’ success and their impact on K-12 students, communities and families in the Tallahassee and St. Augustine areas as teachers. We hope to build more partnership schools and expand our teacher preparation program throughout the state. Beginning in fall 2022, Flagler students now have the opportunity to have a full semester student teaching internship anywhere in the state of Florida if they meet the criteria for out-of-area student teaching.”

Flagler College offers majors in elementary education with ESOL and reading endorsements, elementary and exceptional student education with ESOL and reading endorsements, secondary English with ESOL and reading endorsements, education of the deaf and hearing-impaired and secondary mathematics.

# Three tips for achieving your financial wellness goals this year

By Sean Cummings,  
VyStar Credit Union SVP,  
Market President of North Florida



Sean Cummings

With 2022 in full swing, many people are doing their best to stick to their New Year’s resolutions — and that often involves finances. Financial wellness goals can range from exciting life milestones like purchasing a first home or starting a small business, to more everyday challenges such as improving your credit score.

Whether your financial goals for this year are big or small, here are three tips for staying on track to achieve your goals this year:

### Create a sustainable and realistic budget

The first step to assessing your personal financial wellness is to review your monthly expenses. Once you take a deeper look at your expenses, you might identify areas where you can cut spending. For example, review all of your monthly and annual subscriptions like streaming services or memberships and think about how much you use each one. This might be a good opportunity to eliminate any underutilized services that can quickly add up.

Once you identify your monthly spending, you can prioritize and create your budget. Start with staples like groceries, gas and childcare expenses, if you have any. Then work toward dining out, entertainment and more.

Here in North Florida, our communities are made up of diverse populations, ranging from college students to young families to retirees and everything in between. The most important part of creating a budget is making it realistic and tailored to you and your lifestyle.

### Prioritize your spending, saving and borrowing

Once you know what you’re working with, there are many ways you can prioritize. One way is to open a savings account so you can separate your funds from your typical checking account. This will help you clearly see how

much you’ve saved for a house, a new car or a dream vacation.

One opportunity to save money that many homeowners often miss out on is to consider refinancing their home. Refinancing your mortgage can result in lower interest rates, lower monthly payments and shorter payoff terms.

Always be sure to speak with an expert to find out if refinancing is right for you. You can also look into refinancing options for things like auto, RV and boat loans.

### Implement theft prevention tactics to protect your money

Unfortunately, data breaches and scams have become all too common, and it’s important to take these threats seriously. Look into the fraud and theft protection tactics your bank or credit union offers. Make sure you set up immediate fraud alerts so you will automatically get a text, email or phone call to alert you of the issue. Be sure to report any fraudulent account activity immediately and call your bank as soon as possible to discuss how they can help you. Fraud is one headache you certainly do not want to deal with.

When working to achieve your goals, remember to keep them realistic and base them on your personal aspirations. Regardless of your stage of life, there are plenty of tools and resources to set yourself up for success.

*Sean Cummings serves as VyStar Credit Union’s SVP and market president of North Florida. In this role, he leads five regional vice presidents and 500 branch employees in the 50 branches spanning from Jacksonville to St. Augustine and Tallahassee to Gainesville. He collaborates with these teams to deliver best-in-class member experiences and to encourage engagement in the communities VyStar serves. He joined VyStar in 2019 with more than 27 years of financial services experience. He is a U.S. Army veteran and holds a bachelor of arts and master of business administration degrees from Seattle University.*



# In the Arts



Send your arts news to [news@pontevedrarecorder.com](mailto:news@pontevedrarecorder.com)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022 · PAGE 27 www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

## Montell Jordan, Eve 6 to headline '90s festival

Contributed photos

The second annual AS IF! The '90s Fest will take over Francis Field in downtown St. Augustine from noon to 9 p.m. May 21.

Headlining the event this year will be Grammy-nominated singer Montell Jordan, Southern California rock band Eve 6 and Quad City DJ's.

Jordan rose to fame in the 1990s with tunes like "This Is How We Do It," "Somethin' 4 da Honeyz" and "Let's Ride." Eve 6 is remembered for its hit singles "Inside Out," "Here's to the Night," "Promise" and "Victoria." Quad City DJ's, a multi-platinum group is best known for the original "Space Jam" theme song as well as the hit "C'mon N' Ride It (The Train)."

"Growing up in the '90s was incredibly influential to me as a musician, event

producer and creative," said Jeanetta Cebollero, owner of Ancient City Entertainment and the organizer of the festival. "From the fashion and the pop culture to the hip hop and the rock, the 1990s were by far one of the best decades."

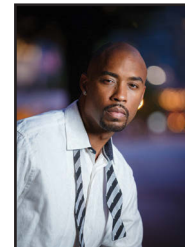
Proceeds from the festival will benefit ACE Alliance, a nonprofit that assists movers and shakers who dedicate their craft and livelihood to the culture of tourism, entertainment and hospitality serving Northeast Florida. The inaugural AS IF! The '90s Fest raised more than \$50,000 for ACE Alliance, and Cebollero and her team are looking to raise even more money this year.

The festival was also awarded a Tourist Development Council grant from St. Johns County for this year after last year garnered a 2.6 million measured engage-

ment reach with people flying in from as far as Seattle to attend.

"Part of what makes me so impassioned about hosting AS IF! The '90s Fest is the philanthropic arm of the festival," Cebollero said. "Between hurricanes and the pandemic, local musicians and creatives need us now more than ever. To give back to them through ACE Alliance is the cherry on top. I hope everyone in Northeast Florida and beyond will join us on May 21 for the official kickoff to summer and the best day of the year."

The one-day event will feature live music, games, a water slide, vendors, food trucks and more. General admission



Montell Jordan (left) and Eve 6 (right) will co-headline AS IF! The '90s Fest.

tickets are \$20. Admission for children age 10 and younger is \$5. VIP tickets are \$60 each and include lounge area, top shelf cash bar, air-conditioned portapotties and sponsor swag.

For vendor and sponsorship opportunities, contact Cebollero at [ancientcityentertainmentgroup@gmail.com](mailto:ancientcityentertainmentgroup@gmail.com).

For more information or to buy tickets, go to [www.asifthe90sfest.com](http://www.asifthe90sfest.com).

## Episcopal School to honor Broadway legend

After the death of Broadway legend Stephen Sondheim on Nov. 26, 2021, cities all over America have been staging celebrations of his life. From the Broadway actors' viral rendition of "Sunday" in Times Square to fully produced tributes in Chicago, Austin and Washington, D.C., and even a performance in Kuala Lumpur, cities have been performing tributes to the man considered by some as the most influential composer and lyricist of the second half of 20th century.

Episcopal School of Jacksonville's Director of Fine Arts, Katie Black-Bowling, wanted Jacksonville to join these cities celebrating Sondheim's body of

work. She found just such an opportunity through Episcopal's annual Celebrating Service Day.

This year Celebrating Service Day will take place on Tuesday, March 22, which happens to be Sondheim's birthday.

The middle and upper school students will participate in various community service projects on that day. Performing arts

students, for their service project, will stage "A Sondheim Celebration" in the Deming Theatre in the Munnerlyn Center for Worship and Fine Arts on the school's Munnerlyn Campus at 1 p.m.

This tribute to Sondheim's work will include performances by the school's honor and jazz band students, who will accompany singers and actors performing

some of Sondheim's best known works, including excerpts from "West Side Story," "Sunday in the Park with George," "A Little Night Music," "Into the Woods" and "Company."

This event is free and open to the public. Schools and other community groups are invited to attend.

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# Sports



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022 · PAGE 28

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## Coming up clutch

*Gomes hits game-winner in waning seconds to beat Sharks, advance*

By Anthony Richards

Round three of the Nease and Ponte Vedra girls basketball rivalry lived up to all the billing and turned out to be an instant classic that the Panthers won with a Sydney Gomes drive and layup with five seconds left.

Gomes' shot was the epitome of clutch and gave the Panthers a 48-47 victory over the rival Sharks in the Class 6A regional quarterfinals Feb. 10.

Prior to the basket the Sharks led 47-46 with 16 seconds left and the opportunity to increase the lead at the free-throw line following a timeout.

"After that last timeout, coach said 'I want the ball in Syd's hands,'" Sydney Gomes said.

The Sharks missed the front end of a one-and-one and Gomes grabbed the rebound and quickly pushed up court and sliced her way to the basket to put the Panthers in front and ignite the Nease faithful in attendance.

"I got it and I knew that if we didn't get that chance, we weren't going to have another one," Gomes said. "I wasn't going to let my team down."

The heart of both teams was on display throughout the game, and it was obvious that the seniors on both sides were doing

everything they could to help will their team to victory and extend their career one more game.

"My mind was all over the place there late, but I just knew we had it in us," Nease senior Allison Fifield said. "I didn't care how much they came back, I kept saying, 'This is our game.'"

And come back the Sharks did, as the Panthers stormed out of the gate to a 10-0 lead, but the Sharks remained focused and did what they had to do to chip away at the deficit.

The Panthers saw their early lead cut to one early in the second quarter but mounted another run of their own and led 24-17 at halftime.

However, the Sharks continued to fight back, and it eventually paid off when they took their first lead of the game 45-44 thanks to an old-fashioned three-point play by senior Reeghan Mayer with 2:30 remaining in the contest.

The Panthers also got a taste of redemption with the win after having lost to the Sharks on their home court in the district semifinals just a week earlier.

"I think we might have been over-prepared," Fifield chuckled. "We watched that film multiple times to see what we did wrong last Wednesday, and we were just not going to let it happen today."

Kennedy Rosendahl had 24 points and Morgan Gavazzi posted 17 during the Sharks win over the Panthers in the district tournament, including nine three-pointers between them.

The Panthers' defense was able to flip that script in one week later.

"The other night they were just hitting down shots, but tonight we locked those



Photos by Anthony Richards

Nease senior Sydney Gomes is swarmed by her teammates after hitting the game-winning shot with five second left to beat rival Ponte Vedra 48-47 in the Class 6A regional quarterfinals Feb. 10.



Sydney Gomes of Nease dribbles around a screen set by her sister Savannah Gomes and is followed closely by Ponte Vedra's Reeghan Mayer.

kids down," Nease head coach Sherri Anthony said. "I don't know if they got any threes."

Next up for the Panthers is a trip to the Florida Panhandle to play Navarre High School at 6 p.m. Feb. 15. With the loss, the Sharks' memorable season came to an end.



Ponte Vedra senior Reeghan Mayer slices through defenders on her way to the basket.

## Sharks sweep regional quarterfinal doubleheader

*Scoring chances, posts galore as Shark girls win 1-0*

By Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra girls soccer team controlled its regional quarterfinal matchup against Tallahassee Lincoln from the start Feb. 9, but it just took a while before they

took the lead and won 1-0 to advance in the playoffs.

The Sharks had so many opportunities throughout the contest, including more than a handful of solid looks around the net, only to have the misfortune of hitting four posts before eventually scoring a goal.

The game-winning goal followed the fourth of those hit goal posts after a long shot from senior Maggie Mace rattled off the cross bar, but this time fellow senior Tamlyn Parkes was there to bury the

rebound early in the second half.

"Once we finally scored, we were really able to relax and just play our game," Mace said. "We started really passing it around a lot more, which is what we like to do."

Although only the one goal was managed, scoring chances continued to be created by the Sharks, which is a positive thing and something they look to build on heading into the next round.

"I feel like we could have won by a lot more," Mace said. "We just need to work

on getting more precise and finishing our chances, so that we can get ahead, and the game isn't as frantic."

The game was supposed to take place the day before but was pushed back a day and Davis Park became the new venue after rainy weather led to poor playing conditions at the Sharks' usual home field on campus.

With all the late changes, it was key for the Sharks to maintain their mental focus,

DOUBLEHEADER continues on Page 30



# Sharks earn gritty win over Senators for district title

By Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra High basketball team outlasted Fletcher 41-37 in a hard-fought district championship battle Feb. 11 at Atlantic Coast High School.

“They’ve got a never quit, stay positive, next play mentality,” Ponte Vedra head coach Kevin Whirity said. “I just love these guys.”

It resembled a heavyweight fight with both teams locking down defensively and adopting a physical style of play.

To win that style of game and on a night when the shots were not falling like they usually would for the Sharks, was impressive and surely sent a message to the other teams in the region with the state playoffs set to begin Feb. 17.

“We’re going to have to win these types of games if we want to make it to Lakeland (for final four),” Ponte Vedra senior Ross Candelino said.

The entire Sharks’ defensive unit did an excellent job disrupting Fletcher’s offensive rhythm by jumping into passing lanes and forcing turnovers and jump balls.

Turnovers led to scoring opportunities in transition, which proved key due to the Sharks struggling to find their shot in the half-court offense.

“When the shots aren’t hitting you have to rely on defense to get you through,”

Ponte Vedra junior guard Nate Bunkosky said. “Defense is something we always train hard for, so that it’s there no matter what.”

Bunkosky was one of several players not afraid to sacrifice his body diving on the court for loose balls and harassing ball handlers in the full-court press.

“Not only did Nate run the show on offense, but he also ran it on defense,” Whirity said. “You can tell his defensive safety came out in him. That cat is as quick as lightning.”

The contest was tied at 12 at the end of the first quarter and 20-all at halftime. However, the Senators increased its lead to 34-27 following a three-pointer early in the fourth quarter.

“When you get down, that’s the point when everybody’s got to lift each other up,” Bunkosky said. “My voice is gone because I’ve been talking to the guys all game.”

The Sharks answered by pounding the ball to senior Luke Pirris in the post on consecutive trips down the floor and he worked his magic down low to tie the game at 34 with less than five minutes to play. He finished with 10 points on the night.



Luke Pirris flies through the air on his way to the basket against Fletcher in the district championship Feb. 11.



The Sharks defeated the Senators 41-37 in overtime to secure the district title Feb. 11.

Photos by Anthony Richards

“When you’ve played basketball almost your life, to win and even just play in a district championship is amazing,” Bunkosky said. “It just shows how far we’ve come. We’re like brothers and I love them.”

The game went to overtime and the Sharks quickly grabbed the lead following a drive and layup by J.T. Kelly.

Down the stretch, the Sharks had several trips to the free throw line with an attempt to extend their lead but missed some front ends of one-and-one opportunities.

However, the Sharks knocked down

some big free throws when the game was on the line, including Kelly and Candelino each knocking down a pair.

“Never was there a lack of energy or effort by both teams,” Whirity said. “That’s what a district championship should be, and I think the fans on both sides should be appreciative of the hard work their players put in.”

Kelly led the Sharks in scoring with 11 points.

The Sharks enter the state playoffs as the No. 1 seed of region 1-6A and will host Booker T. Washington in a regional quarterfinal matchup at 7 p.m. Feb. 17.

# Pratt lifts her way to scholar-athlete honor

By Anthony Richards

Honored was the first word that came to mind when Ponte Vedra High junior Morgan Pratt found out she was named the school’s scholar-athlete of the month for January.

“Coach is a big inspiration of mine, and I was honored by the fact that she nominated me,” Pratt said. “It has almost brought more confidence to myself, and I instantly thought about how grateful I am for my opportunities.”

Pratt is a captain on the Sharks’ girls



Photo by Anthony Richards

**Ponte Vedra High junior Morgan Pratt was named the school’s January scholar-athlete of the month. She recently competed at the girls weightlifting state meet.**

weightlifting team, which is a role she has embraced with her leadership.

According to Pratt, the recognition is huge, and she hopes she can represent not only the school but girls weightlifting.

“Having a weightlifter as scholar-athlete of the month is huge just to get more recognition to the sport,” Pratt said.

After her family moved to the area from Utah a couple of years ago, she transferred to Ponte Vedra from Fletcher last year and decided to give the weightlifting program a try.

She was familiar with lifting weights and working out as part of the training process for many other sports she had played over the years.

“Growing up in gyms has been my thing, but I just wasn’t competing in it,” Pratt said. “I went to the first practice and saw all these girls working hard, and I remember thinking, ‘This is cool, I want to be like them.’”

One of the major differences she has enjoyed about competitive lifting compared to every day training is the atmosphere that exists.

“It’s nice to just go and lift by myself to give me time to reflect, but when you go into a competition you have all these girls screaming and cheering for you to be a better version of yourself than you were

yesterday,” Pratt said. “I feel like everyone needs that type of support in their lives. We all feed off each other’s energy, and it makes you feel unstoppable.”

Pratt competes in the 129-pound class and recently competed at the Class 2A state meet.

Her personal best in clean-and-jerk is 165 pounds, while her max bench and snatch is 125 and 115, respectively.

“From PVC pipe to 165 is huge,” Pratt said. “That’s a lot of weight and it’s still going up with every day that I consis-

tently work and go at it.”

Pratt and her girls weightlifting teammates have taken part in a couple of different community initiatives, including helping with Children’s Miracle Network and Toy for Tots.

She aspires to go into the medical field and credits her mom for helping be her inspiration with the work she does as a nursing educator at Mayo Clinic.

“I’m interested in anything where I can be hands on and helping people,” Pratt said.

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Photos by Anthony Richards

**Maggie Mace (No. 12) of Ponte Vedra chases after a ball along the sideline during the Sharks' regional quarterfinal against Tallahassee Lincoln Feb. 9.**

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8. \*Like President Eisenhower's head
12. \*One fourth of a Presidential term
13. Take-out handout
14. The Beast's problem in "Beauty and the Beast"
15. \*Pres. Eisenhower established this space agency
16. Thought
17. Body of water
18. \*#22 and #24
20. First-rate, slangily
21. Terminate, as in mission
22. Lingerie staple
23. Public speaker
26. Ivory tickler
30. "Fresh Prince of \_\_\_\_-Air"
31. Most likely to win
34. Pot contribution
35. By surprise
37. Indian restaurant staple
38. Lacking justification
39. Office communique
40. Greece and Bulgaria peninsula
42. Overnight stop
43. Indifferently
45. Sturdily built
47. English course abbreviation
48. "\_\_\_\_'it easy"
50. Oliver Twist, e.g.
52. \*University of Virginia founder
56. African prairie
57. \*Second most-popular Presidential birth state, after Virginia
58. Arm bone
59. Poem at a funeral
60. German title
61. Arnold Lobel's "Mouse \_\_\_\_"
62. High school club
63. Clinton \_\_\_\_ Rodham
64. Hitler's Deputy

**DOWN**

1. Update a FitBit
2. Sound of bells
3. "At \_\_\_\_ soldier"
4. Modern tie forerunner
5. Aromatic lumber
6. Beside, archaic
7. Two of the same
8. \*The only President who was a bachelor
9. \_\_\_\_ 51, Nevada
10. Law school entry requirement, acr.
11. Bear's room
13. Edith Piaf's hit
14. Meat of coconut
19. Digital tome
22. Trash container, e.g.
23. \*One of three Presidents to win a Grammy
24. James Dean's famous role
25. Remember this battle
26. \*First to serve coast to coast
27. Indo-Aryan, as in languages
28. Did not smell good
29. Like yellow polka dot bikini
32. June 6, 1944
33. Salt in cocina
36. \*a.k.a. Silent Cal
38. Loosen ropes
40. Deli acronym
41. \_\_\_\_ help
44. Hawaii's number
46. Mob offensive
48. High-pitched laugh sound, in print
49. Like Bananas Foster
50. "All's well that ends \_\_\_\_"
51. Away from wind
52. \*Second most common Presidential first name, after James
53. Type of gin
54. Cross to bear
55. Midday slumbers
56. Chill, with 'out'

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## Doubleheader

Continued from 28

which they proved they were able to do. "The good thing about this field (at Davis Park) was that we played on it when the same thing happened last year, so we're used to it," Parkes said. "Everyone just trusted each other, and it was all good."

### Ponte Vedra boys pour it on after falling down early

The Ponte Vedra boys soccer team found themselves trailing early, but stormed back to defeat Pensacola Booker T. Washington 3-1 in a Class 6A regional quarterfinal tilt. The Wildcats got on the board first and took a 1-0 lead early in the first half, but the Sharks responded later in the half as junior Andres Villasana gathered pass through the box from senior Jake McGowan and hammered it home past a sprawling goalie to even the score at halftime. "We rarely concede first, so getting down was hard because we haven't really had to experience that," Ponte Vedra senior Sammy Soares said. "Once we got back to even it was all about finding our

rhythm again." Senior Michael Hilbert gave the Sharks a 2-1 lead with a rocketed shot inside the bottom left corner of the net. It was the third goal of the season for Hilbert, and it could not have come at a better time for the Sharks. "The ball kind of just fell at my feet and I saw an opportunity and just ripped through it," Hilbert said. "It came right off the cleat and just skipped off the ground and went in. It was an exhilarating feeling." The Sharks increased their lead 3-1 late in the second half as senior Aaron Novak headed in a perfectly placed corner kick inside the right post. "We've been working on this new system of offense for about two years now, and it's finally starting to click, and you can see it in the number of goals we're scoring," Soares said. "It's all coming together, and this is really feeling like the year." Soares switched positions in week one of the season and although it was a transition at first, he has really started to come into his own. "I didn't know I'd be playing outside back, because I've been a centerman my whole life," Soares said. "I feel like I've gelled."



**Andres Villasana winds up to shoot the first Ponte Vedra goal of the regional quarterfinal contest.**



# Ponte Vedra CLASSIFIEDS

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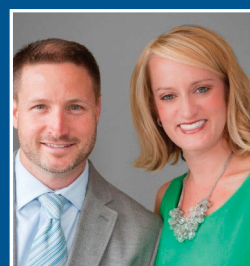
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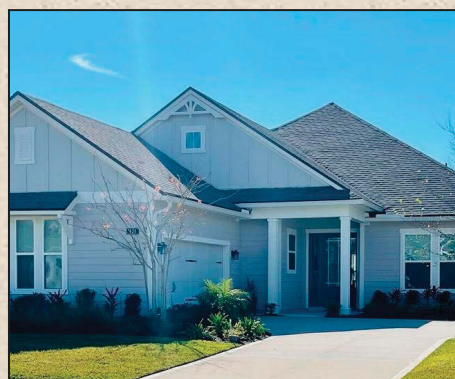
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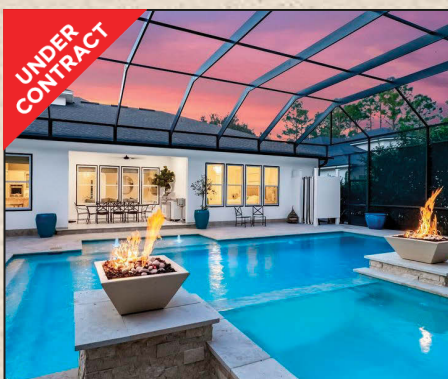


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