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Page 15

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Thursday, February 8, 2024

PonteVedraRecorder.com

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## Major sculpture created in Mandarin

Harriet Beecher Stowe subject of work

By Shaun Ryan

A landmark work of art is taking shape in Mandarin — and the public will have an opportunity this weekend to witness the artist in action.

Renowned artist Brenda Council will be putting the finishing touches on her clay sculpture, “Harriet Beecher Stowe in Mandarin,” before sending it off to a foundry, where it will be cast in bronze. When finished, the bronze sculpture will be brought back and installed in

SCULPTURE continues on Page 3

## Post 129 sent pair to nationals as part of memorable year

By Anthony Richards

Sending representatives both to Boys Nation and Girls Nation from the same area of a state is very unusual, but it is even more rare to have them both come from the same American Legion post.

That was the case when Hailey Pitches and Ben Black were chosen to represent Post 129 in Jacksonville Beach during the 2023 program, which included a trip to Washington, D.C.

Pitches is a senior at Nease High School and is a member of the school’s NJROTC program, and she has accepted a scholarship offer to attend the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, while Black is a senior at Ponte Vedra High School and will be attending the United States Naval Academy after graduation.

For both, the opportunity to take part in initiatives was an honor and something they will always cherish, and they shared their experiences and journeys to this point during Post 129’s meeting on Feb. 1.

“For me the coolest thing was getting to

NATIONALS continues on Page 27



Photo by Anthony Richards

Ben Black, a Ponte Vedra High senior, speaks to the American Legion Auxiliary, Post 129 about his experience last year at Boys Nation on Feb. 1.



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# Send us your news

We welcome submissions of photos, stories, columns and letters to the editor. Let us know what's happening. 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](http://www.facebook.com/ThePVRecorder)

## BRIEFS

### Work to close Masters Drive

St. Johns County will close Masters Drive from Feb. 18 to March 31 to replace an existing box culvert. Construction will require a complete closure at the location of the affected culvert, about 300 feet south of the State Road 16 and Masters Drive Intersection. Detours will be established with necessary signage to provide advanced warning and directions for roadway users.

This culvert crossing is part of the \$3.8 million Santa Rosa drainage improvement project that is being funded by a community development block grant. The drainage improvements will reduce flooding caused by stormwater and high tides within the Santa Rosa subdivision.

The culvert replacement will provide an outfall for the drainage along the west side of Masters Drive and the north side of SR 16. The replacement is necessary due to the age and condition of the existing culvert. The project will also increase the size of the culvert, which will reduce the duration of storm impacts.

The project is expected to be complete in the spring.

### GOP committee to meet

The SJC Republican Executive Committee District 4 will meet at 6:15 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 15, at the Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach. The committee meets on the third Thursday of each month.

### Palm Valley Market every Tuesday

The Palm Valley Market is held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Tuesday inside the Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Road. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, local honey, tea, seasonal treats, soap, jewelry, plants and more.

### Family seining event set for Feb. 10

GTM Research Reserve will offer a program on family seining from 9 to 11 a.m. Feb. 10 at GTM Research Reserve Guana Dam, 505 Guana River Road, Ponte Vedra Beach. Learn about the animals and their roles in Guana Lake by pulling a seine net and collecting species of fish, crabs and other marine life.

The event is free. but parking is \$3 per vehicle. All necessary gear (waders and boots) will be provided. Hat, insect repellent, water and sunscreen are recommended.

Register online at [gtmnerr.org/visit/events](http://gtmnerr.org/visit/events).

### Workshop topic: Preparing for an interview

The Savvy Job Hunters Ministry of Christ Episcopal Church will host a free virtual workshop,

“Putting Your Professional Package Together and Preparing for the Interview,” from 10:30 a.m. to noon Feb. 23. The workshop will be presented by Dr. Priscilla Berry, owner and president of Berry and Associates. Email [pottesen66@gmail.com](mailto:pottesen66@gmail.com) to register. All are welcome to attend.

### Beach cleanup on Valentine's Day

There will be a Valentine's Day beach cleanup, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 14 at the GTM Research Reserve. Meet at the Exxon beach parking lot between 10 and 11 a.m. Wear gloves. Hat, insect repellent, water and sunscreen are recommended. Trash bags will be provided.

Learn more about events at the reserve at [gtmnerr.org/visit/events](http://gtmnerr.org/visit/events).

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

## PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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# Sculpture

Continued from 1

Walter Jones Historic Park alongside the Mandarin Museum and the 1898 St. Joseph’s Mission Schoolhouse for African American Children.

This is the first-ever, life-sized sculpture of the author of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” who lived in Mandarin for 17 winters and made tremendous contributions to the riverside community.

Admission is free to the Mandarin Store & Post Office, 12471 Mandarin Road, where Councilll has been putting in long hours with the project for

the past two months. Open studio is between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The sculpture itself depicts Stowe teaching two young boys — one Black, one White — their ABCs. The boys are seated on an orange crate, Stowe on a bench that will accommodate park visitors who would like to sit next to the famous abolitionist and author and maybe have their photo taken with her.

Councilll, who grew up in Mandarin learning all about Stowe, expressed hope that her sculpture would inspire people to visit the museum and learn more about the author and her legacy.

Stowe, who arrived in Mandarin in

1867 and purchased 30 acres of property, helped to build the first Freedman’s Bureau and a school for Black children there. Her famous 1952 novel played an important role in revealing the evils of slavery and inspiring people to put an end to it.

“That’s why creating this monument to her is so important for Jacksonville and for the United States,” said Councilll. “The whole nation should know her story, and it should be perpetuated generation to generation.”

Because the project is very expensive, local residents hope to raise money to pay for it. In fact, sponsorship opportunities are available. For



Photo courtesy of the Mandarin Museum

**A model of the sculpture created by Brenda Councilll**

further information, contact the Mandarin Museum & Historical Society.

Learn more at [mandarinmuseum.org](http://mandarinmuseum.org).



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## OBITUARIES

**Susan Forster**

Susan Forster, 80, left us for Heaven on January 31, 2024. Susan was born in New York City on November 20, 1943. Daughter of Fred and Myrtle Abbott. For all her life she had Fred's love of music and her mother's love of caring.

Susan loved life, the outdoors and making friends all over the world. She and her husband of 58 years, Peter, traveled far and wide and saw and experienced the wonders and cultures of many nations.

Susan graduated from Green Mountain College and met Peter in New York City in 1964. She had the good fortune to work for CBS in the '60s with the likes of Walter Cronkite and the beginning of the Super Bowl era firsthand.

She was Director of Human Resources for the Mead Corporation, got her MBA along the way, and then started, along with longtime friend Janet, a commercial interior design company called InPlan. After eventually selling that company, she devoted more time to community help in the greater Jacksonville area. She was active building houses with Habitat for Humanity, a member of the Woman's Giving Alliance and organized the first Ponte Vedra Beach cleanup in the early 2000s called Sweep the Beach for which over a

hundred local helpers signed up and got it done. Ponte Vedra and Sawgrass gave us a blessing in what were many, many forever friendships that never faded.

Helping her large extended family and the children was a passion. She was a good teacher and role model, involved and caring, but set the bar high. In her lifetime she packed a lot of parachutes for others.

Sailing the summers on the waters off the coast of Maine for nearly 50 years made Maine, along with many friends, a second home. She loved being on the water. Rarely did Susan tell anyone that she had a full Captain's license. Along with friends Sid, Cate and Liz, she started a Comfortable Cruising program, women only, to teach the art of sailing large boats at the Camden Yacht Club, a smashing success. Skiing in Telluride for nearly 30 years never became routine, thanks to our Aussie friends Georgie and Nev.

She is survived by her husband, Peter; brother, Tony Abbott; sister-in-law,

Roberta Abbott; nephews, nieces, and cousins: Susan, Ed, Megan, Katie, Andrew and Matthew Ciszek; John, Swati and Pravara Abbott; Doris Cush and Joan Wasserman; two very special angels, Khadija and Sonya, and a cadre of never wavering support from Shelia, Grace, Ana, Donna, Pravara, and countless others.

A Memorial Service will be held in May at the St. Francis in the Field Memorial Garden.

Should you wish to make a donation in her name, please consider Community Hospice & Palliative Care, 4266 Sunbeam Road, Jacksonville, FL 32257. Please visit her Tribute online at [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com).

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## DEATH NOTICES

**Norma Jean Allen**

Norma Jean Allen, 92, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Jan. 24, 2024. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery - 904-285-1130 - [www.pontevedravally.com](http://www.pontevedravally.com)

**Uday Bhatt**

Uday Bhatt, 84, of St. Augustine, Florida, died Jan. 24, 2024. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery - 904-285-1130 - [www.pontevedravally.com](http://www.pontevedravally.com)

**Patricia Roberts Clarke**

Patricia Roberts Clarke, 86, of Atlantic Beach, Florida, died Feb. 2, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). 904-249-1100

**Charles Leon Gaudry, Jr.**

Charles Leon Gaudry, Jr., 87, of Atlantic Beach, Florida, died Feb. 4, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). 904-249-1100

**Robert Lorin Hunter**

Robert Lorin Hunter, 97, of Atlantic Beach, Florida, died Feb. 5, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). 904-249-1100

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# Local HVAC company offers women internship opportunity

World's Greatest Heating and Air, a local heating and air company, has announced the launch of the Women of HVAC Paid Internship program. This initiative is designed to empower women seeking career opportunities in the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) industry.

The inspiration behind this pioneering program comes from the founder's personal journey. Having graduated from college years ago, she began her career in training and development but found herself struggling to make ends meet, even with multiple jobs, including waiting tables. After more than a decade, she transitioned into the HVAC industry, where she encountered numerous young men who had chosen to forgo traditional college education in favor of learning a skilled trade. These individuals were achieving six-figure salaries at an age when she had been a struggling college

graduate.

One glaring observation she made was the lack of female representation in the HVAC industry. Research revealed that less than 3% of the workforce in HVAC is women. This realization led her to the question, "Why should the guys make all that money?" Out of this question emerged the Women of HVAC Paid Internship program.

The Women of HVAC Paid Internship is an extraordinary opportunity for women in Duval and St. Johns counties to break into the HVAC field. This program will provide paid internships and on-the-job training to equip participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to become successful technicians and installers in the HVAC industry.

World's Greatest Heating and Air fosters a diverse and inclusive work environment. The company believes that diversity enhances innovation, productiv-



ity and overall success. By launching the Women of HVAC Paid Internship, the organization is taking a significant step toward addressing gender imbalance in the HVAC industry.

The program is currently accepting applications and plans to begin hiring interns by March 1. Interested candidates are encouraged to apply through the company's website. Successful applicants will receive hands-on training, mentorship and the opportunity to build a career

in the HVAC field.

World's Greatest Heating and Air is excited about the positive impact the Women of HVAC Paid Internship program will have on empowering women in the HVAC industry and narrowing the gender gap.

For more information about the Women of HVAC Paid Internship program or to submit an application, go to [worldsgreatesthvac.com/blog](http://worldsgreatesthvac.com/blog) or contact Crissy Collins at [ccollins@wghvac.com](mailto:ccollins@wghvac.com).

World's Greatest Heating and Air is a leading heating and air conditioning company dedicated to providing honest and exceptional HVAC services in Duval County and St. Johns County. With a strong commitment to quality, client satisfaction and community engagement, the company has established itself as a trusted partner for residential and commercial HVAC solutions.



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*Dr. Carlos Blackmon owns and operates Guided Smiles Prosthodontics and Implant Center located at 153 Fort Wade Road, Suite 100 in Ponte Vedra. He is a veteran having proudly served in the United States Navy, and he has called the Northeast Florida home since being stationed at Mayport in 2015. He specializes in prosthodontics and enjoys the difference he can make in his patients' lives.*

## Dr. Carlos Blackmon

### As told to Anthony Richards

#### Tell us a little about yourself and your background.

I'm originally from Killeen, Texas, and my parents were in the Army, so I was born on a military base and spent my childhood there and in Atlanta.

I went to the University of Georgia and then dental school at VCU before joining the Navy where I did dentistry for several years before deciding to go back to school to specialize in prosthodontics.

We came to the area in 2015 by way of the military when my wife and I were relocated here when I was stationed at Naval Station Mayport.

I ended up going to UF for my prosthodontic residence.

#### When did you realize dentistry was the right career path for you?

It began when I was going off to college and I went in for a dental checkup.

Before, I had wanted to be a sports broadcaster because I was a huge sports fan and grew up playing sports, so I thought I wanted to do what I could to remain around it.

However, I also knew I liked working with my hands, and I was always into Legos growing up, so seeing all the tools they had in the dental office intrigued me, as well as the fact that I found out I could help people.

I was offered the chance to shadow my dentist and I knew it was the right fit for me.

#### Did you always want to join the military?

My dad was retired from the Army and he really encouraged me to serve my country and how it's an honorable thing to do.

It gave me time to figure out my direction in dentistry and the career path I wanted to take.

#### What led you to prosthodontics?

This aspect of dentistry is even more of an arts-and-crafts form of dentistry because you learn how to make a lot of the prosthetics that you end up using.

It did not take me long to gravitate to it because it goes back to me liking to use my hands and the training to do it yourself was a totally different type of experience than anything I had done.

It's extremely rewarding to see the difference you can have in a person's life.

Usually, the patients I encounter are individuals with drastic and extreme



Contributed photo

**Dr. Carlos Blackmon always liked to use his hands to create things growing up, which is what made dentistry so appealing to him.**

cases. They could have had cancer and had some of their jaw removed or a person could be missing all their teeth.

Patients are usually with me for a year or half of a year as I'm with them through the rehabilitation process that takes place. It's the healing process and all that goes into it.

#### What are the most rewarding parts about your job?

The journey that you and your

patients take together is the rewarding part.

You get to know your patients, and you're there sharing in their highs and lows with them.

#### What do you enjoy most about living in the North Florida area?

We like to get out to the beach and walk around any chance we get, and of course the year-round weather here is unbeatable.

#### What do you and your family do in your free time?

The Riverside Arts Market is someplace we're at almost every other Saturday. We love to do our part to support the local arts scene and all that is going on with it, and we stay open to anything else going on in Jacksonville.

Also, the Georgia-Florida game is always a fun time and something we enjoy. I went to both schools so that's always a big game in our household.

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

**KATHY'S GARDENING GUIDE**

# Dianthus

"Love is like a flower — you've got to let it grow." — John Lennon

By Kathy Esfahani



Kathy Esfahani

Symbolizing admiration, happiness, and love, the Dianthus flower is blooming now, just in time for Valentine's Day! These fragrant plants make beautiful gifts on their own or combined with other flowers in colorful bouquets. They are wonderful as splashes of color in a planter or garden and useful as bright borders to outline a landscape bed.

Dianthus flowers are available in pinks, purples, reds, and whites and have delicate blooms featuring five petals with fringed edges. These blooms can be a single color or multicolor. The blue-green leaves of Dianthus are long and thin, almost like blades of grass. Dianthus grows in clumps and varies from small groundcover plants to stems 30 inches tall.

Although Dianthus can tolerate partial shade, it is best to plant them in areas of full sun (at least 6 hours per day). Prepare for planting by digging a hole twice the size of the plant's root ball. Space the plants at least 6 inches apart and



Dianthus blooms

use only a thin layer of mulch if any at all. It is important for the stems to have ample room for air circulation.

Dianthus prefers well drained soil, even bordering on slightly dry. Wait for the soil to feel dry to the touch before watering. Yellow leaves may be a sign of too much water!

Remove old blooms and leaves to encourage growth throughout the season. Dianthus blooms bring birds, bees, and other pollinators to the garden - enjoy watching the hummingbirds and butterflies that Dianthus may attract!

The leaves and stems of Dianthus plants should not be ingested and can be mildly irritating to human skin. Be sure to wear gloves when working with these plants and wash irritated skin with soap and water. Dianthus can be toxic to animals if eaten, possibly causing nausea, vomiting, or other digestive issues. Look for areas safe from roaming animals and children when planting Dianthus.

Photos provided by Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery

**Flower of the Week**



Dianthus

However, when grown organically, the blooms of Dianthus plants have both medicinal and culinary uses. They can be used as herbal diuretics or applied to the skin to treat infections or swelling. Dianthus blooms are edible for humans and often used as culinary garnishes. In ancient Rome, Dianthus flowers were used to flavor oils and wine. Their spicy fragrance and taste can add interest to salads, cake decorations, or syrups. Whether decorating a romantic plate or starring in a beautiful bouquet, Dianthus flowers are perfect for celebrating love!

Happy Valentine's Day!

**Flower of the Week: Dianthus**

**Please 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.**

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Photo by Susan Griffin

THE PLAYERS 50th anniversary merchandise.



Photo by Anthony Richards

THE PLAYERS executive director Lee Smith speaks during media day at TPC Sawgrass on Feb. 5.

# THE PLAYERS 50th anniversary quickly approaches

By Anthony Richards

It is roughly one month from THE PLAYERS and that means things are kicking into high gear as TPC Sawgrass continues to transform to host the mass crowd it is expected to welcome onto the grounds throughout tournament week.

THE PLAYERS executive director Lee Smith expressed his excitement as the event gets ever closer during a media

day event on Feb. 5 in the TPC Sawgrass clubhouse.

One of the big talking points heading into this year's event is that the tournament will be celebrating its 50th anniversary.

"What we're excited about from the 50th standpoint, is to explore some of the unexplored stories and continue to talk about the fact that we've never had a back-to-back champion, but also Jack

Nicholas won three out of the first five," Smith said. "We're obviously going to have some on-site branding and a retail capsule built into the fan shop."

There may be some fans that did not know that TPC Sawgrass was not the sole home in the history of THE PLAYERS, and in fact it had several venues where it was played, including the first held in 1974 at Atlanta Country Club.

"It is a story that we're really leaning

into," Smith said. "We went to Atlanta Country Club where the first event was held and we're going to host their leadership down here during the tournament. Recognizing those things is what we've been really having a fun time with."

THE PLAYERS is scheduled for March 12-17 and will include many of the traditions fans have become accustomed to including the military appreciation concert.



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# Flagler College students create personalized bags for youth in care

For the second straight year, the St. Johns County Family Integrity Program (FIP) and Flagler College have partnered to provide nurturing resources for youth in the care of the FIP.

Lauri Mongiovi, professor of art and design at Flagler College, is teaching a course focusing on childhood separation. An integral part of the class is the book "All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake." Mongiovi highlights the message of the book by allowing her college students to create personalized duffle bags for children in the care of the FIP.

Many foster children are moved from location to location. These personalized keepsake bags are given to the children for them to keep and cherish as a symbol of their distinct identities.

Mongiovi also invites guests to speak to her college students as part of the course. This year, Addison Bailey, the adopted daughter of Racine Coleman (an FIP foster parent), shared her story of foster care and being separated from her family. The students were moved and asked many inquisitive questions.

Coleman touched on how important it is for the students to know what is going on in their community and how everyone can help and come together to support the affected youth. She went on to explain how personalizing a bag for a child in foster care may seem insignificant to some; however, to the child, it means much more to know that "someone, somewhere, was thinking about them."



Flagler College students sit with personalized bags. Professor Lauri Mongiovi, Addison Bailey and Racine Coleman are in the background.

It just so happened that the majority of the Flagler College men's baseball team was in the class. They discussed how, when they signed up for the class, they did not know that it would be about child separation, and they certainly did not expect ironing and stitching patches on bags, but they were very grateful for the experience and asked how they could further help.

Mongiovi received approval from Flagler College to teach the class again in May 2025.

To learn about how you can help children within our community, go to [sjcfl.us/FIP/HowCanIhelp.aspx](http://sjcfl.us/FIP/HowCanIhelp.aspx).



Contributed photos

Close-up of one of the personalized bags.



Flagler College students and Alison Spalding display bags they personalized. Spalding, founder and CEO of Fostering Kindness, is donating care packages and birthday presents to youth in the care of the FIP. Spalding started Fostering Kindness with the belief that meaningful, personal gifts are essential to childhood. Spalding, along with Sandi Wise, a volunteer guardian ad litem, spoke to the class this year.



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Photo courtesy of Suburban Propane  
**Representatives from Suburban Propane and Historic Tours of America held a donation presentation at the Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center in St. Augustine. The effort was part of Suburban Propane's SuburbanCares initiative in communities across the nation.**

## Suburban Propane, Historic Tours support Lincolnville Museum

Suburban Propane Partners recently partnered with Historic Tours of America to announce its support of the Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center in St. Augustine. The announcement was made to commemorate Black History Month and contribute to the preservation of African-American history.

This joint initiative provides crucial funding to further the center's mission of sharing the cultural heritage of St. Augustine's African-American community through various channels, including art, educational programs, lectures, live performances, oral histories and immersive exhibits.

The center is located in the Lincolnville Historic District, which was founded in 1866 by formerly enslaved people and stands in the town's most prominent historically black neighborhood.

This month, the city will introduce an 80-foot trolley stop at the center to facilitate easy access for visitors, including those traveling aboard Historic Tours of America's iconic orange-and-green Old Town Trolley Tours trams, enabling them to explore the museum. The Lincolnville district holds significant historical importance, as it has played a pivotal role in the city's early development and the nation's Civil Rights Movement.

Established in 1565, St. Augustine is

the United States' oldest continuously inhabited settlement, representing both European and African-American heritage. Preceding Jamestown by 42 years and Plymouth Rock by 55 years, the Spanish-founded St. Augustine stands as the nation's first enduring settlement.

"At Suburban Propane, we believe in the power of preserving and sharing diverse cultural histories," said

Nandini Sankara, company spokesperson. "Our collaboration with the Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center aligns with our SuburbanCares commitment to support initiatives that celebrate and educate on the vibrant heritage of the communities in which we operate."

"We are honored to join forces with Suburban Propane to support the Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center," said Piper Smith, vice president of marketing, Historic Tours of America. "Through this collaboration, we aim to contribute to the vibrant culture of St. Augustine and highlight the impact of African-American history on the nation's oldest continuously inhabited settlement."

Suburban Propane Partners is a nationwide distributor of propane, renewable propane, renewable natural gas, fuel oil and related products and services, and a marketer of natural gas and electricity and investor in low-carbon fuel alternatives.



**Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center**



Peterbrooke Chocolatier Durbin Park.

# Galentine's Event

The link, at 425 Town Plaza Ave., located in Nocatee, was the place to be Jan. 31 for the Galentine's Event, which featured several local businesses, including Fleur de Lis Boutique Florida, Scout & Cellar, Peterbrooke Chocolatier, Bold City Boudoir, Rock Star Beauty with Carolyn, Genevieve's Divine Massage and Monroe & Co.

Photos by Susan Griffin



Lisa Keller with Fleur De Lis Boutique Florida.



Shana Ryan and Karen Patino.



Genevieve's Divine Massage.

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# Jumbo Shrimp offer Valentine's Day package

Photos courtesy of the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp

By Anthony Richards

There are many ways to go about making sure to make that special someone know how loved they are this Valentine's Day, both traditionally and uniquely.

One of the more unique ways to show one's love this year comes courtesy of the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp, as the minor league baseball team has something special they are offering.

As part of the Valentine's Day package, the Jumbo Shrimp are presenting four dugout reserved ticket vouchers that will not be dated for specific games, which will allow them to be used for any home game during the 2024 season, which is set to begin in April.

They are also teaming up with a couple of local businesses to really add to the Valentine's Day vibes.

Along with the tickets, the person receiving will also get a rose from Arlington Flower Shop, candy from Sweet Pete's, as well as a Jumbo Shrimp Valentine's Day card and decal of the team's logo.

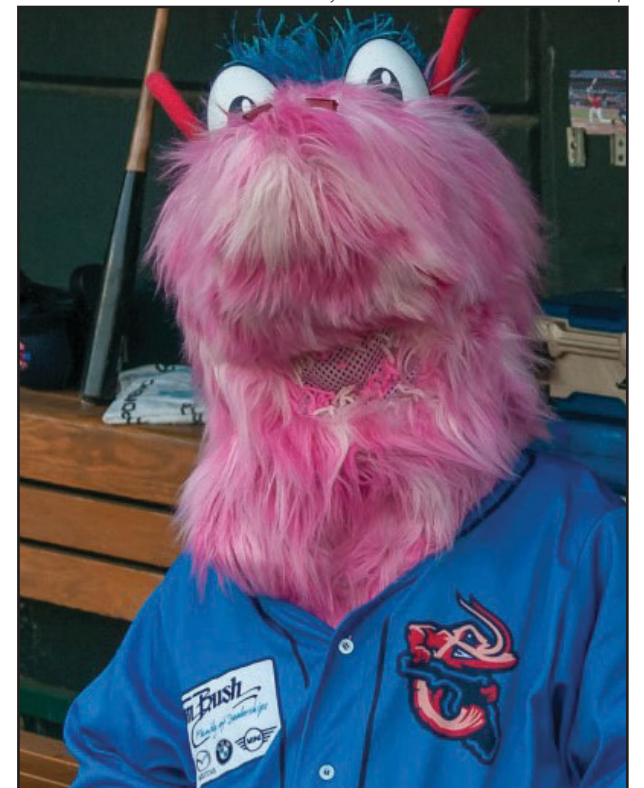
However, as if it was not unique enough, what makes it all its own is the fact that the gift package will be delivered by either one of the Jumbo Shrimp mascots, Scampi or Southpaw.

So, if you see a giant shrimp or dog mascot walking down the office hallways or on site where one works, do not be alarmed, because it is just some Jumbo Shrimp fans expressing how much they love each other one of the best ways they know how.

Scampi and Southpaw will be making their deliveries on Feb. 13 and 14, and reservations are limited so placing an order is something the Jumbo Shrimp



Southpaw could be one's special Valentine's Day deliverer this year.



Scampi will be delivering Jumbo Shrimp Valentine's Day gift packages Feb. 13 and 14.

recommend anyone interested does soon or goes to [jaxshrimp.com](http://jaxshrimp.com) for more details.

The Valentine's Day packages cost \$150 and must be ordered by noon on Feb. 12 or until packages sell out.

The team's front office can be called to place an

order and schedule a delivery time by calling 904-358-2846.

The Jumbo Shrimp are a Triple-A baseball affiliate of the Miami Marlins and play their home games at 121 Financial Ballpark in downtown Jacksonville.



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[www.sawgrassmarriott.com](http://www.sawgrassmarriott.com)

# Peterbrooke expects to dip 100K strawberries by Valentine's Day



Photo provided by Peterbrooke Chocolatier

No Valentine's Day gift conveys love or appreciation quite like chocolate and that's why Peterbrooke Chocolatier estimates that it will hand dip more than 100,000 strawberries in chocolate just in time for the holiday.

According to the National Confectioners Association, 92% of Americans celebrate Valentine's Day with chocolate and candy.

"Chocolate-dipped strawberries are a tradition for Peterbrooke and one of our best sellers around Valentine's Day," said Francie Bey, Peterbrooke's director of marketing. "As Valentine's Day gets closer, our chocolatiers are dipping strawberries and other items almost 15 to 18 hours a day to meet guest demand. We understand

**PETERBROOKE** continues on **Page 14**



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Photos provided by Peterbrooke Chocolatier



# PENNY PREVILLE

## Peterbrooke

Continued from 13

that love comes in all shapes and tastes so whether you're treating your bestie to a fun surprise, gifting to your kids, buying for a loved one, or showing thanks to a colleague, Peterbrooke has a Valentine's gift for you."

This year's Valentine's Day lineup at Peterbrooke includes everything from Madagascar Vanilla Red Heart and Red Lip truffles to chocolate roses, silky chocolate hearts stuffed with chocolate covered popcorn, artfully crafted boxes, baskets, and other whimsical heart-shaped treats. Wine or champagne bottles can also be custom dipped in chocolate at participating shops allowing guests to eat the chocolate while celebrating with a drink together.

"From fan favorites to new treats such as our Sun-Kissed Orange or Macchiato Coffee truffle, our handcrafted chocolates are filled with hidden wonders in every bite," added Bey. "With more than 15 Peterbrooke shops across Jacksonville and Northeast Florida, along with our other shops in Tampa, Tallahassee, Palm Beach, Orlando, Birmingham and beyond, we're here to make every Valentine's moment a little bit more loveable."

For more than 40 years, Peterbrooke has drawn in crowds across the Southeast for its handmade chocolates rooted in European tradition with a generous dash of Americana.

Since its inception in 1983, Peterbrooke has become famous for its unique take on specialties such as its signature chocolate-covered popcorn, cookies, pretzels, marshmallows, potato chips and strawberries that are hand-dipped daily with Peterbrooke's proprietary blend of milk, dark and white chocolate.

Peterbrooke's traditional favorites such as decadent truffles, hand-made caramels and authentic Italian gelato are also featured in every shop.

Founded in 1983 in Jacksonville, Peterbrooke Chocolatier is a "neighborhood chocolate shop" offering a wide selection of European-styled handmade chocolates through a distinctly American experience.

The first shop opened in Jacksonville's historic San Marco neighborhood in 1983 and today the brand has 27 locations throughout the Southeast, including Florida, Alabama and Georgia. The brand began franchising in 2006.

For more information, go to [peterbrooke.com](http://peterbrooke.com).



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# Senior LIVING

## FEATURING

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THE  
RECORDER 

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2024

# St. Johns COA looks back on 50 years of service, growth

This year the St. Johns County Council on Aging celebrates 50 years of service to older adults and caregivers in the county.

The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization was founded 50 years ago by local concerned citizens with a focus on providing essential nutrition, transportation, and independent living support services for our community's elders.

Since serving their first home-delivered and congregate meals to seniors in 1974, the COA has been on a journey to empower our community's elders to live their best lives at every age.

The operation has grown immensely over the years and currently has six senior centers and lifelong learning centers, four memory care locations, and offers transportation services to all 600 square miles of the county.

"As we have throughout our history, we continue to pursue opportunities to provide greater dignity, independence, social inclusion, and well-being for those we serve," COA executive director Becky Yanni said. "Whether it is a meal prepared with love, a strong hand to help with tasks around the house, or an engaging program to stay active, healthy and connected, we are dedicated to supporting quality of life and independence for local seniors."

While volunteers provided transportation for seniors in the early days, the COA now offers door-to-door paratransit transportation services with a fleet of specialized vehicles.

In 2000, COA also established the Sunshine Bus Company, providing the first public transportation services for the

entire community as the St. Johns County government contracted provider.

The COA also created their Prescription Assistance Program in 1999 to assist seniors in obtaining low- or no-cost prescription medications through pharmaceutical company programs. The program has saved St. Johns County seniors more than \$32 million since it began.

Another highlight from the past 50 years includes the construction of River House in 2010, a lifelong learning center set on the Matanzas River in downtown St. Augustine, thanks to money from a legacy gift received from St. Augustine resident Mary Peck.

Also in 2010, COA created IMEP, its groundbreaking Integrative Memory Enhancement Program. The popular classroom program is now offered at

four locations throughout the county, including the Ponte Vedra Memory Care Center, which COA established in 2015. Outside agencies and facilities that serve seniors throughout Florida and the U.S. have also subscribed to the program since 2015, when IMEP was trademarked and copyrighted.

To learn more about these inspiring stories, go to [coasjc.org/coa-50th-anniversary](http://coasjc.org/coa-50th-anniversary).

"We would not be where we are today without your support," Yanni said. "Thank you to all of our champions – our donors, funders, volunteers, staff and community partners for supporting our important mission. Together, the future for seniors and caregivers, our future, will grow ever brighter into the next 50 years and beyond."

Photos courtesy of Pickleball in the Sun



Pickleball is a game that can be enjoyed and played together regardless of age or experience level.



Roughly 9 million people are pickleball players in the United States according to USA Pickleball.

## Pickleball continues to grow, span generations

By Anthony Richards

Pickleball courts are seemingly popping up everywhere throughout St. Johns County and one of the places that has seen an influx of interest and growth in that area over the years has been at the Brown Family YMCA in Ponte Vedra Beach.

According to the location's assistant executive director, Cara Roach, the facility was using its gym to provide three pickleball courts, but the demand was getting to be too much, and it led to the addition of five outdoor courts as part of the new Maguire Family Pickleball Center, which has made a huge difference since its construction.

"We did our first tournament in the fall and there were 103 people that came out, so we had enough to even create a 70 and

older division," Roach said.

The next tournament hosted by the YMCA is scheduled for April 26-28 and is expected to be even bigger, as it will be three days long and the format will consist of teams instead of a round robin approach.

There has been so much interest of people wanting to get involved that they have begun offering a class for beginners to learn the sport of pickleball from 9 to 10 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"We had it in our gym pre-COVID and about 20 people were coming out, but then we started getting about 50 or so people during COVID, so it really seemed to escalate it," Roach said.

They even have 130 people in the recently started pickleball club and are preparing to begin league play next month with different categories depend-

ing on age and experience level.

However, one of the aspects that Roach loves most about pickleball is that people can play together and have fun no matter what experience level they may have, which is something very rare among most sports.

She has also seen that pickleball is a sport that is relatively easily picked up by most everyone that tries it, which makes it a game that everyone can enjoy.

"I love the mixing of generations that takes place on a pickleball court," Roach said. "I'll walk around and a lot of times after school I'll see middle schoolers will be playing with adults and everyone is just having a fun time."

According to research by USA Pickleball, roughly 9 million people are pickleball players in the United States, and the Association of Pickleball Play-

ers performed a study that found nearly 50 million have played pickleball in the world within the last year.

There are various courts located across the First Coast and plenty of Facebook groups created to help spread the word about them and expand the ever-growing pickleball community in the area.

One of the promoters of pickleball locally is Laura Gainor, a Nocatee resident and creator of "Pickleball in the Sun," which is a lifestyle brand and experiential pickleball marketing agency with the goal of highlighting premier pickleball experiences and destinations to play and how Northeast Florida fits into that.

"Travelers are now increasingly packing not just their golf clubs, but their pickleball paddles and tennis rackets when selecting their vacation destinations," Gainor said.




# The Palms tours MOSH

Members of The Palms at Ponte Vedra took a fun field trip to the Museum of Science & History in Jacksonville on Jan. 17. Part of the fun included experiencing the Silver Space Series exhibit and watching the planetarium show about the James Webb Space Telescope.

Photos courtesy of The Palms at Ponte Vedra






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# Palms resident has note-worthy career

By Shaun Ryan

Charles Almeida played his first note on a musical instrument more than eight decades ago and today, at 96, he's still setting toes tapping while performing with a local band.

In his apartment at The Palms at Ponte Vedra, he is surrounded by treasures of a rich lifetime. There are photos of loved ones, a unique American Indian staff carved for him as a gift, a cartoon caricature celebrating his many talents, a pair of speakers he bought while serving with the military in Korea and, of course, an assortment of woodwinds.

Most of his musical career was spent with a variety of military bands, but he also played for touring Broadway shows, various combos and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. During his career, he performed with some of music's top talent.

Technically a "woodwind doubler," capable of playing multiple instruments in the same performance, Almeida's musical career began in his youth with a desire to play the saxophone.

## Early days

Entering junior high school in Providence, Rhode Island, he was tested to determine if he had an ear for music. His teacher told his parents that the school would offer free music lessons if they provided the instrument. They were offered a choice: saxophone for \$150 or clarinet for \$50.

When the music store salesman told Almeida's mother that 90% of what he learned on clarinet would translate to saxophone, the decision was made. And his senior year, his father bought him the saxophone he wanted.

Almeida's first gig was at a local dance club. His pay of \$4 for working three-and-a-half hours on a Saturday night impressed his father, who told him to use his earnings to pay for his ongoing lessons.

By the time he was 20, Almeida began working at the local music store and was playing at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet as part of a 17-piece band three nights a week. He was doing well enough to buy a 1948 Studebaker Champion.

But it looked as though he was about to be drafted, so on the advice of a friend he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, where he joined the reserve band.

"I thought: This is a pretty good gig," he said.

But, the war being over, President Harry Truman declared a reduction in force. The draft took a holiday. And Almeida took to the road.

## On the road

At first, he went to Kentucky and



Photo by Shaun Ryan

## Charles Almeida with his clarinet at The Palms at Ponte Vedra.

joined a five-piece band from Chicago. But he found the lifestyle disagreeable.

"As soon as I could find another job, I was out of there," he said.

He joined a number of bands after that, the first of which brought him to Jacksonville.

"I came to Florida the first time in 1948," he said. "I worked a club out on Route 1 called Joe Williams' Peacock Club. I remember it, because it was the first really big nightclub I ever worked in."

While in the Sunshine State, he dis-

covered two cherished pastimes: diving and skiing. In fact, he quit a successful band so to return to Key West to pursue those interests. While there, he joined a local trio, which played at the Bamboo

# Almeida

Continued from 18

Room Cocktail Lounge and then, after hours, at a gambling joint.

On Key West, he also discovered another great passion: spear fishing. In fact, his fishing success was documented with a photo in the February 1952 issue of Popular Science depicting Almeida and his group with a 1,160-pound hammerhead shark they caught.

Meanwhile, the risk of the draft came around again in 1951 during the Korean War. One night at the Bamboo Room, he spoke to some members of the U.S. Navy about enlisting there so that he could attend the Navy School of Music.

But they dissuaded him, suggesting instead the Air Force band.

## Good advice

So, in 1952 he enlisted and was sent to Lackland Air Force Base in Texas for basic training. There, he auditioned for the band and was signed up for the basic bandsman indoctrination course.

That's when some life-changing advice he'd received a few years earlier proved its worth. A musician from whom he'd been taking lessons said, "If you ever have to go in the service, don't tell them you play saxophone or clarinet. Tell them you play flute. They're

always short flute players."

While at Lackland, Almeida was instructed to go to Washington, D.C., for the 12-week advanced instrumentalist course at Bolling Air Force base. Technically, he didn't qualify; he had too few years in the Air Force and was short the required rank.

But, as it turned out, they needed a flute player.

"That changed my whole life," Almeida said. "I got sent to Washington, D.C., right out of basic training."

## Brushes with greatness

Because he could play tenor sax, he was transferred to Andrews Air Force base in Maryland to play in the dance band. He was encouraged to take up the piccolo, and thus was able to play in the concert band as well.

"The first gig I played with these guys, this trombone player sitting behind me — man, he could play!" Almeida recalled. "The first break, I turned around and said, 'Man, I love your playing!'"

That trombone player turned out to be Sammy Nestico, who would go on to work with Count Basie, Phil Collins, Barbra Streisand, Tommy Dorsey, Gene Krupa and many more big names. He also went on to a long career in film and TV, serving as the orchestrator for "Mission: Impossible," "Mannix," "M\*A\*S\*H," "Charlie's Angels" and

more. He was orchestrator and arranger for "The Color Purple."

"That's how I met Sammy Nestico," said Almeida. "We became fast friends."

While at Andrews, he also befriended a young band member named Tommy Newsom. In the years ahead, Newsom would go on to work with Kenny Rogers, Charlie Byrd, John Denver and more. He would be a member of the Tonight Show Band during Johnny Carson's years, as well as the orchestra for "The Merv Griffin Show."

But in 1953, Almeida and Newsom were in the Air Force and were more or less pressed into performing for the band at Bolling, Almeida because — in a repeat of the flute episode — he happened to play piccolo.

## Still playing

In 1955, Almeida got out of the service and returned to Key West, diving, skiing and attending college on the G.I. Bill. He also continued to play. But civilian life wouldn't last long. In February 1956 he re-enlisted with the hopes of attending warrant officer school. That didn't pan out due to a change in how ranks were assigned, but Almeida continued to perform.

He left the Air Force in 1962 but then enlisted in the U.S. Army shortly thereafter. For a time, he played with the NORAD band.

He got his first taste of Broadway musicals while serving at Fort Huachuca in Arizona. A local theater group needed musicians for a performance of "Music Man" at the post.

In 1972, after leaving the military, Almeida began to play for traveling Broadway shows, something he was suited for as a woodwind doubler. Toward that end, he took up another instrument, the oboe.

In Washington, D.C., he performed at the National Theater, the Kennedy Center and more. In Baltimore, he performed at the Lyric Theater, the Mechanic Theatre and more.

"And we did several pre-Broadway runs," he said. "Those were fun. We did a pre-Broadway run for 'A Chorus Line.' That was a hard show."

From 1973 to 1987, he also played for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

"Every time the circus came, I played the circus," he said.

In 1981, he was selected to play a brief soprano sax solo in the Baltimore Symphony's recording of Ravel's "Bolero."

In 1983, Almeida and his wife relocated to Florida, where he continued to perform for the circus.

These days, Almeida continues to perform at a local sports bar, where patrons may not realize they are listening to a musical legend.



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Pam Ducas and Miguel Coles.

# Cypress Village thanks partners

Cypress Village recently held its second annual Sip, Sip, Hooray New Year's event.

It was a way of saying "thank you" to all of the Cypress Village partners: hospital partners, liaisons, home health care and hospice organizations, as well as those that support the community throughout the year.

Live entertainment and great food made for a wonderful event that's held annually after the busy hustle and bustle of the holidays, kicking off the New Year.

Photos by Susan Griffin



The night had live entertainment.



Radha Weeder, Trudy Toche and Lisa Green.



The Cypress Village staff.



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# Senior centers announce February activities

Here's a look at some of the activities and events planned for February at area COA senior centers.

## THE PLAYERS COMMUNITY SENIOR CENTER

175 Landrum Lane  
Ponte Vedra Beach

If you have any questions, call the center at 904-209-3659.

**Lunch – Tuesdays:** Noon to 1 p.m. Registration required a week in advance. Fee required: \$5 per meal.

**Lunch – Thursdays:** Noon to 1 p.m. Registration required a week in advance. Fee required: \$5 per meal.

**Hisshin Sumi-E Painting Class:** Traditional East Asian brush painting. 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 8. Fee required: \$3 per person.

**Chair Exercise – Tuesdays:** 9:30 to 10 a.m.

**Chair Exercise – Thursdays:** 9:30 to 10 a.m.

**Canasta – Tuesdays:** 10 a.m. to noon

**Canasta – Thursdays:** 10 a.m. to noon

**Mexican Train Dominoes:** 10 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays

**Ask a Nurse:** 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays

**Bingo – Tuesdays:** 1-2 p.m.

**Bingo – Thursdays:** 1-2 p.m.

**Board Game Playing:** 10 a.m. to noon Wednesdays

**Wii Bowling:** 10-11 a.m. Thursdays

**Lunar New Year with Camellia at Deerwood:** Celebrate the Year of the Dragon with Victoria Proctor Sales & Marketing Director at Camellia at Deerwood for games, prizes and fortune cookies! 11 a.m. to noon Thursday, Feb. 8. Free!

**St. John's County Library:** The Ponte Vedra Beach Branch of the St. John's County Public Library System visits for Mardi Gras fun! 11 a.m. to noon Fat Tuesday, Feb. 13.

**Happy Birthday February Babies!** Join us for cake and one of our favorite entertainers, James Cargill. 11 a.m. to noon Thursday, Feb. 15.

**National Muffin Day:** Join Karen DeWeese, sales director at Windsor Pointe Independent Living, for muffins and fun. 11 a.m. to noon Feb. 20.

**St. John's County Legal Aid:** Free lecture on exploitation of the elderly and disabled. Given by Megan Wall, St. Johns County Legal Aid, managing attorney. 11 a.m. to noon Feb. 22.

**Check Your Blood Pressure with Nurse Fran:** 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Feb. 29. Free.

**Fall Awareness:** 11 a.m. to noon Feb. 27 with Nurse Fran. Learn how to safely get up after a fall.

**St. Johns County Council on Aging, Inc. Paratransit Transportation:** 11 a.m. to noon Feb. 29. Learn about COA's non-emergency medical and other transportation services within the St. Johns County Service area.

## COA CENTER AT FLAGLER HEALTH+ VILLAGE AT NOCATEE

351 Town Plaza Ave., Suite 205  
Ponte Vedra

Unless specified otherwise, register by email to pbrunell@stjohnscoa.com or by calling 904-814-9407. Classes are open to adults ages 18+.

### Tuesdays:

**Caregiver Support Group:** All caregivers are welcome. The group meets 1-2 p.m. every Tuesday. There is a trained facilitator present at every meeting to guide the group.

**Widows and Widowers:** Social group meeting 11 a.m. to noon the second and fourth Tuesdays of every month. Register in advance for one or both Tuesdays.

**Proper Pruning Techniques:** Learn when, how, why and what to prune in your landscape. Class presented by Terra Freeman, Horticulture Extension Agent from UF/IFAS. 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Feb. 13.

**Herbology with Professor James Carucci – Herbs for Digestion:** Learn

what herbs to use to aid proper digestion and how to prepare them. You will be able to make a product and take it home to use. 3-4 p.m. Feb. 20. Cost is \$10 per class. Sign up at: <https://coajc.coursestorm.com/category/coa-center-at-nocatee>.

### AARP Smart Driver™ Course:

Take this one-day class and save on your car insurance. (Check with your carrier.) AARP offers evidence-based safe driving strategies, new laws and rules of the road, how to deal with aggressive drivers and more. Advanced registration is required. A fee of \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for nonmembers will need to be paid (check or cash) to instructor on class day to receive a certificate of completion. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Feb. 27. Call or email to register or for more information.

### Fall Prevention for Caregivers:

Presented by AHEC, a program specifically for family caregivers on measures to protect your loved ones from falls. 2-3 p.m. Feb. 27.

### Wednesdays:

**Open Art:** Bring your art or craft project to work on while socializing with friends. Meets 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. every Wednesday.

**Medication Review:** Do you have ques-

ACTIVITIES continues on Page 22



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## Activities

Continued from 21

tions or concerns about the prescription medications you take? Retired pharmacist Ray Lowe is here to help. Call or email to schedule a free one-to-one appointment. Wednesday morning appointments available. Call 904-814-9407 to schedule.

**Mah Jongg Meet-up:** Open play for experienced players. 1-3 p.m. Feb. 14 and 28; 3-5 p.m. Feb. 21.

**VA Benefit for Senior Veterans:** This presentation covers veterans, widows and agent orange and burn pit presumptive illnesses, presented by Bubba Schlader, extended care and crisis financial planner. 10-11 a.m. Feb. 14.

**Exploitation of the Elderly & Disabled:** This free lecture will cover important information that you need to know to protect yourself and your loved ones. Presented by Megan Wall, managing attorney of the St. Johns County Legal Aid. 10-11 a.m. Feb. 21.

**Genealogy Group:** A genealogy expert will guide you in discovering and finding your ancestors on the third Wednesday of each month. 1-2:30 p.m. Feb. 21.

**Hospice Myths & Facts:** Learn about hospice care as holistic, supporting the needs of the patient and family. Community Hospice will debunk the myths and provide the facts. 10-11 a.m. Feb. 28.

**Caregiver Needs Assessment:** Make an appointment with a qualified dementia care specialist who will: Set up a time to discuss your situation, one to one; develop an individualized education and needs assessment; support and guide; and empower you to find solutions for those needs. Call to schedule an appointment 904-814-9407.

### COA'S RIVER HOUSE

179 Marine St.  
St. Augustine

River House will be closed for classes and open programs on Feb. 13 and 19. If you have any questions, call 904-209-3655 Monday-Thursday or email [tharris@coasjc.org](mailto:tharris@coasjc.org).

For more information, go to [coasjc.coursestorm.com/category/river-house](http://coasjc.coursestorm.com/category/river-house).

### Registration Required

Registration is required for the following programs, and space is limited. To review course details and to register, go to [coasjc.coursestorm.com/category/river-house](http://coasjc.coursestorm.com/category/river-house).

**101 Ways to Transition to a Plant-Based Diet or to lean more to the green:** 1:30 to 3 p.m. Feb. 12

**Fishing:** 9-11 a.m. Feb. 20

**Sea Shell Art Class:** 11 a.m. to noon Feb. 20, 27

**Chair Yoga:** Three weeks starting Feb. 14 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

### Open Programs

Open programs are free and, where noted, may require registration. Go to [coasjc.org/river-house](http://coasjc.org/river-house) for more information.

**Help with Medicare Questions:** Second Monday of each month from 9 a.m. to noon. Reserve a spot with a SHINE volunteer now by calling 904-209-3655.

**Mahjong Open Play:** Bring your mahjong game and come play. 1-3 p.m. Mondays. No meeting on Feb. 19.

**AARP Tax Help:** Free tax return preparation to anyone who needs it with AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers. Mondays from Feb. 5 to April 8 between 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Reserve a spot by calling 904-209-3655.

**Healing Hearts:** A group for grieving a loss. Meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

**One-on-One Tech Help:** One-on-one help for your smart phone, tablet or laptop questions. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Feb. 20 and 27. Call 904-209-3655 to reserve a one-hour spot.

**Happy Hookers:** Join this social group as they crochet, knit, etc. Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. No meeting Feb. 13.

**Socrates Café:** People coming together to discuss questions and issues that they are interested in. Every Wednesday from 10:30 a.m. to noon.

**Widow to Widow:** Join us for a support group for widows by widows. Wednesdays from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

**Open Card Play:** Bring your deck of cards and socialize over a friendly card game of your choosing. Every Thursday from 12:15 to 3:15 p.m.

**Exploitation of the Elderly and Disabled:** With Megan Wall of S.J.C. Legal Aid. 10-11 a.m. Feb. 23

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GUEST COLUMN

# Questions to ask before cataract surgery



**By Kenzo Koike, M.D.**  
Florida Eye Specialists

Preparing for cataract surgery can feel overwhelming, and it's normal to have questions. After all, nothing is more precious than your sight. An experienced ophthalmologist will walk you through all the answers to your questions, but it's helpful to have a little background before your first appointment. Here are the answers to the most frequently asked questions I receive.

**What are the different types of cataract surgery?**

The two main types of cataract surgery that we perform at Florida Eye Specialists are traditional and Femtosecond laser-assisted cataract surgery (FLACS). Traditional cataract surgery is more manual and hands-on, whereas FLACS is less hands-on and relies more heavily on technology. However, both methods are highly effective and result in a quick recovery process.

The benefit of laser cataract surgery is that it creates a more precise and accurate outcome. This allows eye surgeons to correct a wide range of vision problems, including astigmatism, far- and near-sightedness at the time of cataract surgery. It gives you the option to correct two eye conditions with one procedure and reduces or even eliminates the need for glasses.

**What are my lens options?**

During cataract surgery, your eye's cloudy natural lens is removed. Your surgeon will replace it with a clear artificial lens known as an intraocular lens (IOL). Today's lenses offer crisper, higher-quality vision, and more function than ever — and there are more options than you think.

Whether you have astigmatism, need better nighttime or daytime vision, have had prior refractive surgery, or wish to see clearly without the use of glasses or contact lenses, we can customize your lens to your individual needs. You can even fine-tune your vision after cataract surgery with the Light Adjustable Lens.

**How long does cataract surgery take?**

Cataract surgery is one of the most common and safest surgeries in medicine. It takes only 30-45 minutes or less. Patients go home the same day as their procedure. Note that if you need cataract surgery in both eyes, you will undergo two separate operations. Our surgeons like the first eye to recover before they operate on the second.

**What risks are associated with cataract surgery?**

Although cataract surgery is extremely safe, as with any surgery, it is possible complications could occur. Symptoms like dry eye, blurred vision and eye pain are all common in the days following your cata-

ract procedure. They are usually managed with prescription eye drops and resolve on their own in a few days or weeks.

**Will I be in any pain after cataract surgery?**

Most patients experience minimal pain or discomfort following their cataract surgery and can return to work or other daily activities within a couple of days following their procedure. As you recover, you may experience blurry vision, itching or minor discomfort. After all, your eye has just been operated on, and it will need some time to heal and adjust. However, your vision should improve, and symptoms typically subside within just a few days post-operation.

**Schedule Your Cataract Consultation**

If you have cataracts, you don't have to suffer from blurred, dull vision or give up the activities you love. At Florida Eye Specialists, our eye surgeons use cutting-edge technology and premium lens options so you can see better than ever before. Remember, the earlier the cataract surgery is performed, the better the outcome. Take control of your eye health by making an appointment today.

**Kenzo Koike, M.D., is a board-certified ophthalmologist at Florida Eye Specialists. For more information on Dr. Koike and his specialties in treating cataracts and glaucoma, visit [FloridaEyeSpecialists.com](http://FloridaEyeSpecialists.com) or call 904-564-2020.**



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## GUEST COLUMN

# Becoming Archie Bunker



By Scott A. Grant

When I was much younger, so much younger that I barely recall the event, an older cousin announced at the dinner table that he was a communist. All heck

broke loose. We were at my grandparents' house, as we often were in the summer. My grandmother lost her mind, and a big fight broke out. My grandparents were big Nixon people. Communists were not welcome! I suppose there were worse things he could have claimed to be, but like being a communist those things were not the sort of thing you brought up in polite society.

At the time, I remember wondering why he said such a thing. If you want to imagine that you're some sort of communist, that is fine. Keep it to yourself. In the late '60s, early '70s it just was not the kind of thing you admitted to. Unless maybe you are around some other like-minded people and then you can all sing L'Internationale together. The Internationale is the international song of communism. It is set to the music of the Marseilles.

A French exchange student taught me the words in high school in both French and English. I think she had a crush on me. At the time it felt very subversive. I have since forgotten the words, although the first line is "C'est la lutte finale," which translates as "it's the final battle." This brings up another question. Are there really any communists out there?

I mean, I suppose there are some. But are there many? My 17-year-old son was talking about Anarcho-Communists the other day and the "seventeen" red scares of the Twentieth Century.

I do not think he meant 'seventeen' to be literal. Just that there were quite a few red scares beginning in 1919. In America we often used those scares to subdue some other insular minority. Anyway, I was proud of my son for using the term Anarcho-Communist. My older cousin might have thought he was a communist that heated summer evening in the late '60s, but it turned out he wasn't. Later in life he became a staunch Republican. So, why did he say he was? I think mostly just to annoy my grandparents, who were not even his grandparents. He was from the other side of the family and just visiting. He was not invited back.

If the plan was to anger and irritate my grandparents and ruin dinner, it worked. I remember wishing I could just slink away and go outside and bounce a tennis ball off of the steps. I couldn't. No one escapes the rampant fear of communism once it rears its ugly head. As I said earlier, I am not sure that there really are that many real communists running around or that communism is what we really

fear. To me totalitarianism or a dictatorship seems both more likely and more ominous.

So, what is the point? People, often younger, but not always, will sometimes say things to elicit an emotion. Sometimes the emotion is anger. Sometimes it is fear. We are sold anger and fear on a daily basis by politicians and the media. I saw an episode of "All in the Family" the other day. Archie was mad at his son-in-law for donating money to McGovern, who was, in Archie's mind, a "communist." There is that word again. Just about anything that scares us can and has been labelled communist.

My advice is that as we age, we should be wary of succumbing to the unreasonable and unwarranted fears that are often used to control us or just make us angry. Young people will delight in riling us. Old people will use our fears to secure our votes or allegiance. Don't be Archie Bunker. The things that terrify us are rarely the things that should.

**Scott A. Grant is a local author, historian and investment specialist. He looks at the world differently and welcomes your comments at [scottg@standfastic.com](mailto:scottg@standfastic.com).**

## Ascension St. Vincent's Southside adds new back pain procedure

Ascension St. Vincent's has announced it will fully include the innovative TOPS System for treating back pain at its Southside campus.

This technology is used to treat a range


of conditions mainly associated with back and spinal pain. It is an alternative to traditional fusion surgeries for patients suffering from a narrowing of the spinal canal in the lower back.

The system allows for greater rotation, bending and extension compared to traditional counterparts and many patients find they have improved walking and movement mobility within 48 hours of their

procedure.

For more information about this procedure and neurosurgical care at St. Vincent's, go to [ascension.org](http://ascension.org).


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Here's a look at the forthcoming great room and bar at the Rise clubhouse.



This artist rendering shows the interior of one of the apartments. Interior finishes, views, color and lighting are representative.

# New 55-plus active living community taking shape

Rise, a new 55-plus active living community in Nocatee, is progressing toward completion. The first building is projected to become available around May 1.

Already, prospective residents are looking into it. About 10% of the apartments are pre-leased, according to General Manager Jerry Shafer. Currently, Rise is offering six weeks of free rent at move-in with a signed lease for 12 to 15 months.

The community will be located just one mile from Nocatee Town Center.

When completed, Rise will have 178 apartment homes divided between two buildings. The first will be four levels, the second five. Both buildings will have elevators.

A nearly 10,000-square-foot clubhouse is under construction now and is expected to be complete at the end of February. It

will house onsite offices, a yoga room, a 24-hour fitness room, a kitchen, a media and music lounge, a creative arts workshop, a game room and more.

For anyone interested in making a visit to see the site, hard-hat tours are being offered 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Guests must wear close-toed shoes.

Prospective future residents, whether Gen Xers, Boomers or Seniors, who want to learn more may visit the Rise table at the Active After 50 Expo, which will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 10, at the St. Johns County Convention Center,



An artist's rendering of the front office exterior.

500 S. Legacy Trail, St. Augustine.

For further information about this new community, go to [risepontevedra.com](http://risepontevedra.com).



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A look at the progress at Rise from above.



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# Nationals

Continued from 1

meet all the different girls and all their different backgrounds,” Pitches said. “It was completely unexpected for me, because I went in with a preconceived notion that it was going to be a hyper competitive environment and that the girls would all be fighting for these leadership opportunities. But I quickly realized that instead we were supporting each other and building bonds, which was the best part for me.”

According to Pitches, the fact that she had some leadership experience prior to it, she was able to fully embrace being a mentor to girls.

Black had a similar experience to Pitches and also cherished the amount of people he has had the opportunity to meet and interact with along the way, and he believes those relationships are ones he looks to build upon moving forward.

“It’s very easy when you’re here in Florida to see things from your own lens and the way you view things, but when you meet kids who grew up in the middle of Kentucky or California, you learn how they see the world as well,” Black said. “The spirit of Boys and Girls Nation is that you are talking about politics and current issues, and it becomes much easier to understand other viewpoints and come to respect those diverse opinions.”

Talking politics is not something that Black shies away from and he hopes to pursue a career in the social sciences and political science realm during his time at the Naval Academy.

Pitches wants to become an intelligence officer in the military, and she chose West Point over the other services’ academies due to it offering an international affairs major track as well as many other course paths that intrigued



Photo by Anthony Richards

Nease High senior Hailey Pitches also advanced to Girls Nation in 2023 and represented Post 129.

her.

Neither had parents who served in the military, but still found it their calling to serve their country the best way they know how, and they credit their involvement in Boys State and Girls State for helping define their path.

“For someone like me, a lot of my exposure to it has come from my interactions with veterans and people who are in the Legion,” Black said. “The projects they do and are involved with has really opened my eyes to how important they are to our community.”



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# St. Augustine museum offers Black history tours

The Ximenez-Fatio House Museum, a long-standing fixture of historic Aviles Street, will launch the fourth chapter of "I Lived Here, As Well ... The Story Continues." Tours will run Feb. 8 through March 2. For tickets and details, go to [ximenezfatiohouse.org/ilhaw](http://ximenezfatiohouse.org/ilhaw).

Museum guests are invited to step into a 226-year-old boarding house and experience, firsthand, the stories of the people who lived within it.

The "I Lived Here, As Well" program is a series of interpretive Black history tours in which the tour guides are actors who portray several characters from St. Augustine's past.

Some of these characters are people who lived in the house, like Louisa Williams, a previously enslaved woman who was freed by Union troops in St. Augustine in 1862. Other characters were crafted to represent enslaved and freed people who were documented as working in the house, but whose names never were recorded.

On the 2024 tour, guests will witness the unfolding narratives of both familiar and new characters, adding depth and intrigue to our ever-evolving tale. Those stepping into this narrative for the first time will meet a diverse ensemble of characters from various eras, each embodying distinct roles in the house's



Contributed photos

"I Lived Here, As Well ... The Story Continues" tells the story of African-Americans who lived in the Ximenez-Fatio House.

storied history.

Over the history of the house, many have come through the doors. Weary travelers welcomed through the proper front entrance, guests enjoyed the luxuries of home, with a bit of Florida style, and the ill healed in the midst of warm sunshine and clean sea breezes.

There were some who passed through

the doors, however, who were unseen.

Those who may have used the front door but went unnoticed. Some who never used the front door, as they rarely left. They lived there, as well, but their stories are not as widely known.

"I Lived Here, As Well" is their story.

The Ximenez-Fatio House Museum has stood on Aviles Street since 1798

and has been owned by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Florida since 1939. Learn more at [ximenezfatiohouse.org](http://ximenezfatiohouse.org).

"I Lived Here, As Well" and other programs are sponsored in part by the St. Johns Cultural Council and the St. Johns County Tourism Development Council.



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TPC Guide Issue Date: March 7<sup>th</sup>  
Deadline for Space Reservation: February 22<sup>nd</sup>



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# Cornhole For A Cause is Feb. 10

Kick off your Super Bowl festivities at the IV Annual Super Cornhole For A Cause fundraising event, presented by Adaptive Jax and hosted by the Rotary Club of Jacksonville-Oceanside.

Bags drop on Saturday, Feb. 10, at ABBQ Meat & Drink in Atlantic Beach. This event will welcome up to 64 two-person teams and ticketed spectators.

In addition, there will be tournament prizes, raffles, food and beverages.

The fundraising goal is \$35,000 with funds to be donated to Mission House and the Beaches Museum.

The winning team receives a VIP Jaguar Insider Experience, which includes two VIP passes to Jacksonville's ultimate tailgate location, the Duuvul House, donated by the Law Offices of Phillips, Hunt, Walker & Hanna. Winners also receive a VIP experience at the premiere of Tommy Mac's Happy Hour season two, sponsored by Adaptive Jax and Team Tommy Mac.

Second place winners receive a family membership to the Beaches Museum, an opportunity to attend either a Chapel Concert or the Fletcher All Class Block

Party (in 2024), along with a Beaches Museum gift bag. Third place winners get an ABBQ Meat and Greet \$100 gift card each and a gift basket.

Everyone can join the fun and support these organizations by participating in the Cornhole for a Cause Super Raffle. The prizes include a two-night stay at Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort and Spa, a luxurious Ten Salon Gift Basket, a weekender package from Salt Air Inn with beach swag and bike rentals, a Napoleon Travel Grill, artwork by artist Scotie Cousins, an evening at the Alhambra Dinner Theatre and VIP tickets to comedian Tom Pappas at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, along with Pet Daycare and Spa packages. Raffle tickets can be purchased at Proctor Ace Hardware in Neptune Beach.

Registration begins at 9 a.m. The tournament starts at 10:30 a.m. and will run until 3 p.m. Parking is available at Community Presbyterian Church, located behind ABBQ Meat & Drink. Participants and ticketed spectators can sign up at oceansidejaxrotary.org.

# New online library catalog launched

The St. Johns County Public Library System is enhancing its customer experiences with a new online catalog to offer the public access to more than 300,000 books, magazines and other library services.

The library is migrating to a new, more user-friendly, modern browsing experience that makes it easier to find library materials. The new catalog offers personalization features and search tools designed to help patrons more easily discover what the library offers.

"We are so thrilled to launch a new, user-friendly catalog that gives patrons more control over their library experience," said library director Debra Rhodes Gibson. "The catalog looks great and makes discovering library materials so much easier with its interactive design. We continually strive to bring accessible and engaging services to our community, and we think this catalog checks those boxes. We invite everyone to explore the site and take advantage everything the St. Johns County Public Library System has to offer."

Some of the new online features offer enhanced account control for library patrons. This includes an option to opt in to track reading history, extensive options to filter searches and the ability to create lists, save favorite searches and link multiple library cards to one account allowing families to easily manage their checkouts and holds.

In 2023, the library system's six branch locations and bookmobile circulated more than 1.1 million physical items and electronically circulated another 390,000 items to patrons. Jae Bass, manager of support services, said, "We began the process of upgrading to the Aspen Discovery catalog platform back in August 2023. We are so proud of this new catalog and are excited for everyone to start exploring and discovering all that it has to offer."

The library system has plans to announce more technology upgrades later in 2024 to improve mobile accessibility to its services and programs. To learn more about the St. Johns County Public Library System, go to sjcpls.org.

## WALKERS RIDGE IN SAWGRASS COUNTRY CLUB

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# 'The Treehouse' opened on Bolles campus

The Bolles Lower School Ponte Vedra Beach Campus held a ribbon cutting Feb. 2 alongside the Bolles Office of Advancement to celebrate the official opening of the Wotiz Family Outdoor Learning Center "The Treehouse."

Made possible by Ashley Wotiz '96, Matt Wotiz and many supporters, this center will enhance the learning process through the outdoors and bring elevated energy and connection to classroom learning.

It also will create an opportunity to experience and appreciate nature and allow students to not only learn about their surroundings but to also better understand how nature can impact math, literature, history, art, music

and science.

Campus Head Stacey Hendershot said faculty members have been enthusiastically anticipating the opening of "The Treehouse," brainstorming the many ways they can use the space to creatively reach students.

The entire campus gathered for the ribbon cutting, along with dozens of parents and supporters, to commemorate the opening of the center. The youngest Bulldogs used binoculars to view "The Treehouse," while the older students waved orange-and-blue pom poms to celebrate.

Bolles President and Head of School Tyler Hodges took the podium to express his gratitude to the Wotiz

family and everyone who supported the project, reiterating the significant impact this structure is poised to make in students' educational and social growth.

"This is going to help students look at the world from a different perspective, and that is really important – especially when you're young," Hodges said. "As we cultivate their dreams and we encourage them to dare to be whatever it is they want to be, this is the type of building that helps them do that."

After the ribbon cutting, the students gathered for their first group picture in "The Treehouse."



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[www.PonteVedraRecorder.com](http://www.PonteVedraRecorder.com)

## Ascension St. Vincent's Southside recognized for spine surgery

Ascension St. Vincent's Southside has been named to Healthgrades' list of 2024 specialty excellence awards for spine surgery. The hospital was recognized as a top-five hospital in Florida and the only one in the Jacksonville area.

Healthgrades is a comprehensive resource for information on physicians and hospitals across the United States. Healthgrades awards spotlight hospitals that deliver superior quality care.

Healthgrades evaluates hospital performance using objective quality measures, including clinical outcomes and patient safety, as well as patient experience.

"This achievement reflects our commitment to overall excellence and highlights the level of talent across our spine surgeons, nurses and care teams," said St. Vincent's Southside President and CEO James Machado. "We are deeply honored to be recognized for this award and look forward to continuing to provide quality care to our community."

In addition to this excellence award, St. Vincent's Southside has also earned patient safety excellence awards from 2021 through 2023, and a specialty award in cranial neurosurgery as recently as 2022.

The hospital's multidisciplinary approach connects patients with medication therapies, surgical care and neurophysiology care.

"Providing unparalleled spine care to our patients is our top priority as spine surgeons," said St. Vincent's neurosurgeon and Chief of Neurosurgery at St. Vincent's Southside Dr. Stephen Parker. "We are able to provide minimally invasive techniques and complex surgeries utilizing a range of state-of-the-art equipment. We are honored to be recognized as the pinnacle of hospitals providing spine care."

Earlier this month, Southside also fully launched the innovative TOPS System for treating back pain after being one of the first hospitals in the country – and the only facility in the area – to trial the technology.

For more information on spine surgery at St. Vincent's Southside, go to [healthcare.ascension.org/specialty-care/neurology](https://healthcare.ascension.org/specialty-care/neurology) or call 904-296-3103.



Contributed photo

The neurosurgeons of Ascension St. Vincent's Southside.

## Executive joins VA network

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the appointment of Chad Adams as the new deputy executive director of the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, which serves more than 138,000 veterans and has an operating budget of more than \$1.8 billion at the nation's largest VA health care system.

More than 5,800 employees provide services at 26 locations serving a 50-county region in northern Florida and southern Georgia. Adams will have oversight of finance, quality management, compliance and business integrity, patient safety, systems redesign, human resources and employee whole health.



Chad Adams

Adams previously served as the associate director for operations, based at the Lake City VA Medical Center, where he was responsible for operations and management support to the entire health system. Adams received his Master of Science degree in health services administration from Florida Gulf Coast University and has more than 25 years of experience working with the

Department of Veterans Affairs.

Adams is a graduate of the Health Care Leadership Development Program, Graduate Healthcare Administration Training Program and Competency Development for Leaders of the 21st Century.



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## GUEST COLUMN

# What should you know about risk and your investments?

Written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors

Risk, and the role it plays in a portfolio, can be among the most difficult concepts to understand fully. Sometimes our view of risk isn't something we consider until there's a sharp market downturn or other activity that compels us to question our tolerances. To help bring the positives and negatives of risk into clearer focus, here are four important risk-related considerations for investors.

## 1. Risk has many faces

The term "risk" usually refers to investment risk: the idea that you could purchase stock at \$50 a share and it could be worth \$25 a year later. This kind of risk is relatively easy to understand, and it's measurable based on the ups and downs in an investment's price. The more volatile the price has been, the more risky the investment is considered to be.

Investment risk is only one risk investors can face. Others include:

- **Market risk.** This is the risk that the entire market will decline and pull your investment down with it. This happened to stocks during the Great Recession, as well as during the market decline due to the initial impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

- **Inflation risk.** Inflation is the overall increase in prices in an economy. There's a risk that an investment's return won't be enough to overcome inflation's impact. For example, if inflation runs 2% a year and your investment returns only 1%, your investment will buy less at the end of the year than at the beginning.

- **Opportunity risk.** Some investors believe you can avoid risk by investing conservatively. Opportunity risk is the possibility of missing out on the chance to earn better returns because you aren't being more aggressive.



Jamie L. Seim, Matthew D. Guevara, Evonne T. Heykens and Stephen T. Foody.

There are other types of risk, too, including some specific to certain investment categories. For example, bond investors face default risk — the risk that the issuer will fail to make interest payments or repay the bond's par value at maturity.

## 2. Risks are usually linked to expected return

This is possibly the most important thing to understand about risk. Risk and return generally go hand-in-hand: If you put money into a low-risk investment, you should probably expect lower returns. If you choose a higher-risk investment, you're likely seeking higher potential returns.

Of course, things don't always work out the way you expect. A high-risk investment may not get better returns. (In fact, you could lose your entire investment.)

## 3. You should determine your risk tolerance

Your risk tolerance is how much risk you can comfortably live with in your portfolio. Determining your risk tolerance can be challenging. One indicator that you've

exceeded your investment risk tolerance: when your investments' performance keeps you awake at night — especially when there's market volatility.

It's OK to have a relatively low risk tolerance. However, focusing on lower-risk strategies may mean that you need to adjust your objectives (for example, having \$750,000 at retirement instead of \$1 million). Or, you may need to increase the time until you tap into your investments. For example, you may decide to work until age 67 instead of 65 so you have more time to earn money, add to your portfolio, and wait before you begin to withdraw funds.

## 4. Help is available

Because risk is complicated — and only one aspect of investing — consider looking to a financial adviser for help with building your portfolio. A financial adviser will take the time to get to know your goals and understand your risk tolerance before recommending an investment plan.

All investing involves risk, including the

possible loss of principal.

Investments in fixed-income securities are subject to market, interest rate, credit and other risks. Bond prices fluctuate inversely to changes in interest rates. Therefore, a general rise in interest rates can cause a bond's price to fall. Credit risk is the risk that an issuer will default on payments of interest and/or principal. This risk is heightened in lower rated bonds. If sold prior to maturity, fixed income securities are subject to market risk. All fixed income investments may be worth less than their original cost upon redemption or maturity.

Equity securities are subject to market risk which means their value may fluctuate in response to general economic and market conditions, the prospects of individual companies and industry sectors. Investments in equity securities are generally more volatile than other types of securities.

**This article was written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors and provided courtesy of Jamie Seim, CFP, Senior Vice President – Investment Officer in Ponte Vedra Beach at 904-273-7917.**

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# ROAR Training Center adds trainer to team

ROAR Training Center has announced the addition of EJ Eldridge to its trainer team. A NASM-certified personal trainer and youth exercise specialist, Eldridge brings his knowledge and expertise to ROAR to expand the youth training and sports conditioning programs.

Growing up, Eldridge was a runner and varsity football player at St. Augustine High School.

“I grew up getting to play multiple sports, but really grew a passion for football,” Eldridge said. “As a former athlete, I love helping youth become better versions of themselves. I love what I do, and so work never really feels like work. I feel so lucky that this is what I get to do for a living.”

Eldridge describes himself as a man of faith, and spends his free time sprinting, fishing and surfing.

ROAR currently has young athletes training for lacrosse, football, cross



E.J. Eldridge

country, basketball, softball and surfing. The training facility is Safe Sport Certified, too, denoting that ROAR staff are knowledgeable, reputable and qualified to operate a safe space for youth



Contributed photo

A youth athlete trains at ROAR Training Center.

exercise.

With Eldridge on the team, the youth fitness training and youth athletic performance for sport offerings at ROAR are even more enhanced.

“We here at ROAR are proud to

welcome EJ and know he has so much to contribute to our Youth Exercise Program,” said Chris Cygul, ROAR owner. “Our training center focuses on providing a personalized experience, and these young athletes are often working toward very specific sports goals. We know EJ can help them get stronger mentally and physically, and best prepare them for whatever field they’re playing on.”

ROAR not only caters to youth but is family-friendly with programs for everyone of all fitness levels. The center serves a wide variety of clients, and offers personal training, women’s fitness and nutritional wellness. It’s also owned and operated by husband-and-wife duo Kristy Lee Wilson and Cygul.

“We’re a family of personal trainers, and we want our clients to feel like they’re a part of that family,” said Cygul.

Learn more at [roartrainingcenter.com](http://roartrainingcenter.com).

# Cardiologist joins Terry Heart Institute at Wolfson Children’s Hospital

Wolfson Children’s Hospital and the C. Herman and Mary Virginia Terry Heart Institute continue to expand children’s heart services across Northeast Florida with the addition of pediatric interventional cardiologist Ram Bishnoi, M.D.

Bishnoi is double board-certified in pediatrics and pediatric cardiology by the American Board of Pediatrics. His areas of expertise include pediatric interventional cardiology, pulmonary hypertension and inpatient and post-operative care. As a pediatric interventional cardiologist, Bishnoi is trained to perform specific minimally invasive catheter-based treatments for heart conditions.

At the Terry Heart Institute, Bishnoi will establish a pediatric pulmonary hypertension program and work closely with our neonatology team to optimize



Dr. Ram Bishnoi

the care of the most vulnerable patients. He will also deliver multi-disciplinary care to patients recovering from cardiac surgery and interventions at Wolfson Children’s Hospital.

Before moving to Jacksonville, Bishnoi served as the director of inpatient cardiology at Geisinger Janet Weis Children’s Hospital in Danville, Pennsylvania, and as a pediatric interventional cardiologist with Geisinger Medical Center.

“Dr. Bishnoi has trained at some of the top medical institutions in the United States and India and he is amongst a select group of pediatric cardiologists who have received advanced fellowship training in interventional cardiology,” said Rajesh Shenoy, M.D., medical director of pediatric cardiology for Wolfson Children’s Terry Heart Institute. “His expertise in the manage-

ment of critical congenital heart disease catheter-based techniques will supplement the top-notch care that is already provided in the cardiac catheterization laboratory at Wolfson Children’s Hospital.”

Bishnoi received his medical degree from Sardar Patel Medical College in Bikaner, India. He completed pediatric residencies at both Maulana Azad Medical College in New Delhi, India, and Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. He also completed a pediatric cardiology fellowship at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and a pediatric interventional cardiology fellowship at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center.

Note that physicians providing care at Wolfson Children’s Hospital are not employees or agents of the hospital.

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# In the Arts

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www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

## Art in Public Spaces features photography, paintings

St. Johns Cultural Council, the organization that promotes arts, culture and heritage in St. Johns County, has selected two local artists to present solo exhibitions for its Art in Public Spaces program.

The exhibitions, presented in the Rotunda Gallery of the St. Johns County Administration Building, will feature photographer Byron Capo and painter Gail Beveridge. The exhibitions will be held at 500 San Sebastian View in St. Augustine.

St. Augustine-based photographer Capo's exhibition, titled "Inner Spectrum: Finding Hope in the Light," is on view at the Rotunda Gallery now through March 27.

Capo is a professional architectural and landscape photographer who takes inspiration from Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and Clyde Butcher. His work explores alternative processes, including infrared photography and palladium printing to reveal his unique perspective of the natural world. "Inner Spectrum" highlights the interior illuminations of two structures: the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine and La Mola, fortress of Isabel II in Mahon, Menorca. The work illustrates Capo's connection to his Menorcan heritage and the meaning of the forts to his ancestors.

Both 17th century forts were built for military defense and provided shelter for civilians.

"They were the foundations of a future and provided the security and hope needed to survive and prosper," said Capo. "Although completely different in design, both provided balustraria and windows for the sunlight to penetrate the interiors. At times, this natural window light was the only connection to the exterior world. Light has a profound effect on the mind, especially when provided in small doses. It becomes medicine for the soul."

Capo's work has been recognized with the St. Augustine Art Association's Jean Troemel "Best in Show" and numerous awards from the St. Augustine Camera Club. In addition, his photography has been published in local and regional magazines, exhibited in galleries and included in "From River to Ocean, an Art in Public Spaces" exhibition celebrating St. Johns County's 200th anniversary.

For further information, go to [byroncapophotography.com](http://byroncapophotography.com).



Byron Capo



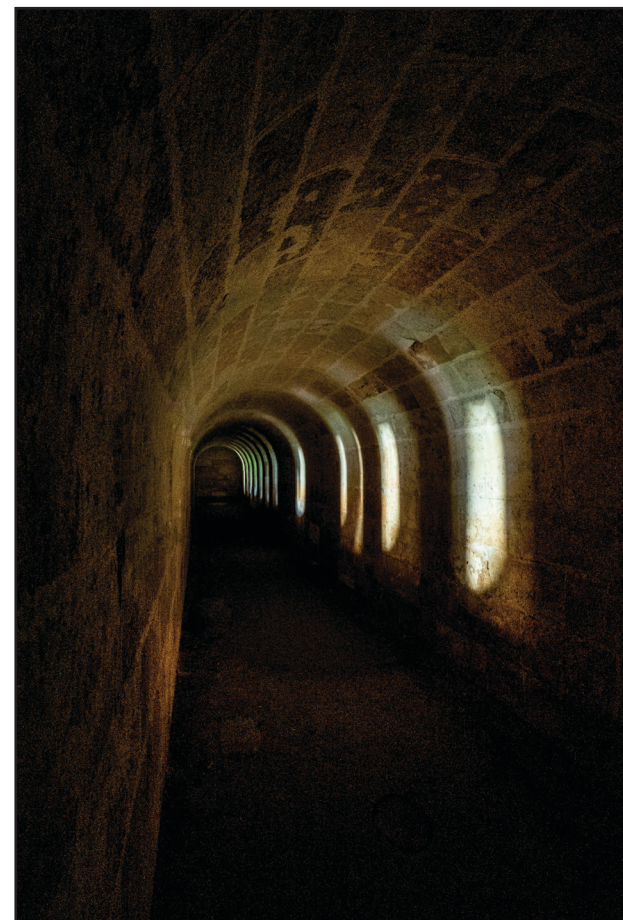
Gail Beveridge



"The Guardians," oil on canvas by artist Gail Beveridge

"Inner Spectrum: Finding Hope in the Light" is presented by the St. Johns Cultural Council and made possible through the support of the Florida Division of Arts and Culture and the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council.

St. Johns Cultural Council also announced that St. Augustine painter Gail Beveridge will be the next artist featured in a solo exhibition for Art in Public Spaces opening in January 2025. Beveridge is an award-winning artist whose work has been exhibited in juried shows



Images provided by St. Johns Cultural Council

"La Mola — Light Wave" by photographer Byron Capo

across the nation. Her work was showcased as part of the Lightner Local program at the Lightner Museum in 2022, and at the Cummer Museum in 2023.

Art in Public Spaces exhibitions at the Rotunda Gallery feature local artists who are chosen to exhibit their work individually or in group shows, with new installations every three to four months.

The exhibitions are open to the public on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, contact the St. Johns Cultural Council at [sjcc@historiccoastculture.com](mailto:sjcc@historiccoastculture.com).

## CANVAS, STAGE AND MORE

### A look at what's happening in the arts locally

#### "Hadestown"

The Tony-winning best musical is being presented through Feb. 11 at the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts as part of the FSCJ Artist Series. The show is based upon the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. For tickets and information, go to [fscjartistseries.org/tickets/hadestown](http://fscjartistseries.org/tickets/hadestown).

#### Drew & Ellie Holcomb

The Florida Theatre presents Drew &

Ellie Holcomb on their "Feels Like Home Tour" at 7 p.m. Feb. 25.

Drew and Ellie Holcomb are a husband-and-wife Americana duo from Nashville. Tickets are available at [floridatheatre.com](http://floridatheatre.com) or the Florida Theatre box office at 904-355-2787.

For further information, go to [drewholcomb.com](http://drewholcomb.com) and [ellieholcomb.com](http://ellieholcomb.com).

#### "Ones: The Beatles #1 Hits"

The Florida Theatre presents "Ones: The Beatles #1 Hits" at 8 p.m. Feb. 27. The show presents top musicians performing the 27 unforgettable Beatles No.

1 songs that topped the charts for seven consecutive years. Tickets are available at [floridatheatre.com](http://floridatheatre.com) or the Florida Theatre box office at 904-355-2787. The actual Beatles came to Jacksonville 60 years ago, playing the Gator Bowl on Sept. 11, 1964.

#### Geoff Tate & Adrian Vandenberg

The Florida Theatre presents Geoff Tate & Adrian Vandenberg at 8 p.m. Feb. 28. Tate is best known for his work with the progressive metal band Queensryche. Vandenberg is best known for his work with Whitesnake. Tickets are available at

[floridatheatre.com](http://floridatheatre.com) or the Florida Theatre box office at 904-355-2787.

#### Blippi

The Florida Theatre presents "Blippi: The Wonderful World Tour" at 6 p.m. Feb. 29. Blippi and best friend Meekah inspire curiosity in preschoolers around the world by creating content and experiences that are relatable, accessible and make learning fun. Tickets are available at [floridatheatre.com](http://floridatheatre.com) or the Florida Theatre box office at 904-355-2787.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

# Call for photographers to submit work

The St. Augustine Art Association is celebrating its centennial with an art show of epic proportions.

“History Through the Lens of Architecture” is a national juried show where professionals and amateurs can submit photographs that show the intrinsic tie between their city’s history and architecture.

One of the oldest art associations in the nation, the St. Augustine Art Association was founded in 1924 and comprised of members who were inspired by the city’s blend of European style and natural Florida beauty. The exhibit will be hosted at the St. Augustine Art Association, 22 Marine St. in St. Augustine, and online from July 18 through Aug. 25.

“In a city known for its history, St. Augustine’s first European settlers influenced its builders and artists, leaving an undeniable mark on its architecture that has lasted through time,” said Jennifer Flynt, executive director of the association. “With this show, artists from across the nation can share how they see history and culture being represented in the structural designs of their favorite towns and cities. The combined works will be a piece of art in itself, creating a unique representation of the world.”

“History Through the Lens of Architecture” challenges artists to tell a story,

through photography, of how their local architecture inspires its culture and community. Photographers will be judged in two categories: professional and amateur. Works will compete for a total prize purse of more than \$10,000, including the \$5,000 Best of Show, 100th Anniversary Alice & Clark Alger Award.

The final exhibition will be judged by award-winning architecture and interior design photographer Alan Blakely. Blakely is widely recognized as one of the top architectural photographers working today. He specializes in architecture, interior and aerial photography with a client list comprised of the world’s best design firms, hotels, real estate developers and more.

Photographers may submit their photos to the jury now through May 10. Works are due for gallery installation and judging by July 9. Awards will be announced at the opening reception on July 18 with the show continuing through Aug. 25.

For the complete prospectus and entry instructions, go to [staaa.org/history-through-the-lens-of-architecture](http://staaa.org/history-through-the-lens-of-architecture).

The “History Through the Lens of Architecture” exhibit is sponsored in part by Photoarchitectural, LLC, as well as grants from St. Johns County Tourist Development Council and Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

# Bestselling author to speak at library

New York Times bestselling author Lisa Black writes with authority about crime investigations. She spent years as a forensic scientist and is still a working, certified crime-scene and latent-print analyst. Black will speak at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library on Feb. 20 as part of the Friends of the Library Speaker Series.

Black is the author of 17 suspense novels, including her latest in the Locard Institute series, “The Deepest Kill.” In her talk, which is free and open to the public, she will discuss her writing journey, her career that began as a forensic scientist working in a morgue in Cleveland, Ohio, and details about her new book, which features forensic analysts Ellie Carr and Rachel Davies.

Currently working for the police department in Cape Coral, Florida, Black has testified in court more than 65 times. Her books have been translated into six languages, optioned for film and short-listed for both the inaugural Sue Grafton Memorial Award and the Nero. She was also one of the guests of honor at the 2021 Killer Nashville conference.

Black will sign and sell her books fol-



Lisa Black

lowing her presentation at the library, with a percentage of the sales benefiting the Friends of the Library.

The program begins at 6:30 p.m. in the library’s FOL Community Room. Doors will open at 6 p.m.



Contributed photo

The cast and production crew for “The Sound of Music,” presented by The Christ Church Creative Academy.

# Local group presents ‘Sound of Music’

Christ Church Creative Academy performers will present nine performances of the beloved musical, “The Sound of Music,” with the first show opening Thursday, Feb. 8. The cast of the musical, directed by Bradley Akers, includes adults as well as children ages 7 to 17. It will also be performed at 7 p.m. Feb. 9, 2 and 7 p.m. Feb. 10, 4 p.m. Feb. 11, 7 p.m. Feb. 15 and 16, and 2 and 7

p.m. Feb. 17.

General admission tickets are \$25 and premium seating tickets for the first three rows are \$35.

Go to [ccpvb.org](http://ccpvb.org) for ticket information. Tickets will also be available for purchase at the door. The church is located at 400 San Juan Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach. Phone: 904-285-6127.

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From "She Served," an exhibition of the Hope4Veterans' Narratives of Women in the Military program.



The Apex Theatre Studio Penguin Project "Moana Jr." company.

Contributed photos

# 'Arts for All' grant recipients announced

St. Johns Cultural Council, which promotes arts, culture and heritage in St. Johns County, has announced the recipients of its inaugural "Arts for All" grants. The new program, made possible with funding secured by the Cultural Council through the National Endowment for the Arts, provides support for local artists and arts organizations and ensures greater access to high quality arts programming for residents of St. Johns County.

The January 2024 grantees include:

- Apex Theatre Studio — The grant provides funds for the Penguin Project "Shrek Jr.," a musical theater production which casts young artists with developmental disabilities working side-by-side with children without disabilities.
- Amber Hall, Teaching Artist — The Rhythm United program will use a percussion orchestra to provide music education to fourth and fifth graders at the seven Title 1 schools in St. Johns County.
- First Coast Opera — For the performance of "Pirates of Penzance," First Coast Opera will create accessible materials and options for the visually impaired, market to and create production materials for Hispanic communities and provide free show tickets and pre-show talks to students of Title 1 schools.
- Debra Mixon Holliday, Visual Artist — Grant funds will support the creation and exhibition of "Once Around the Sun," an exhibition of 12 works of art representing the calendar months and



"Garden Party by Debra Mixon Holliday.

depicting local flora and fauna. Exhibitions are planned at the local Butterfield Garage Gallery and the St. Johns County Main Library, and printmaking demonstrations and classes will be presented at The Waterworks.

• Hope4Veterans — Funding will be dedicated to the organization's Narratives of Women in the Military program. Hope4Veterans will present "She Served," a photography exhibition by Martina Schmidt to showcase women veterans, and produce "Single Black Female in the Navy," an original play by Kim Mullins, a Navy veteran and theater teacher, about



Amber Hall, Teaching Artist

her experiences as a woman in the Navy.

• Marcellus "Cellus" Brown III, Musician — The Elevating Afrobeat Culture in St. Augustine project will produce and launch a culturally resonant album that addresses insightful themes of cultural heritage, social justice and a personal evolution to amplify Afrobeat culture within St. Augustine and neighboring areas. Performances of songs from the album are planned in several locations in St. Johns County.

• Jam-ology — The grant-funded project will provide an in-school program at Title 1 schools, which encourages students to work together to collectively create and compose a song. Activities



Marcellus "Cellus" Brown III

will promote collaboration, critical thinking and self-worth, benefiting students academically, socially and emotionally.

"Most of the funding we provide to organizations is to support arts, culture and heritage activities aimed primarily at tourists," said Brenda Swann, St. Johns Cultural Council's associate director. "We sought additional funding from the National Endowment for the Arts so that we could fund local artists and emerging arts organizations that create high quality arts programs for St. Johns County residents. The funded Arts for All grant projects make arts and culture more accessible to underserved populations, including students at Title 1 schools and those with developmental disabilities, while sharing the art, stories, and rich cultures of our resident population."

Another grant application cycle will open in early summer 2024. For more information on Arts for All Grants, go to [stjohnsculture.com/arts-for-all-grants](http://stjohnsculture.com/arts-for-all-grants). To learn more about how to support the arts in St. Johns County and to subscribe to the St. Johns Cultural Council newsletter, go to [stjohnsculture.com](http://stjohnsculture.com).

  
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# Sports

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2024 • PAGE 37

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Ponte Vedra's Quinlee Irwin (No. 7) and Abby Wooten (No. 10) work to chase down a ball against Nease's Taylor Larramore (No. 22) and Piper Crecco (No. 27).



Jenny Dearie of Ponte Vedra and Samantha Akers of Nease race to get to a ball.

Photos by Anthony Richards

## Sharks clinch regional top seed with district title

### *Panthers senior class secures playoff appearance*

By Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra Sharks and Nease Panthers gave a playoff preview of sorts, as the Sharks defeated the rival Panthers 3-0 in the District 3-6A championship on Jan. 31.

The Sharks enter the state playoffs with a record 17-1-1 following the victory and showed that they deserve being named the No. 1 seed in their region.

"We're a very hard-working group all around and everyone is very competitive," Ponte Vedra junior Quinlee Irwin said. "There is just some great talent on this team, and there's definitely some-

thing special taking place here."

In the title game, it was all Sharks early on as they controlled possession in the first half and had chance after chance throughout the opening frame.

However, the Panthers (11-3-3) held tight defensively and limited the number of solid looks that they were able to muster on goal even with the bevy of opportunities in the Panthers' zone.

Panthers' senior goalkeeper Emily Loftus did her part in keeping the Sharks out of the net but was forced to leave the game with an injury late in the first half after she was collided into by a charging Sharks player when going out to corral a ball in the box.

Backup goalie Amber Jones came in to finish the contest and did a nice job of keeping the Sharks at bay, before they finally got on the board with a goal from midfielder Irwin, who buried a shot after

a nice cross pass delivered from Natalie Brooks to put the Sharks up 1-0 at halftime.

"On the first one, I was set up perfectly," Irwin said. "There was no one around me and I saw that open space and just decided to go for it."

The Panthers came out with an aggressive mindset in the second half and attacked offensively early in the second half, including a confident strike from Addison Eaton of Nease that rang off the crossbar.

"Ponte Vedra is a good team, but I feel like in the second half, especially in the first 20 minutes we did a good job of pressing them and making it difficult on them," Nease head coach Alex Ford said.

Eventually, the Sharks were able to create counter opportunities of their own, as Irwin punched in her second goal of the night when she pounced on a rebound

and Lily Morse connected with a cutting Brooks who slipped past a defender and fired one by the keeper to put an exclamation point on another district title for the Sharks.

"We work on finishing goals like that in practice, and I was just there in the right spot," Irwin said.

The Sharks will open up the playoffs hosting No. 8 Gulf Breeze (5-7-4) in the regional quarterfinals beginning at 7 p.m. on Feb. 13, while the Panthers are the No. 6-seed in the region and will travel to take on No. 3 Navarre (15-5-2) at 6 p.m. on Feb. 13.

"This is a really great group of players and they've bonded so well as a team and are not afraid to fight for each other," Ford said. "I've been with these seniors for four years now and this is the first time that we've qualified for the state playoffs."



Nease senior goalkeeper Emily Loftus makes a diving save in the first half.



Seniors Elle Anderson (No. 14) and Audrey Johnson leap in the air and high-five as the starting lineups are announced for the Sharks prior to the contest.

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1	2	3				4	5	6	7
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11						12			
13				14		15			
16						17			
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36								37	
38								39	
40								41	
42								43	

- ACROSS**
- 1. One point south of due east
  - 4. Coagulated blood
  - 8. Fortifying ditch
  - 10. Devotee of Hinduism
  - 11. Trunk of a tree
  - 12. Bank note
  - 13. Capital of Guam
  - 15. Study again
  - 16. Covered with hoarfrost
  - 17. Opening
  - 18. Legendary Rolling Stone
  - 21. Stray
  - 22. Computer storing system
  - 23. Signal
  - 24. Pitching statistic
  - 25. Human being
  - 26. Malaysian isthmus
  - 27. The "Blonde Bombshell"
  - 34. A gland
  - 35. Bluish greens
  - 36. Endangered
  - 37. Three-dimensional
  - 38. In a way, precipitated
  - 39. God associated with dissolution
  - 40. Blemished
  - 41. Flow or leak slowly
  - 42. Disco legends The Bee \_\_\_\_\_
  - 43. Midway between south and southeast
- DOWN**
- 1. A way to board
  - 2. Get down
  - 3. Highly seasoned sausage
  - 4. First day of month
  - 5. Eurasian shrubs
  - 6. The organ that bears the ovules of a flower
  - 7. Small lake
  - 9. Belief
  - 10. Sunrooms
  - 12. Metric weight unit
  - 14. Vasopressin
  - 15. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
  - 17. One-time family room staple
  - 19. Got back together
  - 20. Anger
  - 23. Sang merrily
  - 24. Sea eagle
  - 25. Military men
  - 26. Kilo yard (abbr.)
  - 27. Found in the sea
  - 28. Protects from weather
  - 29. Type of medicine
  - 30. City along the Rhine
  - 31. Animal disease
  - 32. Martini ingredients
  - 33. Get away
  - 34. Lack of disunity
  - 36. One-time European Commission officer

**SUDOKU**

		5			2			
7	2		1			4	3	
	4			7	8	9	2	
		4	9	2				
	9					2		6
3	5					1		
	8						9	
		6		4		7		

Level: Advanced

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Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



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<p>2023 CADILLAC CT5</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$49,730</b>                      7,148 MILES   STOCK# 0133167A</p>	<p>2021 GMC YUKON XL</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$40,220</b>                      102,309 MILES   STOCK# MR430433</p>	<p>2019 AUDI E-TRON</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$32,620</b>                      32,803 MILES   STOCK# KB020971</p>	<p>2021 CADILLAC XT5 SPORT</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$33,730</b>                      51,415 MILES   STOCK# MZ168428</p>	<p>2020 CADILLAC CT5 SPORT</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$29,980</b>                      51,676 MILES   STOCK# L0119232</p>



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