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Thursday, February 22, 2024

PonteVedraRecorder.com

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## Habitat answers housing challenge

By Shaun Ryan

The housing crisis in St. Johns County continues unabated as the median price for a home hovers around \$520,000.

One organization working to mitigate this challenge is Habitat for Humanity of St. Augustine/St. Johns County. And, due to some recent policy changes, it is on the threshold of making an impact greater than ever before in its 30-year history.

The local Habitat affiliate has launched its fourth neighborhood, Volusia Woods, which will consist of 36 homes when complete.

Three houses are currently under construction there.

HABITAT continues on Page 13

## Smith talks THE PLAYERS economic impact, sightline changes

*Mounds near No. 18 green lowered to create better vantage points*

By Anthony Richards

There is no doubt that the THE PLAYERS Championship has an impact on the local economy throughout the week it takes place each year, but tournament executive director Lee Smith shed some light on just how much of an impact it is recently.

Smith was guest speaker during the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce luncheon at Marsh Landing Country Club on Feb. 14.

According to Smith, THE PLAYERS generates a \$234 million annual impact on the Northeast Florida economy, which has continued to grow over the years, as he stated that he saw a report in 2005 where the tournament generated \$95 million.

THE PLAYERS sold 36,000 hats during the tournament last year and



Photo by Anthony Richards

THE PLAYERS Executive Director Lee Smith speaks next to the tournament's 50th anniversary logo during the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division luncheon on Feb. 14.

23 local restaurants were involved with THE PLAYERS in some way or another during the week.

According to a University of Florida study, the breakdown of last year's event saw about 96,000 hotel rooms

booked throughout the week and 650,000 passengers making their way through Jacksonville International Airport, which makes it the airport's

SMITH continues on Page 19



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# INSIDE

One of Us

Page 6

Business Weekly

Pages 20-23

In the Arts

Pages 24-26

Sports

Pages 27-29



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# Send us your news

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Visit our new website at **www.pontevedrarecorder.com**

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## BRIEFS

### Patrons donate 4,300 items for Food for Fines

St. Johns County Public Library System patrons donated more than 4,300 nonperishable food items to St. Johns County's Health and Human Services Food Pantry through Food for Fines. The Food for Fines annual program enables patrons to donate food to local families in need and help pay down their overdue fines during the holiday season.

Health and Human Services provides a wide variety of services for approximately 10,000 people in St. Johns County throughout the year.

Food for Fines is one of several collaborative programs that the St. Johns County Public Library System participates in with other county departments, extending its reach to St. Johns County residents. To learn more about the library system and programming, go to [sjcpls.org](http://sjcpls.org).

### Democratic Club to meet

The Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will hold its monthly meeting on Feb. 26 at the Ponte Vedra library, 101 Library Road. Chat and chew is at 5:30 p.m. and the meeting begins at 6 p.m. The featured speaker will be Nate Monroe, columnist for the Florida Times-Union. For more information, email [PVDemClub@gmail.com](mailto:PVDemClub@gmail.com).

### 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.

### PVPV Rawlings Spring Carnival is Saturday

PVPV Rawlings Elementary School will hold its PTO Annual Spring Carnival from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24. There will be games, auction baskets, face painting, balloon artists, a game truck, a teacher experience, auction food and more.

Pre-sale wristbands are \$15 each for students in K-5. Admission on the day of the carnival is \$20. Children age 4 and younger will be admitted free.

For further information, contact Jennifer Cleek at [jbcleek@gmail.com](mailto:jbcleek@gmail.com).

### Repticon returns to Jacksonville

Repticon is coming to Jacksonville with a mixture of vendors and breeders. This family-

oriented, fun-filled event offers guests the opportunity to learn about animals not normally seen in local pet stores. Breeder-vendors are always willing to teach in their field of herpetology.

Guests can also shop for a new family pet among the hundreds of reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, arachnids and small exotic animals. Repticon Jacksonville is also the place to get merchandise, cages, supplies and both live and frozen feeders, as well as expert advice about caring for their new household member.

This event, held at the Greater Jacksonville Agricultural Fair & Expo Center, 510 Fairgrounds Place, offers a unique family outing suitable for all ages and for a very diverse

BRIEFS continues on Page 4

## PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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# MSD in talks with county to expand drainage feasibility study

By Anthony Richards

Drainage is an issue for many streets around the Ponte Vedra Municipal Service District, but it appears that some are in worse shape than others.

St. Johns County has hired Eisman & Russo as a consulting engineer firm, and they are in the midst of performing a feasibility study on Ponte Vedra Boulevard.

However, MSD trustee Mickey White, who has been assigned to road and bridge issues on the board, said that he has reached out to the county engineer department in an attempt to add Solana Road and San Juan Drive to the study being performed.

“Ponte Vedra Boulevard certainly has drainage problems that definitely need to be solved, but Solana Road and the por-

tion of San Juan (Drive) that doesn’t have curb and gutter, are also in the same era of infrastructure that is basically compromised or no longer functioning properly,” White said. “I would like them to expand the feasibility study down Solana and up San Juan in the old sections.”

He also mentioned to Eisman & Russo of the impending sidewalk project that the details of which are getting worked

out itself at the moment, as the two would logically cross paths at some point.

“We need a drainage plan that makes sense along with the sidewalk project,” White said. “What they have identified to me as the critical path to getting this all fixed is to go get a corridor survey where you would go through and measure the

MSD continues on Page 4



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## OBITUARIES



### Walter Alford

Walter Alford, 85, of Atlanta, GA, died February 10, 2024. Born in At-

lanta on April 10, 1938 to Al and Margaret, Alford worked in his father's general store learning the value of honesty, hard work and the power of positive relationships. He started his career with the Bell Systems in 1964 and worked in various legal, managerial and leadership capacities until he retired in 1998.

Throughout his life, Alford was a member of the Episcopal Church and kept a deep faith. He was an avid reader and bird hunter and he loved to travel.

Alford is survived by his devoted wife and best friend, Susanne, their daughter Allison (Stephen), and son Justin; his children, Elizabeth and Walter Jr., grandchildren Alexis and Chandler; his sister Emasue; and his sister-in-law Dianne (Tom).

Memorial contributions may be made to The Cathedral of St. Philip of Atlanta in his name.

## DEATH NOTICES

### Katherine Hibbs

Katherine Hibbs, 95, of Jacksonville, FL, passed away February 16, 2024. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

### Jean Marie Williams

Jean Marie Williams, 73, of Jacksonville, FL, passed away February 9, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

## MSD

Continued from 3

grade as well as the width of the asphalt and decide where there is a manhole here, a pipe there and a mailbox here.”

The idea behind the approach is so that all the information collected can then be used by those working on the drainage project to best figure out how to get the water back into the ponds and the place to put the sidewalks to do just that so that the flow of water does not get interrupted.

White had the county use the surveyor they are already using, so that not only will it hopefully be more cohesive under the same umbrella of information, but they have also already been approved and vetted.

“They’re already working together, so I figured I’d have them just give me

a proposal rather than reinventing the wheel,” White said. “I’m really happy, because I feel that these are our next steps in advancing the ball. This is a big picture plan.”

According to White, it would cost the MSD \$35,000 for the predecessor survey activity and another \$45,000 for the feasibility study to be conducted.

He asked his fellow trustees if they thought it would be something that the county would feel joining in on to help pay a portion of those costs.

“I think it would be appropriate to show them (the county) what we’ve got and that we would love to work with them to get this done,” White said.

The board gave him full support to continue his talks with county officials and his continued pursuit to work with them to make sure the best approach is being considered and taken to improve the drainage infrastructure in the MSD.

## Briefs

Continued from 2

range of enthusiasts.

Show Hours at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 9 and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 10.

Ticket options (sold online only): \$15 Super Ticket (entry for both days), \$12

Saturday (all day), \$10 Saturday after 1 p.m., \$12 Sunday (all day), \$6 for children 5-12. Children age 4 and younger are admitted free.

To purchase tickets or for more information about the show, go to repticon.com/florida/Jacksonville.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

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# Primrose running for state House seat



Contributed photo

Nick Primrose, District 18 candidate, and wife Paige.

By Shaun Ryan

Republican Nick Primrose has filed to run for the District 18 state representative seat currently held by Rep. Cyndi Stevenson, who is term-limited, having served continuously since first being elected in April 2015.

Primrose will face challenger Kim Kendall in the Aug. 20 primary election.

Describing himself as a “commonsense conservative,” Primrose is a former deputy general counsel to Governors Rick Scott and Ron DeSantis. Having earned his law degree at Barry University, he worked for a time in civil law.

A St. Johns County homeowner since September 2021, he currently serves as chief of regulatory compliance with the Jacksonville Port Authority.

Primrose filed to run on March 1, 2023, and has received the endorsement of both Florida Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis and U.S. Rep. Kat Cammack, who represents the state’s 3rd congressional district.

During the Scott administration, he observed the former governor’s strategies regarding job creation and economic development, as well as his response to several hurricanes that impacted the Sunshine State.

In 2018, Primrose played a role in Scott’s election to the U.S. Senate, helping to verify the legitimacy of votes during a largescale recount. Scott prevailed,

having received only 10,033 votes more than his opponent, incumbent Sen. Bill Nelson.

Primrose was asked to stay on during the DeSantis administration, due to his institutional knowledge. He represented the state in the suspensions of then-Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel and then-Okaloosa County School Superintendent Mary Beth Jackson.

As general counsel for the Division of Emergency Management, Primrose helped shape the administration’s COVID-19 policy, navigating the complexities of an unprecedented situation.

As a candidate, Primrose has identified economic opportunity, education, public safety — including support for law enforcement, environmental protection and land conservation among the issues upon which he is most closely focused.

Asked why voters should elect him, Primrose pointed out that the county’s entire legislative delegation is termed out this year and new people will be replacing them. To this end, he emphasized his familiarity with the inner working of state government.

“I think it’s incredibly important that St. Johns County elects somebody that, day one, can go in and know how to introduce a bill, how the appropriation process works, the number of committee stops, who the agency secretaries are if you need to workshop something,” he said. “That is invaluable.”

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*Niko Costas grew up in St. Johns County and he has always loved music, including being in a band. That passion led him to starting Real Time Entertainment & Management, which focuses on creating musical hospitality for both the corporate world and for the public through festivals and other entertainment options with the goal of tapping into the unique culture on the First Coast.*

## Niko Costas

### As told to Anthony Richards

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

I wasn't born in St. Johns County, but my family moved here in Fruit Cove when I was in first grade, and I ended up going to UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management.

I always played music and was part of a band growing up. We even toured around the East Coast and West Coast a couple of times over the years.

I started RTEAM (Real Time Entertainment & Management) as a way to raise money as an avenue for our band, which was named "Sidereal."

In my early college days I was able to learn the ropes of the music entertainment business and I knew it was always something I wanted to pursue.

It's funny to look back and see how you got to where you're at and what that path looks like.

I came back after college and had background and knew what it took to put on a show and a live event, and quickly realized that was my niche and that I was meant for this.

I worked for Sundance Film Festival in Utah for a while, but I always had the end goal to make RTEAM my primary focus.

#### What are some of the goals and mission of RTEAM?

RTEAM at its core in its modern form wants to help connect bands with the local residents and its culture through live entertainment options.

We help create those entertainment options for both the corporate world, as well as festivals going on around the area.

We're helping with the city to help do our part to put Jacksonville on the map even more. We want to get looked at the way that musical hubs like L.A. and New York are, which will take some time but it just takes one act at a time.

We've been chipping away at it and all that hard work is starting to pay off and Jacksonville is finally starting to receive the respect it deserves.

We try to frame everything we do and all our events in a positive manner because it allows us to then use our creativity as a way to uplift people through music.

Even music we are not necessarily fans of personally, we get to know what people appreciate about it and look to really tap into that.

We listen to a lot of different realms of music around the office, so that we stay up with all that is out there. So, we're very well-versed in most genres, and we don't limit ourselves.

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

I love to buy and procure talent because you know you're helping local acts get discovered.

We operate Florida Fin Fest, which is a music festival in Jacksonville Beach held at Seawalk Pavilion that helps tap into the local vibe.

We look for unique sets that people will appreciate and enjoy. We're all about bringing the community together through music and putting smiles on people's faces.

#### What are some of the challenges faced?

We see the challenges just with the entertainment business as a whole, especially with balancing what artists want and what clients want.



Contributed photo

**Niko Costas is the founder and director of Real Time Entertainment & Management, also known as RTEAM.**

We're basically always trying to re-invent the wheel with just about everything we do and come up with.

#### What are your plans for the future of RTEAM?

We've got cool plans in place and we're just continuing to build upon our festival portfolio, along with our venue portfolio here in North Florida.

Also, we're looking to start building partnerships with some more Fortune 500 companies.

It all comes back to wanting to make North Florida a

destination spot for culture and music.

From an event perspective, we're also focused on downtown Jacksonville and the potential there.

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

I've always loved to surf, and you've got to love the year-round weather here.

My wife and I had twin boys five months ago, so my life has really been focused on being a dad lately.

# Vicar's Landing residents receive balloon surprise for Valentine's Day

By Anthony Richards

Everyone deserves to be shown some love on Valentine's Day and that is exactly what Jessica Chard, owner of To the Moon Party Designs, wanted to pass along when she surprised residents at Vicar's Landing at Sawgrass with balloons on the holiday.

In total, she made balloon displays for 92 residents, with each one being sponsored by a member or organization in the community as part of Chard's "adopt a grandparent" initiative.

According to Chard, she grew up always doing things to help elders in her community and she heard of a balloon artist in Utah doing something similar last year.

"I just wanted to show them the love that they deserve," Chard said.

The response she received from the community was incredible, as she reached her 92 sponsorships within a couple of days after she announced the initiative at a Galentine's event followed by it getting out on social media.

The balloon structures were made up of two to three stacked rows of balloons and were topped with a pink or red heart-shaped balloon on top.

"It was almost four days of blowing up balloons, and I was up around 2:30 in the morning on the 13th to make sure everything was ready to go," Chard said.

She also accompanied each balloon cluster with handwritten cards representing each of the sponsors to the recipients.

"It was some tedious work, but it was well worth it,"



Jessica Chard, owner of To the Moon Party Designs, received help from her children to bring Valentine's Day balloons for residents at Vicar's Landing at Sawgrass.

Chard said. "It was so heartwarming to see the community come together and get so excited for our older community like that."

Unfortunately, the bags of balloons had to be left in the Vicar's Landing lobby, as one of the residents had gotten sick and they were not allowing visitors at that time as a



Contributed photos

Valentine's Day balloon clusters were sponsored by the community for 92 residents at Vicar's Landing.

precaution.

However, even though Chard was unable to give them each their balloons and see their reactions, she believes that the gesture is one that helped make their day and hopefully reminded them that there is an entire community that loves them out there.

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Contributed photo

Dial-a-Ride made sure its customers felt loved this Valentine's Day with a gift of roses.

## Dial-a-Ride spreads the love on Valentine's Day

Volunteers and board members helped spread some love to Dial-a-Ride customers for Valentine's Day. Roses were handed out to riders Feb. 13 and 14 to let them know how much the team loves them and cares about them. The response, they report, was overwhelming.

One board member said he was "inspired and proud of the efficiency, organization, professionalism, gratitude and genuine joy expressed by both the drivers and every customer that we interacted with."

A volunteer rode along with her husband, a driver for Dial-a-Ride. She said, "Handing out roses made my day and from what I was told made others' day, as well."

Dial-a-Ride also arranged to deliver roses to regular riders at their homes,

those who may not have ridden on those two days. That was such a nice surprise for them. Every rider and recipient of rose delivery was appreciative.

Dial-a-Ride is a free transportation service of Beaches Council on Aging. It takes seniors and disabled adults anywhere they wish to go in the beaches area from Mayport through to Ponte Vedra Beach, including Mayo Clinic and Cypress Village. A \$5 donation is requested for the round trip, but no one is turned away.

For more information, call 904-246-1477 ext. 1. If you or your elderly loved one needs services, call 904-246-1477 ext. 2.

To donate and help keep the vehicles on the road or for more information, go to [beachescoa.org](http://beachescoa.org).

## Grant helps kids learn, play

From outdoor items such as trikes, bikes and scooters, to indoor sensory tools such as light tables, magnetic letter tiles, blocks, puzzles and more, students at Ocean Palms with varying exceptionalities have new ways to learn and play thanks to a grant of more than \$9,000 from the JT Townsend Foundation.

The foundation is dedicated to "providing hope to the community of people living with disabilities by offering financial assistance for adaptive equipment and services that will improve their quality of life," which is exactly what the foundation's recent grant to OPE achieved by

providing these unique educational items to the classrooms and outdoor play areas for approximately 75 students at the school.

In fact, this isn't the first time OPE and the foundation have worked together on a project. When a new playground was installed at the school in 2020, the foundation donated \$5,000 in support of a wheelchair-accessible otter float portion of the structure.

Together, OPE and the JT Townsend Foundation continue to provide educational opportunities, hope and smiles to students of all abilities.



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

Photos provided by Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery

### KATHY'S GARDENING GUIDE

# Getting Ready for Spring

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." — Audrey Hepburn

By Kathy Esfahani



As temperatures start to warm up, we are reminded that spring is almost here, and we are energized to begin tending to our gardens and landscapes! February is an ideal time to plan your spring projects and prepare for planting. Keep these tasks in mind:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture divides the country into planting zones (also known as growing zones). This classification provides guidance for what plants and trees are most suited in the various climates across the nation. Here in Northeast Florida, we are part of the 9A zone. For the most success, select plants that are recommended for zone 9A when adding to your landscape.



Mulch discourages weeds, moderates the soil temperature, and creates cohesion throughout your yard.

- Begin your spring preparations with a full clean-up. Clear any mounds of plant debris that may be in your garden beds, including any annuals you failed to remove last fall.
- February is also suitable for transplanting any plants or trees you've been planning to relocate. Remember to check for sunlight amounts in different parts of your yard as you move plants.
- As long as temperatures remain above freezing, plan for pruning in the coming weeks or early March. Prune plants down

to where you see new green growth. This trimming will help your plants produce maximum growth in the next few months.

- Fertilize flowers, plants and trees before higher temperatures are here to stay. Select fertilizers specifically designed for your plants, palms and/or citrus trees. Be sure to follow the instructions on the package.
- Prepare your lawn for the coming season but wait a few more weeks before mowing. Use warm days to check your irrigation system for broken or misdirected sprinkler heads. Once temperatures will remain above 65 degrees for four to five days, it is important to apply a pre-emergent weed killer to your lawn. Note: pre-emergent is not a "weed and feed" fertilizer; it is solely a weed treatment to help control weeds in your lawn throughout the coming season. For best results, it is important to time this application just as temperatures warm up!
- Weed landscape beds and add new mulch to refresh the appearance of beds



Alyssum

and help the plants prepare for spring. Mulch discourages weeds, moderates the soil temperature, and creates cohesion throughout your yard.

- Clean and update your gardening tools for spring projects. Purchase new items for planned projects and refresh any tools you already have. Now is also a good time to sharpen any tools with blades.

Happy planting!

Flower of the Week: Alyssum

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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# Scout helping restore coral reef



Photos by Lori Moffett

Boy Scouts help Will with his project.

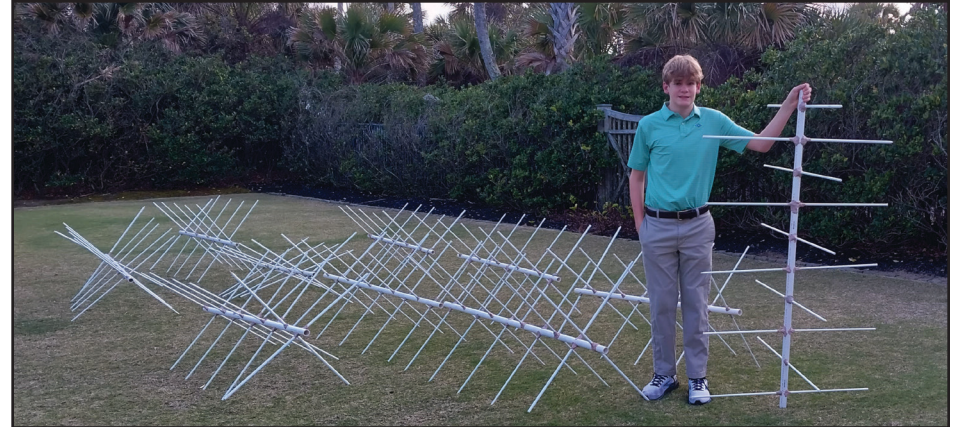
## By Shaun Ryan

Choosing an Eagle Scout project was easy for local eighth-grader Will Moffett. He wanted to do something meaningful, something that he cared deeply about. A certified scuba diver since he was 10 years old, he had previously volunteered with the Coral Restoration Foundation in the Keys, where he learned about

Florida's Coral Reef and how its once-dominant species have become critically endangered.

And he knew he wanted his project to be part of the solution.

First, he did his research and consulted Jacksonville University biology and marine science professor Dr. Dan McCarthy. He learned about the critical role



Will stands next to his completed "trees." Coral fragments hung from them will grow and help restore Florida's Coral Reef.

coral plays in protecting coastlines during hurricanes, providing oxygen, establishing habitat for many species of fish and attracting tourism.

Then, with the help of about 14 other Boy Scouts, Will constructed 10 "trees" made from PVC pipe, each measuring 60 inches in length. The "branches" of each tree were fiberglass rods affixed to the sides of the pipe.

The Coral Restoration Foundation uses such trees in its restoration efforts. With a weight at the bottom and buoy at the top to keep the trees properly oriented, tiny coral fragments are hung from the rods,

where they grow.

"Once the corals are fully mature, they cut part of them off and they plant them on a dead coral reef using this epoxy that is marine-safe and won't degrade," Will said.

This process has proven successful. So far, the foundation has restored more than 17,500 square meters of the reef.

Last weekend, Will and his mom took his completed trees to Key West, where they and others from the foundation traveled to the offshore site for "planting."

As part of Will's project, he gave presentations to about 100 Scouts from other troops in Florida. The presentation included a slide show and a video.

"I'm really proud of him," said mom Lori Moffett. "It was a heavy lift in a lot of ways. ... He's impacted a lot of people, just educating people that reefs are dying globally, but that there are efforts underway to reverse the damage."

In fact, informing people about the plight of the coral reefs is one of the goals of the project.

Will said scuba diving is one of his favorite things.

"It's just a whole new world down there," he said. "I've scuba-dived in the Bahamas, and I saw sharks in Shark Arena. Every 10 feet, there was a shark. It's just the coolest thing ever. There's so much that you don't know until you go under there."

And now, thanks to the efforts of the Coral Restoration Foundation and projects like Will's, diving off Florida's coast will become an ever-greater source of excitement and wonder.



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# A1A could be named for Jimmy Buffett

By Jesse Scheckner, for FloridaPolitics

Florida State Road A1A won't be undergoing any changes in latitudes any time soon, but it may get a new title to honor singer-songwriter Jimmy Buffett.

In a cheerful and at times playful motion, House members voted unanimously for a bill (HB 91) to rename the thoroughfare "Jimmy Buffett Memorial Highway" from its tip in Ferdinand Beach to Mile Marker 0 in Key West.

"This may be the most fun bill of the day," said Islamorada Republican Rep. Jim Mooney, one of the bill's two prime sponsors. "Everybody in this room's a Buffett fan."

If approved in the Senate, the measure would direct Florida Department of Transportation personnel to erect "suitable markers" for the designation across 13 counties spanning the state's east coast by Aug. 30.

A House staff analysis determined that installing the markers would "have an insignificant negative fiscal impact" on the state.

The A1A renaming would be especially meaningful in Buffett's case; it was the title of his fifth studio album. He also referenced the road in one of the record's



Contributed photo

For many fans, musician Jimmy Buffett was always connected to the Key West lifestyle.

songs called "Trying to Reason with Hurricane Season."

"(Buffett was) a poet, a writer, a musician, an environmentalist, a businessman," said Newberry Republican Rep. Chuck Clemons, the bill's other prime

sponsor. "While we don't begrudge any other state — like, let's say, Alabama — from trying to claim (him) just by accident of birth, that he was born in Mobile. In our minds, however, will always rightfully be remembered as one of history's

greatest Floridians."

Mooney and Clemons declined a request from Jacksonville Democratic Rep. Angie Nixon to commemorate the vote with an a cappella rendition of a Buffett song.

"Singing?" Mooney said. "Come Monday, you'll have that answer."

Buffett first became a star in the 1970s with songs that blended country, folk and rock. Though he was not born in Florida, he became ubiquitous with the Key West lifestyle. His fans are called "Parrot-heads."

Buffett also became deeply involved with environmental causes in his adopted home state and campaigned for Democratic candidates.

After his death at 76 in early September following a four-year battle with skin cancer, Gov. Ron DeSantis ordered flags in Tallahassee and Key West to be flown at half-staff.

An identical companion bill (SB 84) by Senate Democratic Leader Lauren Book has one more committee hearing before heading to a floor vote. Book's father, lobbyist Ron Book, was a longtime friend of Buffett's.

**Christine Sexton of Florida Politics contributed to this report.**



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**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

*Hollingsworth endorses candidate to replace him*

To the Citizens of St. Johns County,  
It is with a grateful heart and peaceful spirit that I share with you my decision, as your St. Johns County Tax Collector, to not seek reelection in 2024.

I am amazed and humbled that you have trusted me to serve you in this office since 1978. Elected in 1984, I have strived to be worthy of your faith and confidence, approaching each new day with a servant's heart and a desire to do my utmost to improve our community in my capacity as an elected official.

My greatest joy has been developing a team that shares my passion for serving our neighbors. Over the past four decades, we have fostered a culture of service excellence, innovation and en-

thusiasm to serve you with friendliness, compassion and respect.

The shining star on my team is Assistant Tax Collector Jennifer Pomar Ravan. Her distinct style of leadership and vision for this office rests on a genuine bedrock of honesty, integrity and loyalty to the people of St. Johns County.

I am proud and honored to endorse and support Jennifer as my successor to be your next St. Johns County Tax Collector. Together, she and I have cultivated a reputation of customer service excellence renowned throughout the State of Florida, and I am certain her standards will not waver. I am confident that you, too, will appreciate the strides we have made together and will place your trust and faith in her as your next Tax Collector.

May the Lord continue to bless you and our beloved county.

Respectfully,  
**Dennis W. Hollingsworth**  
St. Johns County Tax Collector



Contributed photo

**\$50K raised for Lung Association**

The GATE Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Jacksonville-based GATE Petroleum Co., and GATE customers raised \$50,000 for the American Lung Association. Funds were collected July 1 to Dec. 31 in coin boxes located at the registers of all GATE locations in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Funding will be allocated to the respective Lung Association organizations in the communities where collected.

“It’s been a privilege to contribute to the American Lung Association,” said Kathy Brady, executive director of The GATE Foundation. “Our gratitude extends to our customers, whose generosity was instrumental in achieving this shared goal.”

In addition to corporate-level giving, The GATE Foundation conducts two paper icon and two coin box collection campaigns each year to benefit organizations that align with its mission to

support efforts and services that nurture and protect the well-being of family and community.

The American Lung Association mission is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease.

“We are so honored and grateful for The GATE Foundation for partnering with us to help end lung disease in our community,” said Chris Gonzalez, chair of the American Lung Association’s Jacksonville Local Leadership Board of Directors. “This campaign not only allows us to raise vital funds for research, but also increases awareness of what we do in the community.”

The GATE Foundation has contributed tens of millions of dollars to support efforts and services that nurture and protect the well-being of family and community. For more information on The GATE Foundation, go to [myGATEstore.com/](http://myGATEstore.com/) Community or call 904-737-7220.



The first three homes are under construction in Volusia Woods.



A completed home in an existing neighborhood.

# Habitat

Continued from 1

It will be a community where future homeowners will be able to afford to live. And these residents will also add to the tax base.

That's good news, but it's only the beginning.

The local Habitat is expanding its policy to include a greater portion of the workforce, those essential workers who historically might not have qualified and yet cannot afford to buy a home at today's market prices. These might be teachers or police officers or someone else in that earning range.

But that's not all.

In the past, the affiliate acted as the mortgage originator. The only revenue it realized from the sale of a home was the monthly mortgage payments sent in by the residents. As a result, it took a very long time to accumulate the funds to begin a new home. Recently, the local Habitat board adopted a process by which the USDA is the mortgage holder. That means the homeowner makes payments to USDA, and Habitat, at the time



Photos provided by Habitat for Humanity of St. Augustine/St. Johns County

The first three homes are under construction in Volusia Woods.

of closing, receives the entire amount for which the house has been appraised.

This frees up money quickly, and Habitat can build one or two more homes right away.

In the 30 years since the local affiliate began, Habitat has built 165 homes here.

But with this new configuration, it's planning to start building 30 homes a year by 2028.

Still, to carry out these plans, Habitat will need help from the community.

Probably its top need is land.

"My dream is that we have someone donate or really give us a good price on 100

acres of land that we can build on for years to come," said Tom Torretta, development director for the local Habitat affiliate.

Beyond that, the organization always needs financial support. There are costs beyond the construction of the home.

"A lot of people don't know that when you build a workforce housing development, the infrastructure is not provided by the county or any other governmental entity," said Malinda Everson, executive director for Habitat for Humanity of St. Augustine/St. Johns County. "We have to pay for it. So, our Volusia Woods neighborhood, the property costs us right around \$300,000;

the infrastructure's over \$2 million."

Writing a check is not the only way someone can support the organization's efforts.

The affiliate can be named in one's will or be made a beneficiary on a life insurance policy. There are multiple ways to give.

There's also a program called cars4homes. Any sort of vehicle can be donated.

"It's easy," said Everson. "You just click a button. You put in the VIN number. They come get it, and we get the check."

For further information, go to [habitatstjohns.org](http://habitatstjohns.org) or call Torretta at 904-826-3252 ext. 2001.

One thing donors should be aware of is that donations to Habitat for Humanity International do not come back to the local affiliate.

Of course, as always, Habitat needs volunteers to help do much of the finish work on the homes and help with much of the behind-the-scenes office work.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: This is an abridged version of the article. To read the full story, go to [pontevedrerecorder.com](http://pontevedrerecorder.com).**



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## HEY, JUDE!

# First facility dog joins Wolfson Children's Hospital and Family Support Services team

*Specially trained service dog helps bring comfort and care to hospitalized patients.*

Patients at Wolfson Children's Hospital are benefiting from a new member of the Family Support Services care team, but this team member has four legs and a tail.

Jude, the hospital's first facility dog and founding member of "Wolfie's Woofpack," works with child life specialist Kara Williams to provide therapeutic interventions for pediatric patients and bring a little joy to their hospital stay.

Williams' role is to help kids understand what is happening in the hospital and to ease their fears through education, support and play. As a specially trained facility dog, Jude complements Williams' efforts by reducing patient anxiety and motivating patients to achieve clinical goals.

Jude is not a member of the Wolfson Children's Hospital Auxiliary's Pet Therapy Program, which was established in 1995. That program provides hospital patients with visits from trained volunteers and their own dogs to help make the patient's hospital stay less stressful and more like home.

"The volunteer-run Pet Therapy Program is a wonderful comfort to our patients, providing them with more of a normalizing visit filled with love and affection," Williams said. "These visits take place on a less frequent basis. Jude, on the other hand, works in the hospital

with patients Monday through Friday and has been trained specifically to assist in service dog tasks such as providing a deep pressure comfort hold to alleviate anxiety or serving as an alternate focus during painful procedures."

## Facility dogs expertly trained as service dogs

Jude came to Wolfson Children's Hospital from the nonprofit organization Canine Companions. As part of his two-year training, Jude underwent rigorous medical and temperamental screenings and passed several skills exams. Jude was matched with Williams during a two-week "team training" session at the southeastern regional training facility in Orlando. Williams worked with several dogs during the matching process but knew Jude was the one very quickly.

"When you're going through the matching process, the staff tells you that you won't pick the dog, the dog will pick you," said Williams. "I worked with roughly six dogs throughout the first three days, but it was quickly clear that Jude was the one, based on the connection we had when working through 'cues' together."

While dogs from Canine Companions are expertly trained to work with a professional handler such as a child life specialist in a health care setting or to help an individual with a physical disability perform basic tasks at home, they are not specifically designated to work in any particular location. As a result, Jude had never been in a hospital until after graduation when he started at Wolfson Children's

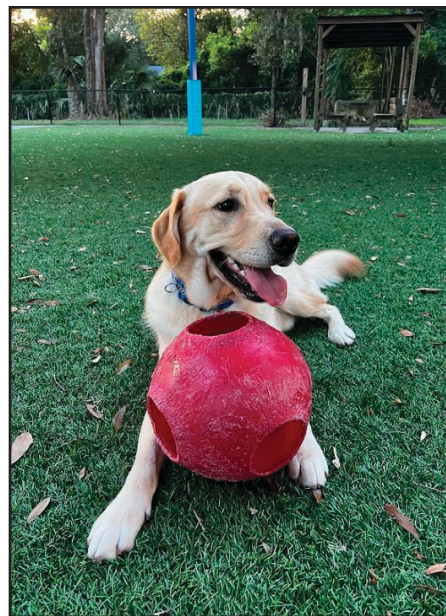


PHOTO SOURCE:

<https://www.instagram.com/heyjudevii/>

this past August.

Jude knows more than 40 commands, which help him assist patients in a variety of ways. Whether he is rolling a ball back and forth with a patient to improve motor function, motivating a patient to walk around the unit or just helping patients ground themselves by focusing on the feel of his fur, Jude brings positivity and hope to the hallways wherever he goes. He can accompany patients to certain bedside procedures, such as IV placements, and Jude is even trained to take "medicine" from a syringe in his mouth during a medical play session to help make syringes less scary for patients.

"Honestly, he does all the work, and I just get to watch him interact with patients and give them the love and support they need during procedures," said Williams. "It has been amazing to see the difference that he makes in patients' lives. They truly light up when he walks into the room."

After Jude works with patients, Williams can provide a variety of mementos

to commemorate their time together. Patients receive a coloring page of Jude, designed by Art with a Heart in Health-care, a non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to arts and healing that includes artists working with Wolfson Children's Hospital patients. With Williams' help, Jude also "writes" thank you notes to patients he has assisted, sending a message of love and gratitude directly from their newest furry friend.

When he finishes his daily shift, Jude heads home with Williams, with whom he lives full-time. Williams is responsible for all of Jude's personal care, including daily grooming and exercise, veterinarian visits and regular check-ins with the Canine Companions team. Being his handler is a lot of work, but she loves every second of it.

"Becoming a facility dog handler and building the Wolfie's Woofpack Program has been a dream of mine for a while," said Williams, who first encountered facility dogs during her practicum, which provides future child life specialists with hands-on experience through observation and supervised participation. "These dogs play such a vital role in the healing process and make such a significant impact on patients. Facility dogs can turn a sometimes-scary place into a safe place."

To keep up with all of Jude's adventures in the hospital follow him on Instagram @heyjudevii.

To support Jude and the future of Wolfie's Woofpack facility dog program, you can donate at [go.baptistjax.com/WolfiesWoofpack](http://go.baptistjax.com/WolfiesWoofpack). Your gift supports Jude's veterinarian visits, required medications, food, grooming, and other materials needed for working with hospitalized children and teens. Donations will also allow the Wolfie's Woofpack program to grow, bringing more facility dogs and handlers to Wolfson Children's Hospital in the future.

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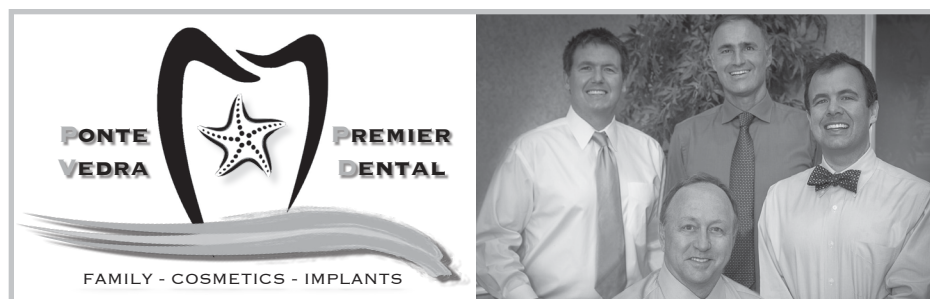
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# Hospital completes Emergency Care Center renovations

A ribbon-cutting ceremony on Jan. 26 marked the completion of a more than two-year project to renovate the emergency care center at UF Health Flagler Hospital.

After seven phases of extensive construction, the hospital unveiled state-of-the-art facilities that will enhance patient care and improve overall efficiency.

“We are excited to celebrate the completion of the emergency care center renovations,” said Carlton DeVooght, president and CEO of UF Health St. Johns. “This project represents a significant investment in our community’s health care infrastructure, and we are confident that it will greatly benefit our patients and staff.

“The end result is a testament to UF Health’s commitment to providing exceptional health care services to the community.”

The emergency care center renovations have been a comprehensive undertaking, aimed at modernizing the facility and expanding its capabilities to meet the growing needs of the community.

The project involved upgrading the infrastructure, enhancing patient flow and incorporating the latest medical technologies. These improvements will enable the hospital to deliver better emergency care, ensuring that patients receive prompt



The emergency care team at UF Health Flagler Hospital cuts the ribbon on the renovated center.

Contributed photo

and efficient treatment in a comfortable environment.

Renovations began on Oct. 1, 2021, and continued over the past two years until work was completed on the nearly 22,000-square-foot facility. Over the course of the project, 48 patient exam

rooms were renovated, as were four trauma rooms and the nurses’ stations.

“I would like to recognize the entire emergency care team who worked diligently during the renovations to ensure that the high standard of care for our patients continued,” said Michelle Paulo,

administrator of emergency services and specialty services, behavioral health and nursing operations. “More than 52,000 patients came through the emergency care center last year, and this facility will allow us to continue to deliver quality care effectively during future critical moments.”



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# Baptist Health, Compass Surgical Partners expand ambulatory surgical care in Northeast Florida

Baptist Health, a faith-based, mission-driven health system in Northeast Florida, and Compass Surgical Partners, an independent, full-service ambulatory surgery center (ASC) development and management partner, have announced plans to jointly launch a network of ASCs branded as Horizon Surgery Center.

The first of these projects is located on the campus of Baptist Medical Center Beaches in Jacksonville. Moving forward, Baptist Health and Compass Surgical Partners have plans to open multiple Horizon Surgery Center facilities in Northeast Florida, both by modernizing outpatient spaces owned by the health system and making targeted acquisitions of existing ASCs.

Horizon Surgery Center Beaches will offer outpatient procedures across a range of surgical specialties including orthopedics, neurosurgery, plastics and general surgery.

“Through our collaboration with physicians, the ASCs will help us bring even more value to the community by providing patients with an option for high-quality surgery in a lower-cost



Contributed rendering

**Horizon Surgery Center Beaches will offer outpatient procedures across a range of surgical specialties including orthopedics, neurosurgery, plastics and general surgery.**

setting,” said Matthew A. Zuino, COO of Baptist Health. “By working together with Compass, we aim to make excellent outpatient surgical care even more affordable and accessible to our growing

community.”

Baptist Health, through its for-profit subsidiary Pavilion Health Services, and Compass Surgical Partners are creating their initial Horizon Surgery Center

locations in hospital-owned buildings to facilitate rapid launches that will expedite the health system’s ASC strategy, which is focused on providing value to communities by expanding access to high-quality surgical care.

Staffed with dedicated specialty teams, ASCs are equipped to provide highly tailored same-day procedures.

The growth of the ASC model has accelerated quickly because its cost-effectiveness increases access to licensed, accredited surgical care, particularly for those with high-deductible health insurance plans. ASCs can also help hospitals alleviate scheduling delays, engage and recruit physicians who prefer the convenience of this modern setting and preserve capital dollars for other projects.

“Compass Surgical Partners is proud to engage in this joint venture with Baptist Health as it addresses its community’s need for broader access to advanced surgical care,” said Compass Surgical Partners CEO DJ Hill. “We’re excited to help this trusted health care partner meet its strategic and service goals by expanding the footprint of Horizon Surgery Centers.”

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Gayle Martin, MD, FACC

#### Advanced Cardiac Imaging

Ameeth Vedre, MD, FACC,  
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Manish K. Bansal, MD, FACC, FSCAI  
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# Baptist Health participates in clinical study to advance Afib treatment

Baptist Health has reaffirmed its position as a regional leader in innovative cardiac treatments by participating in a new clinical study to measure the impact of using AI-powered mapping technology during procedures to treat patients with persistent atrial fibrillation (Afib).

Matthew McKillop MD, cardiac electrophysiologist and medical director of Baptist Health's electrophysiology program, recently became the first physician in North Florida and the fourth in the world to perform a cardiac ablation procedure using the STAR Apollo Mapping System.

The study focuses on patients who continue to experience Afib despite already having undergone an ablation, which involves scarring heart tissue to block the electrical signals causing the heart to beat irregularly.

During the recent procedure, McKillop used the AI-powered mapping system to help pinpoint the areas causing the patient's atrial fibrillation. Computer algorithms summarized thousands of data points to identify areas that were potential drivers for Afib so they could be targeted for treatment.



Dr. Matthew McKillop and his team at work in Baptist Health's Heart Rhythm Center.

The hope is that this mapping technology will bring an increased level of precision to ablation procedures, allow-

ing for more discrete, high-value areas to be targeted and treated using a limited amount of ablation.

The procedure was performed at the new Heart Rhythm Center at Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville.

"We're excited to be the first in North Florida to trial the use of this cutting-edge technology in the treatment of persistent atrial fibrillation," said McKillop. "Our participation in clinical studies like this allow us to bring innovative treatment options to those in our community."

McKillop is collaborating with four other U.S. centers on this physician-led study of the mapping system, which is being sponsored by Dhanunjaya "DJ" Lakkireddy MD from the Kansas City Heart Rhythm Institute at HCA Midwest Health.

Afib is the most common form of heart rhythm disorder, with experts estimating that around 12.1 million adults in the U.S. will have the condition by 2030. It occurs when the upper and lower chambers of the heart are not coordinated, causing the heart to beat too slowly, too quickly or irregularly. The disorder increases one's risk of having blood clots, strokes, heart failure and other heart-related complications.

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# Renner receives FEPA Legislative Achievement Award

St. Johns County Emergency Management Deputy Director Kelly Wilson and Flagler County Emergency Management Director Jonathan Lord spent part of “Emergency Management Day at the Capitol” (Feb. 7) presenting House Speaker Paul Renner with the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association (FEPA) Legislative Achievement Award.

“It is an honor to present Speaker Renner with the FEPA Legislative Award,” Wilson said. “His leadership and support for our communities have been invaluable during the difficult recovery phase of several major hurricanes. We are grateful for his tireless efforts that have served as a steadying force enabling so many affected families and businesses to rebuild. Speaker Renner exemplifies the core tenets of this award.”

The pair – both active participants within the FEPA organization – made the presentation to Renner at his Tallahassee office. Lord nominated Renner, and Wilson is the chair of the FEPA Awards Committee, and they happen to come from Renner’s district – the 19th District.

The FEPA Legislative Achievement Award is presented to a local, state or federal legislator for outstanding leadership in sponsoring legislation that improves emergency management in the State of Florida.



**Florida House Speaker Paul Renner receives the FEPA Legislative Achievement Award from St. Johns County Emergency Management Deputy Director Kelly Wilson, left, and Flagler County Emergency Management Director Jonathan Lord.**

Contributed photo

“Under Speaker Renner’s leadership, the Legislature has navigated the impacts of two catastrophic hurricanes – Ian and Idalia – in addition to Hurricane Nicole,” Lord said in the nomination. “In response to these significant disasters, the Legislature has passed historic legislation providing unprecedented funding and programs for local governments, businesses and residents. These programs have allowed communities to recover quicker and build

back in a more resilient fashion. It takes a true leader, such as Speaker Renner, to sort through the competing demands to ensure the success of the most critical programs and projects.”

“Emergency Management Day at the Capitol” provides top leadership in local emergency management to meet and speak with their legislators about their departments, as well as county or regionally specific topics.

“As a member of both the Flagler and St. Johns County legislative delegations, I am committed to working with my colleagues to provide critical funding and programs our local governments, businesses and residents need to preserve our coastal communities,” Renner said. “Florida’s peninsula is uniquely vulnerable to hurricane threats, and when disaster strikes, we have an obligation to act. Thanks to the dedicated work of so many across our state, our communities have been able to recover faster and will continue to build so future generations can enjoy everything our region has to offer.”

Lord was twice invited in 2023 to address the Florida House Select Committee about hurricane resiliency and recovery as part of a panel discussion that included representatives from Lee, Charlotte, Collier and Volusia counties. All five counties suffered impacts from either Hurricane Ian or Hurricane Nicole, and the committee wanted an update about how all the counties were faring a year later and following the impacts of Idalia.

“It was a pleasure to nominate Speaker Renner after all he has done for Floridians to improve hurricane resiliency and recovery. He always lends an ear to emergency management,” Lord said. “It was an absolute honor to be able to present this award to him today.”

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Photo by Anthony Richards

Local business owners met at Marsh Landing Country Club during the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division luncheon on Feb. 14.

# Smith

Continued from 1

busiest week of the year.

The airport is not the only thing that proves THE PLAYERS is a true worldwide event, but the tournament also has 15 different T.V. partners that will broadcast the event.

“Last year, there were 51 million hours of our broadcast consumed worldwide, so that’s a pretty darn nice commercial for Northeast Florida, St. Johns County and Ponte Vedra Beach, and we’re proud to be a part of that,” Smith said.

Not only does THE PLAYERS impact the community with the money it brings in to local businesses, but it also has supported more than 300 charities since its inception.

Some of the new things surrounding this year’s tournament itself, will include the look of a couple of mounds to the right of the 18th green, which were lowered roughly 15 feet and a mound to the right of the 12th and 13th greens was lowered about eight feet.

“For those of you who know the

grounds forward and back, will notice that we did a lot of earth moving in the offseason,” Smith said. “We used that dirt to fill in a couple of the holding ponds in and around the clubhouse to create a little bit more landing space in what we call ‘Sawgrass Square.’”

Smith was especially excited about the lowering of the mound near No. 18 and is anxious to see the increased sightlines it will give to fans and the look it will create on television.

“One of the things we noticed over time was that when featured groups or pairings come up 18, there just wasn’t a lot of room between the mounding on the right, the cart path, and the green,” Smith said. “You could gather maybe three or four people deep around the green, but it just wasn’t the perspective we wanted, and it wasn’t celebrated enough as the last hole of THE PLAYERS Championship.”

The revision of the mound added about 14 feet of space from the rope running along the hole to the cart path, which in turn will provide more space for fans to get a good glimpse of the final group walking up the fairway and the tournament-clinching shots.

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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 to witness it as it is unveiled at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Memorial Sculpture Competition. The sculpture, which is a tribute to the author of the novel “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” will be unveiled at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Memorial Sculpture Competition, which is being held at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Memorial Sculpture Competition, which is being held at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Memorial Sculpture Competition.

### 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 state area of a state is very unusual, but it was more rare to have them both come from the same American Legion post. That was the case when Elder Paul Pichler and the St. Johns County Post 129 were chosen to represent Florida at the American Legion National Convention in Washington, D.C. Pichler is a member of the school’s ROTC program, and he has served as a school officer at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York. Pichler 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 an experience was an honor and something they will always cherish, and their shared experience will provide a memorable year for Post 129’s members. For more information on Post 129’s activities, visit our website at [www.post129.com](http://www.post129.com).



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PAGE 20 THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2024

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Contributed photos



Mustard crusted pork loin close up with braised lentils and garlic spinach



Chef Matthieu Landillon



Lobster bisque with brioche croutons, creme fraiche and roasted herb oil

## Prolific local chef brings French bistro cuisine to St. Augustine

Fresh on the heels of his most recent success, Chef Michael Lugo is switching gears for his next culinary adventure.

His flagship restaurant, Michael's, showcases fine Spanish cuisine and wine, and his latest offering, Pesca Vilano, reflects the flavors of his homeland, Puerto Rico. His newest venture brings French Bistro dining to Florida's Historic Coast. La Nouvelle opened Feb. 13 in the historic Jefferson House at 102 Bridge St. in the Lincolnville neighborhood in St. Augustine.

"There's something so classically seductive about French cuisine," said Lugo. "The fresh flavors, the contrasting textures of crunch and velvet smoothness, and elegantly simple ingredients – it's comforting and transformative all at the same time. This new concept will take classic French bistro fare and infuse it with elegance – sumptuous yet approachable. I'm thrilled to experiment with these beloved flavors with a bonafide cuisinier. I'm thrilled to welcome Chef Matthieu Landillon, a talented chef from the coastal town of Marseilles, to the team. Chef Matthieu is a graduate of Le Cordon Bleu in Paris and has a decorated career working with many notable chefs, including Gordon



La Nouvelle's team.

Ramsey and Michelin Star Chef Bjorn van der Horst."

La Nouvelle is in a refurbished Victorian home in the historic Lincolnville neighborhood. Formerly the home of Preserved restaurant, the Jefferson House was home to Marie Jefferson Eppes Shine, the great-granddaughter of Presi-

dent Jefferson and founder of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The home lies within walking distance of no less than eight other historic homes, as Lincolnville played a significant role in the Civil Rights Act. The space features seating in the cozy dining room, the Southern veranda, or

the lush garden patio.

The menu showcases classic French ingredients, perfectly prepared under the skillful eye of Lugo. Look no further for simple French perfection than the fresh house-baked baguette with creamy French salted butter, a true testament to "less is more." Once considered peasant fare, lobster finds its perfect home in the decadent lobster bisque, warm and velvety smooth with buttery brioche croutons, tarte crème fraiche and glossed with roasted herb oil. The traditional Lyonnaise salad is a crave-able salad course with fresh greens, cradling creamy poached eggs and dotted with bacon lardons and a bright vinaigrette.

A quick scan of La Nouvelle's entrees will prompt the need for multiple return trips. The Jambon Beurre Sandwich, Branzino Almondine, Sole Meuniere, Steak Frites and Duck Confit are just a few of the main courses. The humble potato receives three luxurious preparations – duck fat potatoes, pommes frites and pommes puree.

Irresistible French flavors like lavender, chocolate and orange, and praline are married with foundational confectionaries like eclairs, Paris-Brest, tarts and profiteroles.

# Questions to ask when looking for an attorney

Various situations call for working with a lawyer or an attorney. Having a skilled, experienced legal advocate in your corner in such situations can be advantageous and increase the likelihood of a favorable outcome.

When searching for legal representation, individuals may realize that there's no shortage of legal firms. That can make it more challenging to find the right lawyer or attorney. The vetting process is an important part of finding legal representation, and the following are some questions individuals can ask as they look for a lawyer or attorney.

## Are you a lawyer or an attorney?

The terms "lawyer" and "attorney" are not interchangeable. The employment search engine Indeed notes that attorneys can represent clients in court and other legal proceedings while lawyers cannot. That's a subtle yet significant distinction that individuals must take into account when looking for legal representation.

## What level of experience do you have in cases like mine?

Though each legal situation is unique, many are not one-of-a-kind instances. So individuals should ask about an attorney's experience with cases like their



own and take note of the breadth of that experience.

## What are the potential outcomes of my case?

Even the most experienced and skilled attorney cannot say with absolute certainty what the outcome of a case will ultimately be. However, that does not mean they cannot study the details and provide an assessment to

give prospective clients an idea of how the case will unfold. When vetting attorneys, individuals should prepare and be ready to discuss details that can help each professional provide the most accurate assessment of their case.

## What will your representation cost me?

Expenses and attorney fees can be significant, so individuals should not

hesitate to ask how much legal representation will cost them. Attorneys represent clients on a contingency basis in certain situations, such as when an individual is suing for damages. In those situations, individuals should confirm what percentage of damages the attorney will receive and if there are any costs they may be responsible for. In other situations, confirm if an attorney is charging a fixed amount for their services or an hourly fee. It's also necessary to inquire about expenses and request that an attorney provide a reasonable estimate of what their fees will be while they're representing you.

## How will we communicate during the case?

It's understandable that individuals want to be kept abreast of the details of any legal matter they're involved in. Ask how that will unfold if you hire the attorney you're vetting. Will an intermediary be calling with periodic updates or can clients contact the attorney directly via an email, phone call or text message?

The right representation can make all the difference in a legal situation. Asking the right questions can help individuals find an attorney they're confident can deliver the best outcome.



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# Mary Fisher, founder of Fisher Agency, to retire

Mary Fisher has completed the sale of Fisher Agency to Erin Gordon, a digital, traditional and creative marketing professional and entrepreneur. Fisher Agency is known and well-respected throughout Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia for branding, website and branding solutions, and public relations. The agency

has grown exponentially to national prominence for digital advertising and social media expertise, especially for franchises.

Fisher started in 1979 as a graphic designer working with Lee Printing and later became creative director of Jacksonville Magazine.

Subsequently, she found her wings as a woman entrepreneur and started Mary Fisher Design (1989), which became Fisher Design & Advertising and later evolved into the full-service company Fisher Agency.

Fisher witnessed significant growth in the following years as one of the first woman-owned, website-design companies in America. In 2020, she merged Fisher Agency with Savvy Partner, led by Gordon, who purchased a controlling interest. This strategic acquisition played a vital role in Fisher's transition plan. On April 1, Fisher will officially retire and continue as a consultant, as needed.

Fisher Agency's client lists include Mayo Clinic, Baptist Health, Watson Realty Corp., Ace Hardware, Jacksonville Orthopaedic Institute, Alivia Care and Community Hospice & Palliative Care, Arizona Chemical, Gate Petroleum, Jacksonville Suns, Brumos, Patriot Rail and many banks and credit unions, just to name a few.

Fisher was honored as one of Jacksonville's "Most Alluring People" (1990) by Jacksonville Magazine; "Entrepreneur of the Year" (2007) by Women Business Owners (WBO) of North Florida and "Woman of Influence" (2015) by Jacksonville Business Journal.

Fisher faced and overcame insurmountable odds during her four-decade career. The biggest hurdles were major injuries in a serious car accident. She suffered 13 broken bones and severe internal injuries, requiring a month in the hospital followed by many more months of grueling rehab. She persevered throughout and continued to run the company and moved it forward.

Her legacy is paired with passionate inspiration as a role model for fellow business owners and a mentor to students from FSCJ, UNF, Junior Achieve-



Mary Fisher


ment, Chamber of Commerce, Women's Business Center's Athena PowerLink and Women Business Owners of North Florida. Fisher believes in giving back and always gives a hand to people and causes she cares about.

Her new endeavor reflects a heartfelt desire to support veterans by honoring her father, a WWII Burma Banshee fighter pilot, veteran husband and brother. She has just finished burmabanshees.com and supports the corresponding Burma Banshees Facebook page. She will continue supporting military veterans after retirement.

Friends will see her on the Queen's Harbour Golf Course, enjoying a crab leg feast at her favorite restaurants, or just around town as she celebrates more than four decades of "a job well done" as she passes Fisher Agency on to Gordon and the next generation to create an even more successful business future.

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# Culhane Sisters heading to wine and food fest

The dynamic Culhane Sisters from Jacksonville are heading to the Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival presented by Capital One for a weekend of fun, mingling with well-known chefs and international celebrities. They are appearing and participating in Coke Zero Sugar presents “Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Live” hosted by Guy Fieri. (Feb. 22-25).

The Four Sisters (Lynda, Michelle, Mary Jane and Áine) are Irish immigrants who spent their childhood working alongside their parents on the family farm in County Limerick, Ireland, where they developed a genuine love for real authentic food, relentless work ethic, hospitality and family.

Attending the South Beach Wine & Food Festival is a celebration of the Culhane Sisters’ successes and an opportunity to acknowledge their loyal patrons.

Their humble beginning started when they immigrated to America. With a lot



Photo provided by Leigh Cort Publicity

Pictured are sisters Áine, Lynda, Michelle and Mary Jane and Guy Fieri.

of resilience and Irish luck, together in 2005 they created the first Culhane’s Irish Pub and Restaurant in Atlantic Beach.

Winning many local and regional

awards, the sisters received a phone call that changed their fate. “Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives” was so intrigued by the restaurant’s success stories, they produced Culhane’s first episode in

2010 on Food Network’s Show “Triple D.” Guy Fieri featured their Dingle Fish Pie, Guinness Beef Stew and Barney Lamb Sliders, hence the episode “Comfort Food with Attitude.”

Years later, Culhane’s second location at Southside was featured on “Triple D Nation: From Biscuits to Briskets” (Season 4, Episode 12). The sisters say they are beyond excited and honored to work with Fieri once again at the South Beach Wine & Food Festival.

What will Culhane’s be serving at the festival? Their very popular Chad’s Shrimp & Grits, created by Chef Chad who has worked at Culhane’s since the beginning, along with Chef Jason. Chefs enjoy the challenge of creating an infusion of Irish American dishes.

Chad’s Shrimp & Grits is homemade and delicious: sautéed fresh shrimp, tomatoes, mushrooms, parmesan cheese and ‘5 Sisters Mother Sauce’ atop cheddar grits and scallions.

# What does a real estate attorney do?

The complexities of the law can be challenging to those outside the legal profession. An attorney on one’s side can help individuals ensure their assets and livelihoods are protected, and even help people avoid costly mistakes.

Investing in real estate is a wise but often expensive endeavor. According to the National Association of Realtors, the median home price of existing (not new) homes was \$410,200 in June 2023. On average, a Canadian home costs 40 percent more than one in the United States. As of August 2023, Canada’s MLS Benchmark Price, which measures the price of a “typical” home in Canada in Canadian dollars, was \$750,100.

With so much money riding on real estate transactions, having a professional real estate attorney in one’s cor-

ner is wise. Recognition of what these professionals can do underscores how valuable they can be.

## Roles of a real estate attorney

The main job of a real estate attorney is to ensure the legal transfer of property from a seller to a buyer. Real estate attorneys will prepare and review documents, ensure that a home title is clear, and facilitate the transfer of funds between parties, according to the online financial resource NerdWallet. Real estate attorneys will identify any unpaid loans, liens, litigation or other claims against the property, uncover deed restrictions and covenants, and any breaks in the chain of title.

In addition to these services, attorneys guide their clients through searches for obligations like taxes, util-

ity charges and homeowners association fees, according to Bankrate. Real estate attorneys also will prepare settlement statements showing the charges to all parties and how the funds will be allocated, including commissions, attorney’s fees, underwriting fee, title search fee, taxes, and more.

A real estate attorney can work for those looking to buy or sell a private home, an investment property, a commercial business, or even guide grief-stricken relatives through the process of selling a deceased loved one’s home to settle estate obligations.

## Who do real estate attorneys work for?

If the real estate attorney is representing a client’s interests only, that lawyer will be an advocate to the client and

work in his or her best interests. Various attorneys tend to be involved in real estate transactions. One will represent the buyer and another the seller. A lawyer may represent the mortgage lender if financing is involved. Another could potentially represent the title company.

## Cost of real estate representation

Certain real estate attorneys will charge a flat fee that encompasses a specific series of jobs, including the preparation of closing documents. Others may charge an hourly rate, particularly if the issue is more complex and involves litigation.

When individuals are selling or investing in property, real estate attorneys can ensure the process goes smoothly and protect their clients if complications arise.

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## Exhibit to feature photorealist artist

By Shaun Ryan

Some artists have a very strong local presence. Others are recognized worldwide. But only a select few can boast that their work is on the Moon.

Shan Fannin is among them.

Five of Fannin's paintings are included in The Lunar Codex, a collection of works by approximately 35,000 artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers from 231 countries, territories and indigenous nations that will be stored in time capsules on the lunar surface.

The method of storage is an analog technology branded as NanoFiche. The images should last hundreds of thousands of years, possibly to be found and enjoyed by future space travelers.

Fannin's pieces will be included in all of the lunar "galleries," including Codex Nova, launched Thursday, Feb. 15, aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 and scheduled to land this week. But that will be one "opening" she won't be able to attend.

"I'm never going to see it, but it's kind of neat!" she said.

Currently, her work is in 10 Earthly galleries, including five paintings in The Kessler Collection. In fact, there is one opening she most definitely will be able to attend, on March 1 at entrepreneur Richard C. Kessler's Grand Bohemian Gallery in St. Augustine. Fannin will be at the gallery to meet the public there during the monthly First Friday Art Walk.

Fannin is one of nine "Next Originals" selected by Kessler from a pool of 1,800 applicants to display her work in New York City's Times Square and at several Grand Bohemian Galleries.

Such success often arrives only after many decades of honing one's work. But Fannin's path was very different. Though she demonstrated talent early in life and even did some painting many years ago, it wasn't until her son was grown and off to college that she turned her attention to painting as a profession.

### Not a photo

Fannin, who lives in Austin, Texas, is a photorealist painter specializing in depictions of all types of vehicles: cars, trucks, motorcycles, airplanes and boats. Her skill is such that the result, unless studied closely, may be mistaken for a photograph.

But Fannin isn't attempting to precisely replicate what the camera records. Each painting represents her own personal take on the subject and varies from the original in subtle ways. In fact, despite the seeming precision of her work, she doesn't rely solely on fine brushes to create it.

"I paint with my fingers, my palms and brushes," she said. "I don't just paint with brushes. I get really messy."

And she doesn't want that motorcycle to look exactly like her reference material.

"I want to have a little twist on it," she said. "I will skew the color a little bit. I'll add reflections. I'll take something away."

She considers her work about 90% realistic and 10% abstract, a style she came to appreciate after taking an art class as a mature adult.

"I really enjoy abstract art," she said. "Before I got into this, I actually did not go to the abstract areas of museums. I know people who just rave about Picasso, but that wasn't my



Shan Fannin poses next to one of her many large paintings.

Photos courtesy of Shan Fannin



Fannin's painting of a VW bus.

thing."

She came to appreciate the abstract qualities inherent in the human form while taking a drawing class, something which translated into her depiction of mechanical vehicles.

"When I got into cars, I saw the correlation with painting a beautiful woman ... when you're painting a Ferrari, that's a beautiful woman," she said.

She exclusively uses acrylic paint, having discovered early on that the fumes from oils gave her migraines, and works from photos that either she or her husband has taken while visiting a car show, air show or similar event.

For the "messy" portions, she coats her hands with a product called Liquid Glove to keep the paint from working into the skin.

"There are a lot of artists that paint with gloves, but I'm

very tactile," she said. "I want to feel the paint."

Asked how she achieves the realistic effects, she laughed and attributed it in part to "a lot of caffeine and cursing."

### A career discovered

Fannin launched her career as a professional artist in 2015, just months after completing her first painting of a vehicle, an orange GMC truck. Today, that painting, which she says she hates, hangs in her dining room to "remind you where you started," as her husband told her.

But the roots of Fannin's art go back to the fifth grade, when she was doing an insect study for a science fair.

"I drew a grasshopper," she said. "My teacher said, 'Wow, you have talent for art.'"

But Fannin wasn't convinced.

"I thought: Whatever," she admitted with a laugh.

She took an art class in high school, and that teacher also told her she had talent.

"I thought: He's just saying that," she said.

But the teacher submitted her work to a community college, and she received a \$1,000 scholarship.

"It was a big deal, because someone actually believed in me," she said.

And though she went on to paint some murals and teach art to homeschooled children, life took her in other directions. She married her high school sweetheart, homeschooled their son and worked as a marketing director at a large corporation.

She didn't pursue art professionally until she was in her mid-40s.

"I really believe we all have a talent, and a lot of us don't find that talent until later in life," she said. "I try to encourage others: If there's something you really want to do, do it."

EXHIBIT continues on Page 25





Contributed photos

Students look at work during the 2023 St. Johns All-County High School Art Show.

# Student art exhibited in March

The St. Augustine Art Association has announced the 19th Annual St. Johns All-County High School Art Show, featuring work from more than 150 students in grades nine through 12 thanks to a community outreach partnership with St. Johns County Schools. Hosted in the association's Bradley Mayer Main Gallery, 22 Marine St., St. Augustine, the exhibit will be on display throughout March and can be seen in-gallery or online.

The exhibit is an association favorite, bringing a fresh and unique perspective to art today, and it started as far back as the 1940s. In the association's early years, artists Tod Lindenmuth and Elizabeth Warren set out to host its first student art show. Sixty-plus years later, in 2004, Diane Bradley joined as a life member and board member after retiring from a 30-year career as a middle school

and high school art teacher. She soon began hosting art classes after school and was inspired to create an opportunity for students to exhibit their work.

She set off to establish a partnership with St. Johns County Schools, and with the help of high school art teacher David Olson and St. Augustine High School Assistant Principal Allyson Breger, the association hosted its first St. Johns All-County High School Art Show in 2005 with only two schools.

Now, the exhibit features work from eight schools and more than 150 students, in part thanks to Tommy Bledsoe, former SJCS curriculum coordinator. He, along with art teacher Rebecca Williams, coordinated with local teachers and secured funding for student awards.

STUDENT continues on Page 26



Artwork from the St. Johns All-County High School Art Show 2023.

## Exhibit

Continued from 24

Stop putting it off. My mom passed away at 52 years old, and she was always saying, 'One day, one day, one day.' Do it now."

### Life at the canvas

It takes Fannin about two to three weeks to complete a painting, and she does between 25 and 30 a year, often working on several at the same time. She has seven new paintings ready for the Grand Bohemian show in St. Augustine, and 11 more in progress.

In painting vehicles, she is careful to paint what she sees, even if that isn't what people expect.

"I don't use black in my painting at all," she said. "I'll use either darker gray or I'll mix blue and brown together to make a dark color. And I don't put bright white on the painting until the very, very end. ... Like when I'm painting a tire, people are like, 'Well, tires are black.' No, they're really like brown and green and purple. In the dark areas, I use what they call Payne's gray, or I'll use a blue, an ultramarine blue, and a brown."

Fannin said she feels like a visual historian, recording these vehicles as they are today. And she does not feel threatened by the rise of artificial intelligence.

"I feel that people will always want a human to create something beautiful," she



Fannin's painting of the front of a locomotive.

said. "Whether it's an article, a book, a photograph, a painting, whatever. If I lose my job one day because of AI, so be it. But I'm going to keep doing what I do."

And she has no plans to ever retire.

"If you find a thing that makes you happy, it doesn't matter if you're working or whatever, you need to do that for the rest of your life. That's what I'm hoping to do. So, if I'm 99 years old, I'll still be painting motorcycles and cars and stuff."

**The Grand Bohemian Gallery is located at 49 King St. First Friday Art Walk runs from 5 to 9 p.m.**

**To learn more about Shan Fannin, go to [shanfannin.com](http://shanfannin.com). To learn more about The Lunar Codex, go to [lunarcodex.com](http://lunarcodex.com).**

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Contributed photos

# Fiber artist featured at gallery

Fiber artist Amy Dove is Butterfield Garage's latest featured artist. At the March 1 opening, her riot of three-dimensional sunflowers will welcome spring and dazzle gallery visitors. Dove uses natural fibers to create layers of highly textured, colorful and three-dimensional blooms, massaging, kneading, rolling and sculpting the fibers into fanciful felt fleurs du soleil. She will be at the gallery from 5 to 9 p.m. to discuss her process and inspirations.

"Sunflowers — radiant, timeless, cheerful — demand attention!" said Dove. "I

see them as little star blossoms full of vitality resembling our Sun. In this series, I have created vibrant blossoms both delighting the eye, and with their energy, drawing the viewer in for a deeper look."

Soon after moving to Florida a dozen years ago, Dove was introduced to felt-making. She was instantly captivated by wet felt-making and the various textures and blends she can create through the process. She combines different materials — mostly hand-dyed — to create layers of new textural expressions all while embracing the visceral nature of the fibers.

"From the very beginning of my felt-making experience, the process of transforming wisps of wool and silk into felted cloth with a little soapy water and agitation has struck me as magical," she said. "It's that magical process, with its playful nature and subtle shifts, that leads to experimentation. My designs come from many hours of saying, 'What happens if ...'"

Dove is still intrigued by this art form that allows for the greatest exploration of surface design within a single medium.

Dove was born in West Chester, Penn-

sylvania, into a family of art lovers. She earned a bachelor's degree from Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science in 1984. After graduating, she worked as a Jacquard Wovens designer for many years.

She has been an active member of the Butterfield Garage Art Gallery as well as the St. Augustine Art Association since 2013, having won many awards for her felt works, most recently awarded "Best of Show."

Butterfield Garage Art Gallery is located at 137 King St., St. Augustine.

## Student

Continued from 25

"This is one of my favorite exhibits of the year," said Jennifer Flynt, as-

sociation executive director. "Seeing the creativity and emotions these young artists are able to express in their work sets the bar high for visual art in our community. They understand what art is and what it's meant to do for view-

ers, and they pull influences from more than just what they see with their eyes. These young artists take you on an emotional — and visual — journey. And whether they realize it now or not, this is an incredible, and historic,

opportunity for them to have their work displayed here at one of the oldest art associations in the country."

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Contributed photo

Artwork from the St. Johns All-County High School Art Show 2023.

# Sports

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2024 · PAGE 27

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The Panthers hosted the Sharks in boys lacrosse action on Feb. 20.



The Panthers win a faceoff.



Ponte Vedra senior goalie Jack Pelot (No. 0) squares up a Nease shot attempt.

## SPRING IS UPON US...SPORTS THAT IS



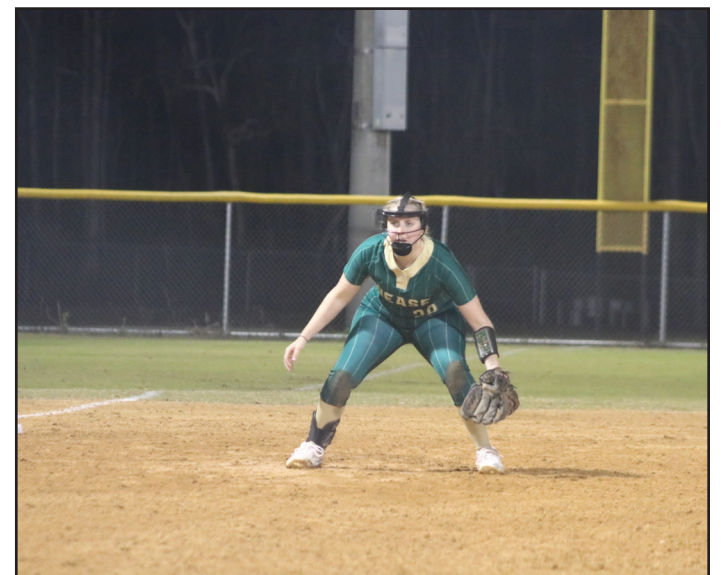
Kristina Campbell high-fives head coach Vinny Stolp after hitting a home run in her first at-bat as a Panther.

The spring sports season has begun and that means busy nights on the campuses of both Nease and Ponte Vedra high schools over the next several months, as fans will have plenty of local talent to watch in an array of sports.

Ponte Vedra and Nease both continued their rivalry, this time on the boys lacrosse field on Feb. 20, while the Panthers battled Menendez to open the softball season the same night.

The Sharks won in boys lacrosse 9-1 and the Panthers' offense came alive as they defeated the Falcons 9-4 on the softball diamond.

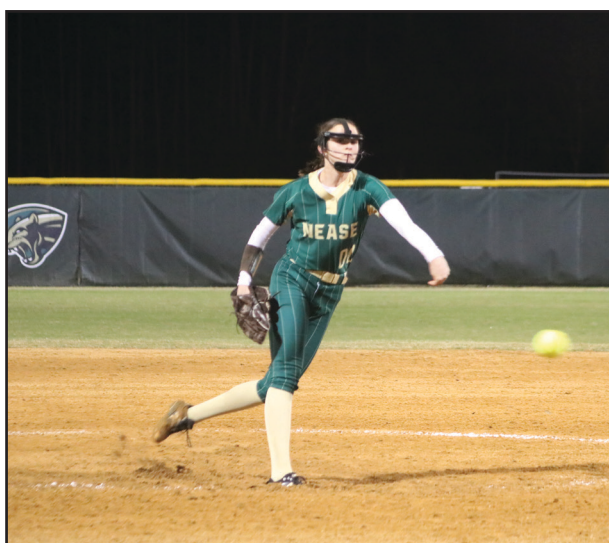
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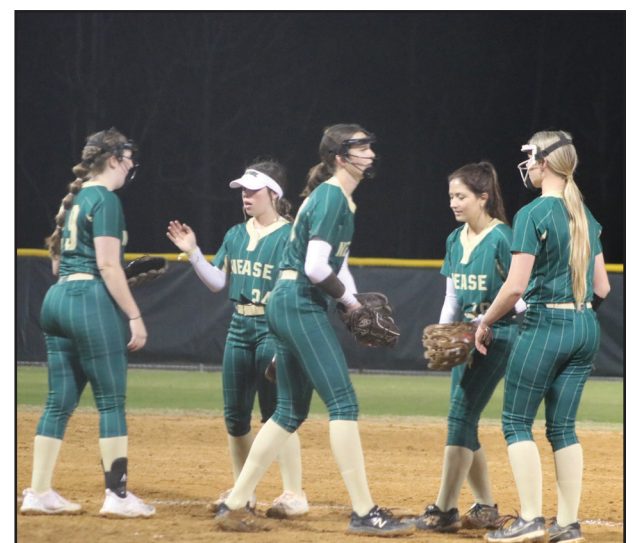
Nease senior Kaylee Wick gets ready to catch a ball at third base.



Senior Jeremy Hart (No. 99) winds up for a shot for the Sharks.



Nease freshman Sydney Davis fires a pitch.



Nease players congratulate each other in the circle following a strikeout.



Photo by Anthony Richards

The fundraiser supports the Ponte Vedra boys lacrosse team.

# Mulch Madness is back for year 15 of lacrosse fundraising

By Anthony Richards

Ponte Vedra boys lacrosse often plays their games on grass, especially when they take the field for their home games in the Shark Tank, but for their major fundraiser each year they sell and deliver mulch.

What makes it such a unique fundraiser is also one of the primary reasons why it remains in place and has developed into quite a tradition over the past 15 years.

This year's mulch madness comes about a month earlier than last year and is currently underway, and any residents looking to purchase mulch can fill out a

form by going to [pvlax.com/mulchmadness/buymulch](http://pvlax.com/mulchmadness/buymulch).

Over the years, the selection has grown and now even includes more than just mulch, as pine straw bales are also available, as well as pine bark nuggets, which are about the size of a quarter.

The forms of mulch this year are brown

shredded cypress, red shredded cypress and black shredded mulch.

The cost is \$8 per bag or bale, with each bag or bale covering three cubic feet, and free delivery will once again be provided for residents living in Ponte

**MULCH** continues on Page 29

# Panthers claim boys wrestling district titles



Contributed photo

Nease High School picked up a pair of boys wrestling district individual titles, as Alan Rivera took home the victory in the 190-pound weight class while Lucian Slayden reigned supreme in the 132-pound division.

# Profiles of four contenders for THE PLAYERS trophy

With three weeks to go until the strongest field in golf reconvenes at TPC Sawgrass, THE PLAYERS Championship sets the stage for the 2024 event by profiling four of the biggest names in the sport who are among the favorites to create their defining moment en route to hoisting THE PLAYERS trophy.

## Rickie Fowler

In the 2023-24 season, Rickie Fowler returned to the winner's circle with a victory at the Rocket Mortgage Classic in dramatic fashion, carding a birdie-3 on the first playoff hole to best Adam Hadwin and Collin Morikawa for his sixth PGA TOUR title and first since the 2019 WM Phoenix Open. The 2015 PLAYERS champion had a successful season, notching eight top-10 finishes en route to finishing 16th in the FedExCup. The Florida resident is set to make his 13th consecutive start at THE PLAYERS as he looks to become a multiple-time champion of the event.

## Collin Morikawa

Collin Morikawa returns to THE PLAYERS Championship after notching the sixth win of his PGA TOUR career — and first in more than two years — at

the ZOZO Championship in Japan last October. The 27-year-old is currently 20th in the FedExCup after opening his 2024 season with a T5 at The Sentry and following that up with a T14 effort at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. Morikawa will be making his fourth career start at TPC Sawgrass after recording a career-best T13 in 2023, where he sat in solo-second through 18 holes after an opening 65.

## Tony Finau

Tony Finau returned to the winner's circle twice during the 2022-23 season with victories at the Cadence Bank Houston Open and the Mexican Open at Vidanta, going on to finish 20th in the final FedExCup standings. This season, Finau has made four starts, highlighted by a T6 finish at the Farmers Insurance Open. The Utah native is set to make his eighth appearance at THE PLAYERS as he looks to improve upon his career-best finish of T19 in 2023.

## Ludvig Aberg

At 24 years old, Ludvig Aberg is set to make his tournament debut at THE PLAYERS Championship. The Swedish-born

**PROFILES** continues on Page 29

# Sharks make waves, with pair of regional final trips

By Anthony Richards

It has been a magical year for the Ponte Vedra Sharks basketball program as a whole, as everything they have touched has led to success at this point.

Both the boys and girls basketball squads have advanced to the regional final in the Class 6A state tournament.

The path for the boys (22-7) has been one of reassurance, as they have won both playoff matchups by double digit margins and have looked the part in both cases.

The Sharks opened with a 57-39 win over Tallahassee Lincoln and followed it up with another convincing triumph, this time, 58-44 over Gainesville.

Just as they have for much of the season, the Sharks are looking like a complete team, with offense and defense coming into play, especially when they have gotten on the roll they are on in the second half of the season.

It is the third year in a row the Sharks will be playing in the regional finals, while making it this far is somewhat new territory for the Sharks' girls basketball team.

The girls (21-8) had to fight for a first round victory and outlasted a gritty Springstead team to win 46-43 in overtime and then defeated Tallahassee Lincoln 51-42 in the regional semifinals.

The Sharks have had home court advantage in each of their two playoff matchups so far and will both take on their region's top seed on the road for a chance to play



Since winning the district title, the Sharks have been on a tear in the state tournament en route to their third straight trip to the regional final.

for a spot in the final four.

The girls will take on Niceville at 6 p.m. on Feb. 22 and the boys will face off with Wiregrass Ranch at 7 p.m. on Feb. 23.



Contributed photos

The Ponte Vedra girls basketball team have had a lot to cheer about all season and now find themselves one win away from the final four.

It will be the first time the Sharks have met the Eagles this year, while the Sharks did face the Bulls in the post-season last year, and they won that contest handily in the first round.

## Mulch

Continued from 28

Vedra and Nocatee on March 23 and 24.

In order to qualify for the free delivery, a minimum of 10 bags or \$80 must be purchased.

One of the special aspects of the fundraiser is that players on this year's Sharks squad will be the ones who will be delivering the mulch to each home.

The Sharks are a contender for the state title in boys lacrosse seemingly every year and the program has solidified itself as one of the teams to be reckoned with, including a tough schedule that features top teams from around the nation.

Fundraisers like Mulch Madness are key to making sure the support they need to pay for the materials needed to maintain that success is in place.



Photo by Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra Sharks boys lacrosse team is currently accepting forms to purchase mulch as part of its 15th Annual Mulch Madness.

## Profiles

Continued from 28

player turned professional following the NCAA Championship in May 2023, and became the first player to join the TOUR directly out of college by finishing No. 1 in the PGA TOUR University Ranking. He experienced immediate success, winning in his rookie season at the 2023 RSM Classic, becoming the first PGA TOUR University alum to win on TOUR. In addition, Aberg collected three additional top-10 finishes and ended the year representing Team Europe at the Ryder Cup as one of Captain Luke Donald's six picks. This season he has finished in the top-10 twice in four starts, finishing T9 at the Farmers Insurance Open and solo-second at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.

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## CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4			5	6	7		8	9	10		
11				12			13				14			
15							16				17			
	18				19		20				21			
					22	23				24				
25	26	27	28	29										
30								31						
32										33	34	35	36	37
					38	39	40		41	42				
					43			44						
		45	46											
47	48					49				50	51	52	53	54
55						56				57				58
59						60				61				
62						63					64			

- ACROSS**
- Golf scores
  - Shock therapy
  - Ballplayer's tool
  - Quench one's thirst
  - Female relatives of American war vets (abbr.)
  - Every one of two or more things
  - Member of Muslim people
  - Play
  - Type of cheese
  - Type of lounge chair
  - \_\_\_ King Cole, musician
  - Fellows
  - North, Central and South
  - In an early way
  - Foes
  - Georgia rockers
  - Cryptocurrency
  - Narrow path along a slope
  - Disallow
  - Joyousness
  - Inaccessible
  - Evoke emotions
  - Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
  - Boston Celtic punk rockers (abbr.)
  - Sword
  - Actor Idris
  - Affirmative (slang)
  - Afflicted
  - One point north of northeast
  - Born of
  - Arabic name
  - Traumatic brain injury (abbr.)
  - Extremity
  - Post
  - One who brings home the bacon
  - More comprehensible
  - Connected with sense of touch
  - Red mineral
  - Breezed through
  - Therefore
  - Early kingdom of Syria
  - Satisfy
  - They confuse doctors (abbr.)
  - Brass instrument
  - Domesticated animal
  - Ribonucleic acid
  - Snakelike fish
  - Woman (French)
  - Economically-minded aircraft
  - When you hope to get somewhere
  - Tease
  - Actress Gretchen
  - Midway between northeast and east
  - Inoffensive
  - Yellowish cotton cloth
  - Consume
  - Does not tell the truth
  - Improved something
  - Spiritual leader
  - Abba \_\_, Israeli politician
  - Fix
  - Evergreen tree genus
  - Swiss river
  - Prejudice
  - Major C. European river
  - Long, narrow strap
  - Male parent

## SUDOKU

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

Level: Beginner

**DOWN**

- Pacific Standard Time
- Protruding ridge on nematodes
- Indian king
- Type of milk

**Here's How It Works:**  
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>2019 TESLA MODEL 3</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$21,480</b>                      55,137 MILES   STOCK# KF314901</p>	<p>2023 JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE L</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$38,988</b>                      5,218 MILES   STOCK# P8744027</p>	<p>2023 BUICK ENVISION</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$28,730</b>                      2,696 MILES   STOCK# PD020119</p>	<p>2013 CADILLAC SRX</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$11,880</b>                      102,238 MILES   STOCK# DS609390</p>	<p>2023 CHEVROLET TRAILBLAZER</p> <p>SALE PRICE <b>\$24,630</b>                      8,323 MILES   STOCK# PB016216</p>



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