

THE RECORDER

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Kids' Summer Fun Guide
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Thursday, April 4, 2024

PonteVedraRecorder.com

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Earth Day beach clean-up scheduled for April 20

By Anthony Richards

April is Earth Month and Beaches Go Green and several other eco-friendly businesses are doing their part to give back and get involved in the local community with an Earth Day community beach clean-up on April 20.

The clean-up is expected to cover a lot of coastline with starting points at both the Jacksonville Beach Pier and the Atlantic Boulevard beach access in Atlantic Beach.

However, the beach is just part of what will be the focus of the cleaning

EARTH DAY continues on **Page 18**

The Yards holds open house for new versatile event space

By Anthony Richards

The Yards continues to be more than just golf, tennis or pickleball, but instead strives to be a social hub for the community, and they took that a step further with the introduction of its latest new event space called the "Greenhouse."

An open house was held for the Greenhouse on March 27 and 28, where members of the community were able to tour the 4,000 square-foot of air-conditioned indoor space as well as 3,000 square-foot of covered patio and outdoor space accompanied by views of its golf course.

According to Anna Washington, director of sales and events, the goal behind the new event center is to be able to host any occasion from weddings to corporate gatherings, charity galas and everything in between.

"We definitely just want to be a



Photo by Anthony Richards

The Yards held an open house for its new Greenhouse event space March 27 and 28.

THE YARDS continues on **Page 3**



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Send us your news

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



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PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



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

BRIEFS

St. Johns County library system extends hours

The St. Johns County Public Library System has announced the expansion of library service hours beginning April 7. From 1 to 5 p.m., the Bartram Trail, Main, Ponte Vedra Beach and Southeast branches will open on Sundays, giving St. Johns County residents access to a library branch seven days a week.

Additionally, the Anastasia Island and Hastings branches will open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Mondays beginning April 8.

These enhanced services result from the approval of additional staffing by the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners for the fiscal year 2024 budget.

“Our community has been patiently waiting for us to open on Sundays and add Monday hours at the Anastasia Island and Hastings branches since we reduced services during the 2008 recession,” Library Director Debra Rhodes Gibson said. “We’re thrilled to have the support of the Board of County Commissioners to extend hours and make it more convenient for families, professionals and those with less-flexible schedules to visit SJCPLS. We look forward to spending more time with our patrons in the library!”

In addition to bestsellers, movies, audio-books, magazines, and more, St. Johns County residents who sign up for a library card receive 24/7 access to the e-library for downloading e-books, reading The New York Times or Wall Street Journal digital editions, streaming movies and music, and researching for work or school projects.

For more information, go to sjcpls.org, email sjcpls@tblc.libanswers.com, or stop by any branch or bookmobile.

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.

Grief support group to meet

A grief support group meets on the third Wednesday of every month at St. Paul’s Catholic Church in Room 107 of the Family Life Center, 578 First Avenue N., Jacksonville Beach. The group is for men and women grieving the death of a family member or friend. The next meeting will be at 7 p.m. April 17. For information, call

Kathy at 904-553-8933.

Democratic Club to meet

The Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will meet Monday, April 22, at the Ponte Vedra Library, 101 Library Road. Chat and chew at 5:30 p.m., meeting at 6 p.m. Featured speaker is Jeanne Moeller, president and board member of the St. Johns County Homeless Coalition, an organization striving to end homelessness by stabilizing vulnerable families in safe and decent homes and providing support services to help them gain self-sufficiency. For additional information, email PVDemClub@gmail.com.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan



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The Yards

Continued from 1

center for the community and be a place where everyone can just come and have fun, spend time with their family and friends and celebrate anything that's going on in their lives," said Avery White, with marketing communications at The Yards.

The space used to be an old maintenance facility used by The Yards, but

when a new maintenance facility was built on Solana Road, the space was available for an upgrade and a major one took place indeed.

It is definitely safe to say that the days of the structure being used to store maintenance equipment is far in the rearview, as it has completely been revamped.

"I'm not sure who had the amazing idea, but transforming the existing building has been something really cool to watch take place," Washington said.

One of the common opinions gathered

from the open house is the appreciation from those who attended of the combination of both indoor and outdoor space, which offers so many options for an event taking place and allows for weather to not be as big of a factor in whether an event is a success or not.

"We also have A/C and heaters, so no matter the time of year, you can host your event comfortably either inside or out," White said. "We have mobile bars so people will be able to be served from anywhere in the space. We definitely love that versatility."

The size of the venue space also allows for its share of flexibility as the combination of indoor and outdoor space pres-

ents the ability to host an array of large gatherings to more quaint sizes while still feeling intimate and not too spacious.

"We've hosted about 300 (people) already, so we like to say we can host about 350-plus," Washington said.

Some of the bar staff was on hand during the open house as attendees were given samples of some of their alcoholic beverage offerings.

"We can do all in-house bartending and beverage services, so their bar packages are always through us, which is always really convenient for people hosting because it's one less thing they have to think out," White said.



Photo by Anthony Richards

The Greenhouse combines a mix of both outdoor and indoor event space to be used.

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

Photos provided by Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery

KATHY'S GARDENING GUIDE

Climbing Flowers and Plants

"Never underestimate the healing power of a quiet moment in the garden." — Josephine Albert

By Kathy Esfahani



Kathy Esfahani

The burst of color from a climbing flower is a stunning addition to any landscape.

These plants provide a vertical design element with minimal space requirements. The plants listed below are

perennials, but they are tropical — be sure to cover them when temperatures drop below 38 degrees. Visit us at the nursery to explore these beautiful climbers:

- Allamanda is an evergreen vine that produces trumpet-shaped, bright yellow blooms. This plant prefers exposure to morning sunlight but can adapt to an area of full sun. As a tropical plant, allamanda

loves moist, but well-drained, soil. Although it is a beautiful vine to have around a patio or pool, allamanda can be poisonous to animals if ingested.

- Bleeding heart is a tropical vine that thrives with full shade or morning sun. This evergreen plant has dark green leaves and clusters of white flowers with red accents. Bleeding heart prefers consistently moist, but not soggy, soil and can be pruned into the shape of your choice.

- Bougainvillea is a woody, tropical plant that loves the Florida heat! This vine can grow up to 40 feet long and produces beautiful flowers in pink, purple, red, white, orange and yellow. Bougainvillea will climb quickly on a trellis or arbor. Beware of thorns when working with this climber and look for an area of full sun to encourage blooming throughout the season.

- A Carolina jasmine vine is an evergreen climber with fragrant, yellow blooms. Barring extensive cold temperatures, these plants bloom late winter through spring and thrive in Northeast Florida. Also known as Carolina jessamine, the Carolina jasmine

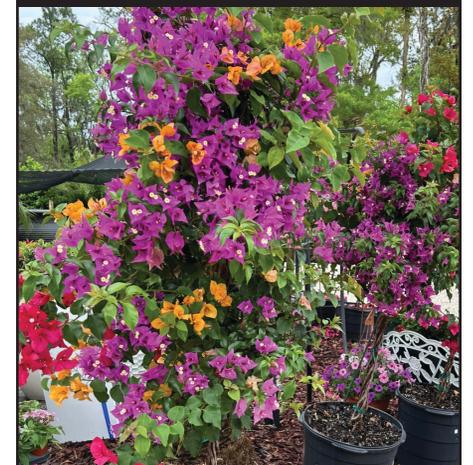
prefers areas of full sun. Prune when the plant finishes flowering to maintain a controlled shape and encourage fullness in the lower areas of the stem.

- Confederate jasmine is easy to grow in partial to full sun. Also known as star jasmine, these plants produce small white, star shaped blooms. Confederate Jasmine can grow to more than 20 feet long if left unpruned! With a bit of attention, however, it can be shaped, and pinching off the tips of the vines will encourage fuller growth.

- Mandevilla vines grow quickly and produce red, pink or white flowers from spring through fall. These fragrant blooms have five petals and sometimes feature a yellow center. Mandevilla loves the Florida sunshine but may need shade during the hottest part of the day. Add these plants to your landscape to encourage hummingbirds to visit!

Use climbing flowers and plants in your landscape to incorporate height and color. Not only are climbing plants helpful for privacy and shade, but they can also add interest to a fence or wall. Prune your

Flower of the Week



Bougainvillea

climbing plants and flowers when they are not blooming to maintain your desired shape and keep their growth under control. As always, be sure to note the sunlight requirements for your climber as you select the perfect location for these decorative plants.

Happy planting!

Flower of the Week: Bougainvillea

Please email Kathy at 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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In January, ImagineCare, a joint venture between Spark Pediatrics and CareSource, announced the appointment of Ponte Vedra resident Adam Beam as CEO. Beam is a seasoned managed care executive with more than 18 years of experience in both the public and private sectors.

Adam Beam

As told to Shaun Ryan

In order to understand your new role, it's important to first understand the organization you work for. Tell me about ImagineCare and its components, CareSource and Spark Pediatrics. What are they and what does this partnership allow them to do better together?

ImagineCare is a joint venture between Spark Pediatrics and CareSource. Spark Pediatrics, they've been in Florida for 12 years, primarily serving children with complex needs — and also providing home health services throughout the entire state of Florida. CareSource is a national managed care organization. They've been serving Medicaid members for over 30 years.

Basically, ImagineCare brings together one of the most well-respected providers in Florida backed by a health plan with the best operations in the country.

Who are recipients of these services?

Our focus will be on Medicaid recipients throughout the state.

As CEO of ImagineCare, what will your responsibilities be?

I'll oversee the entire plan, report up through the board of directors and ensure that we provide quality care and services to the state's most vulnerable constituents.

Will you interact separately with CareSource and Spark Pediatrics or will you be more independent of those partners?

I'll be with both since it is a joint venture. I'll be working hand-in-hand with both organizations.

Tell me about your background, your education and career to date.

Prior military. Was stationed at Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, Florida. When I got out, I worked in Kentucky. I worked for other health plans similar to CareSource. And then, spent seven years in private equity, serving Medicaid members. Moved to Ponte Vedra close to six years ago for work. I was doing Medicaid work in the state of Florida. And then, joined CareSource about two-and-a-half years ago, primarily focusing on the eastern region of the United States, which has led me up to this point.

I'm on the board of the Northeast Florida Boys and Girls Club and work a lot crisscrossing the state, focusing on building community-based organization relationships. I think we've donated over \$1 million so far just working with other organizations. Episcopal Children's and Fostering Connections are some examples.

We're really dedicated to serving the community.

What do you like best about what you do?

I think it's just being part of an organization that's innovative and really trying to get beyond just clinical needs of our members; really looking at the social, behavioral pieces that are all just very important in holistic care.

Also, we have a deep understanding around the whole health of the family and not just of the individual, and really wrapping around services and other community coordination for our members to ensure that their quality of life in Florida is just great.



Adam Beam is CEO of ImagineCare.

Contributed photo

You've stepped up to help those in need.

We've created some amazing partnerships throughout the state. For instance, with the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay. We gave them a \$50,000 grant to help more survivors [of human trafficking]. ... Eighty-eight percent of survivors report that they've interacted with health care providers while being trafficked without receiving appropriate intervention. So, we feel compelled to join this fight against human trafficking, and I think that's a big part of what we're bringing to Florida. To ensure that we can really help the fight against human trafficking.

With ImagineCare's support, the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay can provide longer-term human trafficking care coordination.

Mid-Year Halftime Shows, where we're replenishing students' school supplies ... We go in and we're working with students within some of our communities, and then giving them new book bags, paper, pencils, pens, and then just replenishing the supplies, because we feel there's an urgent need to replenish and secure students' academic success.

Overall, the most fulfilling part about what I do is fulfilling the mission of ImagineCare while knowing that I'm dedicated to improving the community's health. There could be no greater responsibility.

Where do you come from originally?

I'm from Louisville, Kentucky.

What do you like best about living here?

We love Ponte Vedra. My wife reminds me we're never going to move. We love all the normal things, like the beaches and access to the parks — there are lots of things to do outside — but I think what we like most of all is our community. We've just really come to fall in love with a lot of the individuals in the community. We love everything about where we live.

I have two kids. They're thriving. Both of them play three or four sports throughout the year. There's never time off here!

How do you like to spend your free time?

We're always doing road trips on the weekends, exploring all of the different beaches and natural parks within the state.

That's pretty much it. We've really focused on kind of check-marking the entire state. We'll go down to the Keys or even around the Panhandle.

Most of our time is eaten up with kids lacrosse or wrestling or football. But when we get those precious weekends, we definitely take advantage of it.

Jaguars to host draft party at stadium on April 25

By Anthony Richards

Many Jacksonville Jaguars fans will be watching the first round of the NFL Draft on April 25, and once again this year the team is welcoming fans to attend a watch party at Everbank Stadium.

All the opening night action of the draft will be shown on the stadium's video boards for those in attendance to watch and the festivities will take place on the field.

Gates one and four will open to the event at 7 p.m. and the draft officially gets underway at 8 p.m., but the Jaguars encourage fans to get there early and enjoy the various activities that will be in place to provide entertainment on the night.

There will be time before the Jaguars are slotted to pick at No. 17, but there will also be an array of things to keep fans busy until then, including a tour of the team's locker room, football drills and a stage that will have entertainment throughout along with vendors.

One of the highlights of the entertainment on stage will be an appearance from head coach Doug Pederson and select

Jaguars players, as well as Jaxson de Ville and the Roar cheerleaders.

The Jaguars will have more information in the coming weeks about player appearances during the event and a bevy of ways fans can win prizes.

Tickets for the event are free but will be needed in order to enter, so anyone wanting to go should go to jaguars.com/draft/party and click on the link to reserve their spots.

Parking is also free for the event and will be available lot E, lot J, lot P and the Shipyards. Each of the parking lots will open at 6 p.m.

This season will also mark the Jaguars 30th as a franchise and they have asked fans to go online and vote between four different logos that will be used to commemorate the special anniversary.

Fans have until April 10 to vote for their favorite design and the one with the most votes will be the one used by the team.

The winning logo will be announced live on the night about 10 minutes prior to the draft getting underway at 8 p.m.

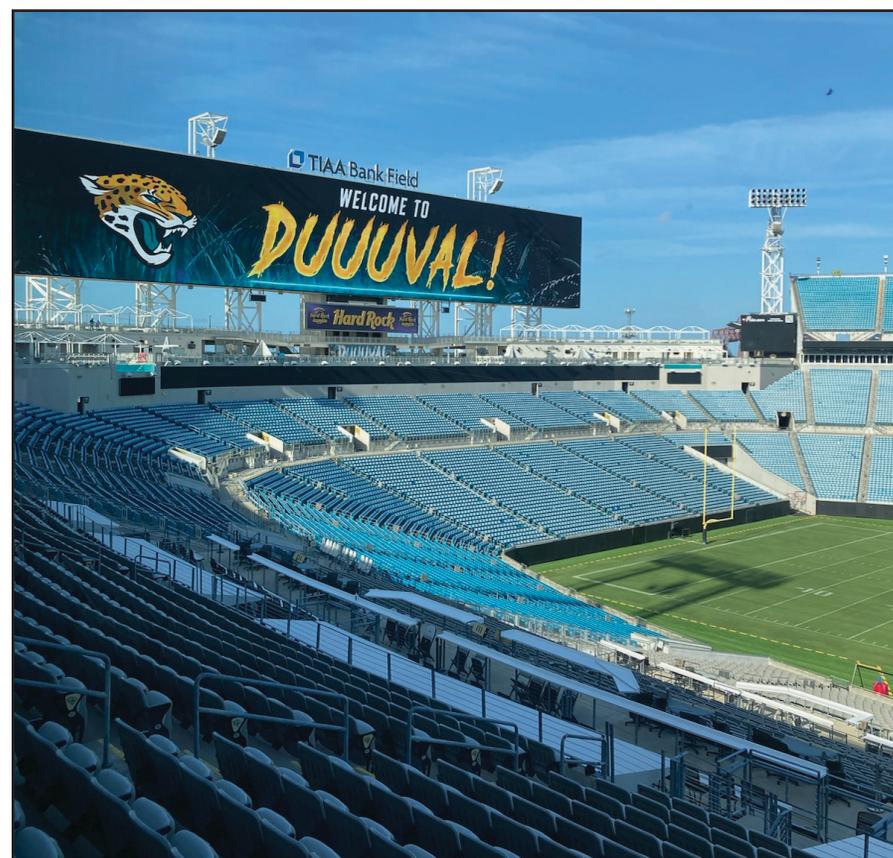


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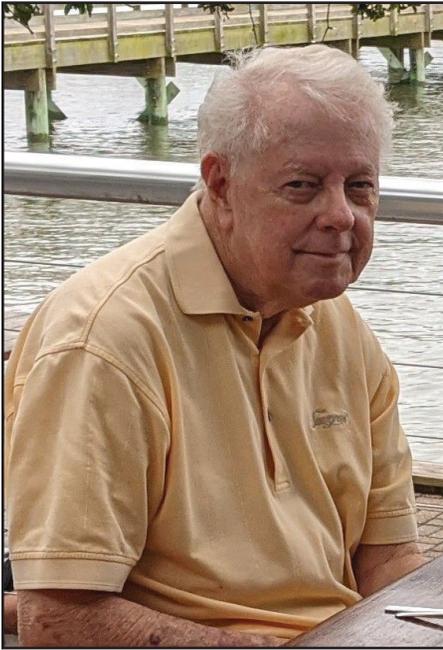






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OBITUARIES



Joseph Stanley Ballenger

Joseph Stanley Ballenger, age 84, passed away on February 2, 2024 at the McGraw Hospice Center, Jacksonville, FL. Stan was born in Lakeland, FL to the late Donald and Mary Ballenger.

Stan was raised in Lakeland and graduated from Lakeland High School. After graduation he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on the USS F.D. Roosevelt (CVA-42) for one of his tours of duty. He spent his last tour of duty at the Anacostia

Naval Photographic Center, Washington, D.C. There he met his wife to be, Zee. They dated for three months and were planning to have their wedding in her home town the following year when his Navy duty would be completed. Stan had other plans. He “convinced” Zee to marry him after three months saying they could save on taxes if they married before the end of the year. They were married at the Naval Anacostia Chapel on November 11, 1961 and were together 62 years.

After his five years Naval service ended in 1962, Stan and Zee moved to his home state of Florida. He went to work for Bryn-Alan Studios, a Tampa area photography business specializing in portrait photography, high school yearbook photos, clubs and sports. After training, he was transferred to Jacksonville to become manager of that local studio. Stan worked hard and developed new businesses for the company. He was promoted to vice president of the Southeast Division area. He truly loved his work and retired after 42 years with the company. In 1986, Stan and Zee moved from Jacksonville to Ponte Vedra Beach.

“Stan the tenor,” as many people referred to him, was blessed by God with a beautiful singing voice. He started singing at a young age and had been singing up until Alzheimer disease took away his memory. Stan sang with the Jacksonville Symphony Chorus for several years. He sang with several Church choirs over his lifetime and for 25 years sang in the choir at Christ Episcopal Church, Ponte Vedra Beach, where he and Zee were parishioners. He acted and sang in many plays and little theaters. Music played a major

role in his life.

Stan enjoyed sports but had a love/hate relationship with his game of golf. In fact, if the lakes on the Sawgrass golf course were drained, many of his golf clubs would be scattered around where he threw them. He did enjoy playing tennis competitively on a team for a while, and for fun with friends and Zee.

Stan was a man of faith. He was a loyal friend. He loved people and was beloved by many for his happy smile, twinkling eyes and fantastic wit. He was a generous, compassionate man who will be fondly remembered by many friends and family.

Stan is survived by his loving wife, Zee; his beloved son, John; his sister, Wanda; his brothers, Freddie and David; and his brother-in-law, Warren Samuel and wife, Wren. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews and his cousin Spud with whom he used to hunt.

A Celebration of Life Service for Stan will be held on April 12, 2024 at 11 a.m. at Christ Episcopal Church, Ponte Vedra Beach with a reception to follow in the fellowship hall. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Christ Episcopal Church, Community Hospice and Palliative Care or the Alzheimer’s Association.

Please sign the online guestbook at www.pontevedravalley.com.



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DEATH NOTICES

Walter A. Colvin

Walter A. Colvin, 81, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died March 28, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

Grace Adelaide Griffin Ferranti

Grace Adelaide Griffin Ferranti, 75, of Jacksonville, Florida, died March 28, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

Jeanne Marie Gibbs

Jeanne Marie Gibbs, 97, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died March 30, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

Patricia S. Kapeghian

Patricia S. Kapeghian, 77, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died March 25, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

Ernest Paul Maier

Ernest Paul Maier, 84, of Jacksonville, Florida, died March 28, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

Regina Peters

Regina Peters, 87, of Jacksonville, Florida, died March 25, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

Harry Richard Reed

Harry Richard Reed, 82, of Jacksonville, Florida, died March 29, 2024. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

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Delores Barr Weaver designates \$1M for North Florida Land Trust

Funding to help preserve land, leverage additional funding

North Florida Land Trust has announced that Delores Barr Weaver has established the North Florida Land Trust Fund at The Community Foundation to benefit and support the work of the nonprofit land conservation organization. Weaver has designated a \$1 million grant from the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Funds to be distributed to the trust over the next 10 years to help fund land purchases.

“This generous gift that Delores Barr Weaver has invested in us will allow us to continue our work to save Florida’s natural spaces because it is now or never,” said Allison DeFoor, trust president. “We are celebrating our 25th anniversary in

2024, and this gift is a great way to start the year. Delores’s devotion to making the world a better place is outstanding. She has built a legacy of commitment to community, and her kindness and generosity will be felt for generations to come.”

North Florida Land Trust will receive up to \$100,000 a year through 2034 from the fund to help pay for the preservation of conservation lands. As the trust increases its fundraising revenue to match federal and state grants, the fund will help the nonprofit launch and leverage additional funding from other sources. The trust will need to raise about \$15 million in private support to fulfill the match requirements over the next few years.

Weaver established the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund 12 years ago to support many causes in the community. Over the past year, she has worked with

staff at The Community Foundation to make grants both locally and beyond Northeast Florida.

“Since my earliest involvement, I have felt connected to NFLT’s mission of preservation and celebration. Their work is not only centered on safeguarding natural places but helps people enjoy these areas and hear the stories of the preserved land,” said Weaver. “The work of NFLT will continue to span generations. Joined by many others, I can play a part in preserving our treasured natural spaces, which enrich our lives in so many ways.”

The Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund has been a supporter of the trust for many years. She has been instrumental in supporting projects, including the trust’s Bogey Creek Preserve, the Spanish-American War Fort, which is now a part of the National Park Service, and Little Nana Dune in American Beach.

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Photos by Susan Griffin

The 2023 St. Augusting Food + Wine Festival.

St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival gears up for 2024 event

The St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival has added two Epicurean Master Classes to the schedule of events on May 10, which will take place at Publix's Upstairs Tasting Deck near World Golf Village, at 170 Village Commons Drive in St. Augustine. The first class will be a wine pairing with charcuterie and cheese and the second class will be a Veterans United craft brewery tasting and pairing.

The festival announced that St. Johns Food Service is an official food service

partner, sponsoring the Harvest Awards and People's Choice Harvest Awards, along with Jacksonville Magazine. St. Johns Food Service is a local, St. Augustine-based food purveyor, celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. A special anniversary celebration is planned to take place at the festival's grand tasting for the company's customers and special guests.

St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival 2024 Schedule of Events include:

- TV personality and celebrity chef

Tiffany Derry participating in several events including Smoke on the Walk and hosting a cooking demonstration at the Saturday grand tasting's Publix cooking demo stage.

- Wednesday, May 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.: "River Walk Tastings" in the historic district at San Sebastian Winery and the Homewood Suites St. Augustine San Sebastian; souvenir glass, with trolley shuttle, live music and food and drink tastings at both venues. The progressive

tasting tours will start at both locations this year. Taste delicious bites from La Cocina International Restaurant and more.

- Thursday, May 9, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.: "Harvest Awards & Tastings" at Bazaar Lincoln, 550 Outlet Mall Blvd., St. Augustine. This is an opportunity to taste some of Northeast Florida's best restaurants, presented by St. Johns Food Service and Jacksonville Magazine. A curated

EVENT continues on Page 11




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Event

Continued from 10

group of the area’s best restaurants have been invited to participate in this event. A group of culinary judges will officiate as the restaurants compete for a Harvest Award, which requires the tasting dish to incorporate the use of a local ingredient. Guests will receive a wine glass to enjoy tasting wines and the festival’s official beverages, located throughout the Bozard Lincoln showroom.

- Friday, May 10, 11 a.m. to noon: “Epicurean Master Classes” at Publix, 170 Village Commons Drive, St. Augustine. Wine pairing with charcuterie and cheese, Veterans United craft brewery tasting and pairing.

- Friday, May 10, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.: “Smoke on the Walk,” presented by the Florida Times-Union/Jacksonville.com and the The St. Augustine Record/staugustine.com, will be held at the Walk of Champions, 1 World Golf Place, St. Augustine. This all-inclusive barbecue extravaganza is a showcase of the Southeast’s most celebrated pitmasters and grill masters with wine, beer and spirits with live music from Remedy Tree. Enjoy unlimited beverage tastings in a souvenir glass, along with delicious grilled, smoked and roasted gourmet barbeque bites, all included with ticket price.

- Saturday, May 11, 2-5 p.m.: “St.



Photo by Susan Griffin

The 2023 St. Augusting Food + Wine Festival. Augustine Food + Wine Festival, Grand Tasting” will be held on the Walk of Champions, 1 World Golf Place, St. Augustine. All-inclusive food and drink tasting tickets, a fun afternoon of culinary and beverage tastings with live music in the lakefront surroundings of the Walk of Champions, the centerpiece of World Golf Village. Tickets include a souvenir cup for unlimited beverage tastings from hundreds of wine, beer and spirit exhibitors, artisans, Publix cooking demo stage, Jacksonville Magazine music stage with Chillula, St. Johns Food Service and Jacksonville Magazine’s People’s Choice

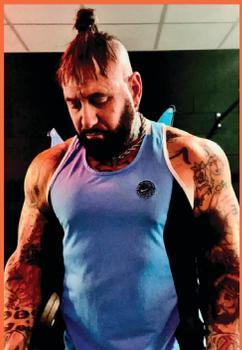
Harvest Awards and more.

- Sunday, May 12, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 1-3 p.m.: “Sunday Mother’s Day Jazz Brunch” (a family-friendly event) at the St. Johns County Convention Center, 500 S. Legacy Trail, St. Augustine. The Sunday Mother’s Day Jazz Brunch is one like no other with an all-inclusive priced ticket featuring live music, brunch buffet with carving station, indulgent sides, made-to-order omelet station, seafood station and a variety of desserts. Bloody Mary bar, champagne, mimosas and a host of unlimited beverage stations from the festival’s partners include wine, beer,

spirits beverage-tasting stations inside the brunch — coffee, iced tea and soft drinks beverages included. In addition to moms receiving a rose upon arrival, the entire family will enjoy being spoiled on Mother’s Day and this festival finale event.

The St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival, named “One of Florida’s Top 10 Food & Wine Festivals” by USA Today, will take place on Florida’s Historic Coast, May 8-12. The St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival, presented by Publix, will once again be a showcase of culinary, beverage and culture that highlights celebrity guest chefs, local chefs, celebrity winemakers/proprietors, live music, artisans, farmers, local craft spirits and beers, along with renowned wine, spirits and beer brands from around the globe. The festival offers a wide variety of events for all tastebuds and budgets, from large scale tasting events to intimate learning experiences. The festival is made possible in part by support from St. Johns Cultural Council, Florida’s Historic Coast: St. Augustine/Ponte Vedra and a 2024 St. Johns County Tourist Development Grant.

The festival’s primary official nonprofit partner is Vilano Beach Main Street, a local St. Augustine, 501(c)3 organization. The festival donates a portion of ticket sales and 100% of the Main Event’s silent auction proceeds directly to Vilano Beach Main Street.



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Inaugural Ladybug Race Event set for April 28

Promises day of activities and sailing

St. Augustine Sailing will hold its inaugural Ladybug Race Event on April 28. And it's not just a race; it's a community-driven initiative aimed at supporting the Women On the Water (WOW!) program.

While the event is organized in support of women in sailing, it is open to all regardless of gender.

The Ladybug Race Event promises an exhilarating day filled with activities for sailors and sailing enthusiasts alike. Taking place at St. Augustine Sailing, the event will feature a mini boat show showcasing Jeanneau Sun Odyssey models ranging from 35 feet to 44 feet along with a Lagoon 40. Attendees can explore these models and engage in various on-dock activities from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A series of workshops and seminars will be held throughout the day, covering topics ranging from marine weather forecasting to winch maintenance, and from cruising essentials to writing and publishing while aboard. Renowned speakers including Chris Parker, John Gaughan and Behan Grifford will share their expertise and insights. For those seeking hands-on experience, an Intro to Sailing course will be offered at

multiple times during the day. The highlight of the event, the Ladybug Race, will feature both performance and cruiser class racing, with a special category for All Female Crew competing for the Ladybug Trophy.

"We're thrilled to host the Ladybug Race Event and support the Women on the Water program," said Toste Muniz, office manager at St. Augustine Sailing. "This event embodies our commitment to fostering community involvement and promoting inclusivity in sailing."

Attendees can enjoy VIP Spectator viewing for a nominal fee, which includes light refreshments. The ladies from the WOW! Program will be flying the Ladybug Spinnaker supplied by Ullman Sails Florida. Tickets for workshops, seminars and on-water experiences can be purchased online. The Awards Dinner will be hosted by Outer Banks Boil Company – St. Augustine and available for purchase, with discounts offered for event participants. All tickets are available for purchase at www.sta-sail.com/ladybug-race.

St. Augustine Sailing Enterprises offers luxury sailing adventures and experiences for all levels of enthusiasts. From private charters to sailing lessons and membership options, St. Augustine Sailing provides customized experiences tailored to fit any occasion and budget.

For more information, go to sta-sail.com.

Spring Harvest Dinner event to benefit food pantry

Heart and Soulfood Eatery in downtown Palatka will host the Spring Harvest Dinner on May 4 as part of the inaugural Palatka Food, Wine & Art Festival.

A benefit for Bread of Life Food Pantry in Palatka, the event will feature food by Chef Garrett Schiavone of Reel Peel Pizza, Chef Paul Brock of The Feed Mill, Chef Jimmy Hughes of Velchhoff's Corner and Chef Tyrone Bennett of Heart and Soulfood Eatery.

The farm-to-table menu will feature dishes sourced locally, including meat and produce from The Feed Mill in St. Augustine. Guests will enjoy a culinary journey that goes from winter to the spring harvest season with appetizers, entrees, craft cocktails and wines inspired by Mediterranean influences.

An art and vendor showcase from 4 to 5:30 p.m. will include charcuterie, beer, wine and live entertainment. The dinner will take place from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Heart and Soulfood Eatery, 308 St. Johns Ave., Palatka.

RSVP on eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/palatka-food-wine-art-fest-tickets-837030048407>.

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Plenty of eggs, smiles to go around at county egg hunts



St. Johns County Parks and Recreation held several Easter egg hunts the week leading up to Easter. The following photos are of some of the families that enjoyed the egg hunt at Treaty Park in St. Augustine, as they had the opportunity to get a full basket of eggs and lots of memorable times.

Contributed photos



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Hastings Cabbage, Potato and Bacon Festival set for April 27-28

The annual Hastings Cabbage, Potato and Bacon Festival returns April 27-28. Held in the heart of downtown Hastings, the festival celebrates the town's agricultural roots through creativity and good, old-fashioned fun.

Experience the flavors of Hastings with four distinct culinary events.

From 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., festivalgoers will sample an array of delectable dishes prepared by popular local chefs, including Hari Pulapaka, Genie McNally, Michael Lugo, Ned Pollack, Ellie Schultze, Dejuan Roy, Sebastian Sikora and Rebecca Reed. Each chef will craft a plate using cabbage, potatoes and bacon. Tickets to the Taste of Hastings are \$35 for general admission and \$100 for the VIP experience and may be purchased online at www.HastingsFL.org/meet-the-chefs.

Sunday, April 28, features the prestigious American Culinary Federation Sanctioned Cooking Competition, where three accomplished chefs will showcase their skill and artistry using any or all of the three main ingredients. With all the flash and sizzle of televised cooking competitions, these chefs will race against

the clock and each other to impress the judges. The competition begins at 1 p.m. and tickets are \$20 and may be purchased at zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/0ecac79f-1be9-4556-8f1f-74cd37898fe5.

The Spud Run and Cabbage Crawl Fun Run on Saturday, April 27, is a hallmark of the festival. Athletes of all ages can take on the 5K, 10K, 15K or 1-mile run. No matter the distance, runners, walkers and joggers will enjoy the picturesque scenery on a course that meanders through Hastings. Prices vary depending on distance and registration period. Runners can register here.

The Great Hastings Mow Down Lawn Mower Races are a sight to be seen! With the course running straight down North Main Street, there's plenty of action. Racers can compete in two racing classes, open stock adult (ages 18 and older) and young rider open stock (ages 15-17), with heats running from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. Mowers can then don their best decorations and join the Mow Down Parade.

A long-standing tradition in the Potato Capital, the Miss Potato Queen Beauty

Pageant is a local favorite. Contestants from surrounding counties participate in age categories from newborns to 23 years of age. The contest spans Saturday and Sunday, with baby to tiny on Saturday, Little Miss to Miss on Sunday.

During the Outdoor Artisans Market, artists, makers and tantalizing bites will line North Main Street from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Vendors will

offer everything from curated clothing collections and jewelry to flowers and art. The best local food trucks are serving fall-off-the-bone barbecue, fried chicken, seafood, lemonade and more. The atmosphere is complete with live music throughout the weekend at the Bazaar Stage, featuring favorites like Bad Dog Mama, Damon Slaughter and Billy Buchanan.

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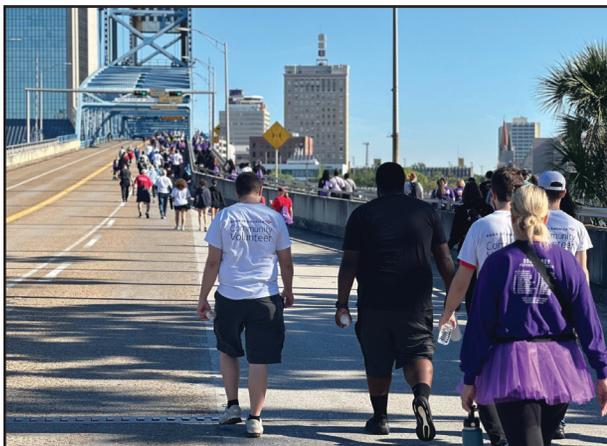


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Hubbard House Walk Impact Zone

Walk helps survivors of domestic violence

More than 1,500 people gathered March 30 to show support for local survivors of domestic violence at Hubbard House's 15th Annual Stand Up & Stride Domestic Violence Awareness Walk. The event raises not only awareness, but funds for Hubbard House's lifesaving, life-changing shelter and services.

"To see the passion here at this event, to feel your energy, and to know how strong your support is for local survivors of domestic violence and of Hubbard House ... thank you!" said Hubbard House CEO Gail Patin.

A highlight of this year's walk was the Impact Zone, an interactive display

where event attendees joined to honor the 4,828 survivors and children Hubbard House served last year. This was accomplished by inviting Walk attendees to write a note on a "sun" and hang it on the display, with a "sun" to represent each person served.

While this is the 15th annual walk, Hubbard House has served the Jacksonville area since 1976. Patin credits those decades of service to the hard-working advocates at Hubbard House, and to the community that continues to stand with Hubbard House.

"When we stride together, as a community, the story of one survivor's strength

becomes the courage for us all to stand up and say, 'No more domestic violence,'" Patin said.

This event was free to attend for the community, but money raised directly supports shelter and services for local survivors of domestic violence and their families. It costs about \$75 to provide one night of shelter and services to one person, and Hubbard House provided 36,635 shelter nights last fiscal year. The total amount raised through the walk is still being counted, but it will exceed Hubbard House's \$100,000 goal.

"With my whole heart, to our community ... thank you!" Patin said.

Another feature of the walk was the Family Fun Zone, with many family-friendly games and prizes. Hubbard House staff and volunteers also spoke with community members throughout the event to raise awareness about Hubbard House's free, confidential resources, including emergency shelter, counseling, job coaching and more.

For any survivor of domestic violence who needs support, Hubbard House is here to help. Speak with trained, compassionate advocates through the 24/7 Hubbard House Hotline at 904-354-3114 or the 24/7 Hubbard House Textline at 904-210-3698.

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Council on Aging reviews year and envisions future

Nonprofit organization St. Johns County Council on Aging held its annual meeting of the COA Board of Directors on March 21 at COA's River House in St. Augustine. Members of the public attended the meeting with the board of directors and COA staff.

New members who had joined the board over the course of the previous year, Linda Ducat, Sheriff Robert Hardwick, Roger Kline and Casey Van Rysdam, were introduced. Dr. Todd Batenhorst presented the slate of nominated officers for the coming year. Elected were President Steve Harrison, Vice President Michele Carmines, Secretary Len Tucker and Treasurer Casey Van Rysdam.

COA Executive Director Becky Yanni reported increases in services and programs across the board in 2023. Notably, participation at COA's senior centers increased 53% and River House lifelong learning program participation increased 76%. Sunshine Center adult day care participation increased 11%, and participation in COA's Integrative Memory Enhancement Program increased 60%. Nutrition services, including home-delivered Meals on Wheels and congregate meals, increased by 11%.

Yanni detailed plans to provide greater safety and accessibility to COA's Coastal Community Center in St. Augustine. The Shelter and Shade project will result in an elevated, covered and safer bus pull-



Contributed photo

The St. Johns County Council on Aging board of directors.

through entry to the center. The phased renovation plans include sidewalks that will make pedestrian traffic from nearby neighborhoods easier and safer to traverse. Remaining funding required for the project is being sought from members of the community.

"We look forward to working closely with our partners — our donors, funders, volunteers and all COA champions — to continue providing the quality programs and services our community's elders so need and deserve," Yanni said.

For more information on supporting the

Shelter and Shade project and COA's work in service to older adults and caregivers in St. Johns County, contact COA's Amy Robinson at 904-209-3700 or arobinson@coasjc.org. For information on the comprehensive programs and services COA offers, go to coasjc.org.



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Earth Day

Continued from 1

up, as parking lots, sidewalks and landscape beds in the vicinity will also be part of the clean-up scope.

The public is welcome to come and take part in the mass clean-up and will just need to look for the Beaches Go Green tent to sign up upon arrival.

All clean-up supplies will be provided but anyone is welcome to bring their own reusable clean-up supplies as well.

The amount of trash collected along the beach will be weighed at the end of the day to help quantify the difference that was made thanks to the clean-up efforts.

Prizes will be given out to the people that



find the “strangest items” while cleaning and to the person who collects the most cigarette butts. Those wishing to collect prizes must be present to win.

The event will be put on thanks to a part-

nership of several local eco friendly groups coming together and spreading the word of the cause that they feel strongly about.

As well as Beaches Go Green, other organizations heavily involved include Sisters of the Sea, which is an annual pro-am surf classic held locally and an all-female surf club.

One of the ways Sisters of the Sea looks to give back throughout the year is by holding a surf session and beach clean-up every first Sunday of the month at 8 a.m. at the Jacksonville Beach Pier, which includes their next event scheduled for April 7.

Another local business looking to do their part is Eco Eclectic, which is a zero-waste shop in Jacksonville that sells items, such as plants, books, records and clothing,

all with a sense of being eco-friendly in mind.

Both locations will offer a beach yoga session courtesy of the nonprofit organization Yoga 4 Change, which uses yoga to foster holistic wellbeing for individuals and communities through evidence-based and trauma-informed curriculum.

The clean-up will begin at 9 a.m. and go on until 11 a.m. Free food will be available for all those who take part and some prizes will be given out by local businesses associated with the event.

Other sponsors helping make the clean-up a reality are THE PLAYERS, Surfing's Evolution and Preservation Foundation, Patriot Rail and Donovan Air, Electric & Plumbing.

MOSH receives \$1.5M donation from Davis family

The Museum of Science & History (MOSH) recently announces significant donations for the MOSH Genesis capital campaign totaling \$1.5 million from the Davis family. The donations include \$1 million from James E. and A. Dano Davis Family Charities and \$500,000 from Jill and Jed Davis. The combined gifts will be honored through the naming of the front lobby of the new museum upon its completion.

The Davis family's philanthropic efforts span multiple generations, creating a legacy of transformative support for nonprofit organizations across the First Coast. Their philanthropic contributions primarily focus on health-care-related projects, at-risk youth and advancing local education opportunities. These gifts include the Mayo Clinic, The Mary Lou Davis Endowment

for Women's Heart Initiative at Ascension St. Vincent's, the Davis College of Business at Jacksonville University, The Mary Lou Davis Family Life Center at Riverside Presbyterian Day School, the Jacksonville Zoo and Seamark Ranch.

Jill Davis currently serves as the vice chair of the MOSH Board of Trustees and is also the chair of the MOSH Genesis capital campaign cabinet. Her service is fueled by her desire to generate philanthropic support for a brand-new, world-class museum in Jacksonville that is accessible to all members of the community, thus reinforcing the Davis family's collective interest in pledging a substantial gift.

“As a multi-generation Jacksonville family, we take pride in supporting organizations that elevate the quality of life for all

families in Northeast Florida,” said Jed Davis, president and CEO of the Davis Family Office. “A project as impactful and far-reaching as this one requires support from across the philanthropic community — including personal contributions, family charities and corporate leaders. We are proud to align our family's name with this important cultural institution and look forward to remaining engaged in its future growth and success.”

The MOSH Genesis capital campaign supports plans for MOSH to relocate to a new building on the Northbank of the St. Johns River in Downtown Jacksonville. In May 2023, legislation for a disposition and development agreement for 2.5 acres of city-owned land at the Shipyards property, commonly known as Lot X, was signed into law. The legislation grants MOSH a 40-year ground lease of the land for \$1 per year; design of the park and the Riverwalk; and other agreements related to the creation of a new museum and surrounding park spaces.

MOSH has operated in its current location on the Southbank of downtown Jacksonville since 1969. The museum's operations have outgrown the current 77,000-square-foot facility; building a new museum will significantly expand the organization's capacity to serve more students

and visitors. Plans for the new museum comprise approximately 100,000 square feet across three floors, with the option to build a future expansion of an additional 30,000 square feet.

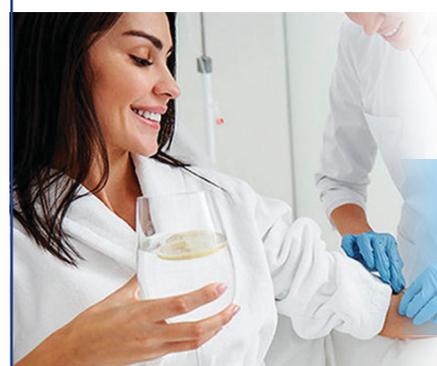
“Working side-by-side with Jill this past year on the MOSH Genesis capital campaign, I am inspired by her personal dedication to bringing a world-class museum to Northeast Florida,” said Maureen Mercho, chief development officer of MOSH. “She has selflessly contributed her time, resources and relationships to this effort. Her passion is shared by Jed and the entire Davis family. By supporting this capital campaign, the Davis family is breaking down barriers to lifelong learning. We are grateful to count the Davises among the many Jacksonville families who are joining us in bringing this vision to life.”

“The Davis family's combined impact on Northeast Florida's philanthropic community is undeniable,” said William Magevney, chair of the MOSH Board of Trustees. “Their name carries a strong reputation not only for their business success, but also for an exemplary level of active engagement in this region's quality of life. We are deeply grateful to honor their generosity through the naming of the lobby at our new museum.”

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Members of the Davis family gather for a photo.

Contributed photo

THE RECORDER KIDS' SUMMER FUN GUIDE



THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024 • THE RECORDER

Flowers receive full focus this spring with Zoo and Gardens' Botanical Bash

By Anthony Richards

The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is more than just animals and shares in the wonders of nature as a whole, which will be in full focus during the Botanical Bash scheduled to take place from April 13 to May 12.

There are plenty of fun and interactive exhibits and events going on throughout the spring as the beauty of the world's flowers will be on full display.

What makes the Botanical Bash so special is that the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is one of the country's only combined zoo and botanical gardens.

The month-long showcase will be held daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and will start with a horticulture plant sale April 13 and 14.

The plant sale will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. where residents can come and purchase various plants and interact with the zoo's horticulture staff who will be there to answer any questions.

There are plenty of unique things families can do together as adults and children can have fun with together, including the seed bomb activity, which will be held every Saturday and Sunday.

As the name implies, a "seed bomb" will be made by attendees using dirt, clay and seeds. The seed bombs made can then be taken home and planted as they will all be flowers that are wildly grown in Florida.

Another interactive way to help educate about local plants in the area will be the native plant scavenger hunt.

On Arbor Day, which is April 26 this year, the zoo will be giving out tree saplings that can also be planted at their home, as the zoo looks to do its part to educate and preserve the importance of trees.



Photos by Anthony Richards

Botanical Bash at Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is scheduled to take place from April 13 to May 12.

Several lecture series will also be held from guests who specialize within the field of botany.

The lectures will be each Thursday and will be held in the Samburu room at the main camp.

There will be four separate lectures, including Jody Willis with the Florida Native Plant Society, who will speak about what is native on April 18.

Urban forestry will be the discussion point on April 25 as Joe Anderson will go in-depth about the topic as a forester with JEA.

Water conservation will be the focus during a lecture by St. Johns River Water Management District's Deirdre Irwin on May 2, and wrapping up the lectures will be Lindsey Spears with Paintings and Stuff, who will discuss

the various art options one can place in their garden.

Just like the focus of the first two days was the plant sale, the final two days will be an Art in the Garden Festival on May 11 and 12 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

More than 30 vendors will be part of the festival, as some of the forms of art on display to be shown in the garden will vary.

Variety of summer camps offered at the link

By Shaun Ryan

The link, the space that inspires in the heart of Nocatee, is once again inviting kids to a summer "packed with creativity, adventure and skill development, setting the stage for a lifetime of success."

The unique facility has announced its roster of summer camps, offering a wide variety of experiences between the end of May and the first week of August. And though young participants will be having lots of fun, making friends and forging great memories, they will also be acquiring important life skills.

Featured camps include: Creative Culinary; LEGO Robotics, Drones, Carrera Cars and Sphero; Let's Get Creative Art



File photo

The link is located at 425 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra.

Camp; Kids in the Kitchen; Fencing; and Dance & Tumble.

Here's a quick look at these activities.

Creative Culinary: Children between the ages of 5 and 13 will don their chef's

hats and cook up some great experiences in the kitchen. There are six multi-day camps that run between May 28 and Aug. 9.

LEGO Robotics, Drones, Carrera Cars and Sphero: Technical whizzes between the ages of 6 and 12 will engage in a range of STEAM activities, running missions and learning to code. There are 11 multi-day sessions that run between May 28 and Aug. 9.

Let's Get Creative Art Camp: Kids between the ages of 5 and 12 will create a wide range of art works in this fun-filled camp. There are six sessions that run between May 28 and Aug. 9.

Kids in the Kitchen: Kids between the ages of 5 and 12 will have lots of fun

building their culinary skills and learning such topics as etiquette and kitchen safety and organization. There are three sessions between June 10 and July 19.

Dance & Tumble: Kids between the ages of 5 and 12 will learn to dance and tumble, but they will also play games and make crafts. There are two sessions between June 24 and July 12.

Olympic Style Fencing: Kids between the ages of 6 and 13 will learn from an expert in this, one of the oldest Olympic sports. They will learn basic skills, technique and the rules. There are two sessions between June 10 and June 21.

To learn more about the link's summer camps or to sign up, go to thelink.zone/summercamps.

Florida Theatre presents variety of children's shows upcoming

By Anthony Richards

For decades Theatreworks offered some of the best national and international children's theatre programs around, and now that tradition has continued the last several years since the once independent organization merged with the Florida Theatre in 2019.

That has been the case for the 2024 season of shows as well, with a variety of acts ready to be presented to children this spring and summer.

Rosie Revere, Engineer and Friends will take place April 15 from 10 a.m. to noon, which is sure to be a popular field trip request as it is recommended for grades kindergarten through fourth grade.

Some of the curriculum themes it hits

on combine both the arts and sciences, as it uniquely features STEM-related material thanks to its use of several engineer and scientist characters included in the show.

Another production included as part of its "study guide" line up will be Cat Kid Comic Club, which will be held on May 3 and from 10 a.m. to noon but this material is suited for first grade through fifth graders.

However, the fun and show selections do not just stop because the school year ends, and in fact it picks up with even more shows to choose from during the summer, as Zak Morgan kick things off on June 25 at 11 a.m. with a free summer theatre production followed by another show on June 26 at 1 p.m.

His show "Zak Morgan: The Wonder of it All," aims to point out how fun science

can be and he does this through his unique humor and creative wordplay, which makes the children in the audience think about the curious ways science has an impact in their daily lives, which they may not have taken the time to realize before.

He also uses technology on stage to help teach children about various things, such as pitch, frequency and magnetic fields, and they will get to see electrons on display with his plasma ball and Van de Graaf generator demonstrations that are also sure to create laughter and learning.

Billy Jonas then will take the stage with his free show called "Who's Gonna Make Our Music?," which will take place on July 2 at 11 a.m. and July 3 at 1 p.m.

He dives into the world of music with his

concert, which will include sing-alongs and bang-alongs, as he essentially becomes a walking and talking percussion instrument with a guitar in his hands.

Through his show, he hopes to prove that everyone in attendance is a musician in their own way and audience participation throughout is the name of the game.

Finally, the free summer theatre series will be capped by "Alice Rocks Wonderland," which is a spinoff of the famed "Alice and Wonderland" written by Lewis Carroll, but with a unique rock music twist designed to get the entire crowd out of their seats and dancing along.

"Alice Rocks Wonderland" will have a pair of performances July 9, with one at 11 a.m. followed by another at 1 p.m.

Summer crafts families can enjoy together

During the summer, the weather can be unpredictable. When rainy weather hits, these fun summer craft ideas can keep everyone entertained.

• **Friendship bracelets:** There have been different iterations of friendship bracelets for every generation. With some general craft supplies, such as embroidery thread, beads, plastic lanyards, or other jewelry-making materials, kids can make and share a variety of friendship bracelets.

• **Seashell creatures:** At the next beach excursion, pick up differently shaped shells. They can be painted and glued together to resemble different animals or whatever designs one can imagine.

• **Dreamcatchers:** With some twigs, yarn and feathers, crafters can make dreamcatchers to hang bedside.

• **Sunprints:** Check out the craft store for a special light-sensitive solution that can be painted onto thick craft paper. Set various

natural items on top (such as fern boughs, shells, feathers, and more) and let the sun do its work. You'll ultimately be left with some beautiful silhouettes.

• **Painted stones:** Kids can have fun gathering smooth pebbles from trails or at the shores of lakes. They can be painted with various designs or sweet sentiments, only to be left around the neighborhood for others to discover.

• **Sea glass jewelry:** An adult can use a

very thin drill bit to make holes in sea glass remnants that washed up on beaches. Feed through earring hooks or chains to create one-of-a-kind jewelry.

• **Dyed shoes or accessories:** Use commercially produced or homemade dyes made from teabags, berry juice, turmeric powder, or more to color certain items. Dress up canvas sneakers with summertime hues, or make colorful bandanas to help keep you cool.

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Camps promise a summer of fun

Summer is fast approaching and for many young people, that means signing up for camp. Here's a helpful list of some of the season's top offerings.

ST. AUGUSTINE AMPHITHEATRE

After a four-year hiatus, The Friends of the St. Augustine Amphitheatre will once again offer Camp Rock for teens 12 to 18 years of age.

Camp Rock is a one-of-a-kind band experience. It focuses on rock music instruction and organization. Kids can focus on guitar, bass, drums, keyboards or vocals; they must have some experience.

Instructors will group students into bands that will perform on the main stage of the St. Augustine Amphitheatre and, through a partnership with Jim Stafford of Eclipse Studios, record their songs in a professional recording studio.

Camp Rock will be held July 22-26, with studio time scheduled from July 29 through Aug. 1. The cost is \$300 per camper and includes a nonrefundable \$25 deposit. Fees may be pre-paid on the Friends website at fosaa.org/events.

Scholarships are available; parents and/or guardians should submit a letter explaining why support is needed with their application. To register for Camp Rock 2024, contact camprock@eclipse-record-

ing.com.

THE LINK

The link, 425 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra (Nocatee), is offering several camps between May 28 and Aug. 5. Camps are open to members and non-members. To register, go to thelink.zone/summercamps or call 904-469-0334.

Creative Culinary

Kids will learn to cook and acquire essential life skills, such as kitchen safety, sanitation, proper knife technique and more.

For ages 5-13

There are six sessions, all from 9 a.m. to noon: May 28-31, June 3-7, June 24-28, July 8-12, July 29-Aug. 2, and Aug. 5-9.

LEGO Robotics, Drones, Carrera Cars and Sphero

Led by an experienced coach, this camp offers a hands-on STEAM learning experience that combines play with technology.

For ages 6-12

There are 11 sessions, all from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: May 28-31, June 3-7, June 10-14, June 17-21, June 24-28, July 1-5, July 8-12, July 15-19, July 22-26, July

29-Aug. 2, and Aug. 5-9.

Let's Get Creative Art Camp

A fun-filled camp where kids can unleash their creativity and craft dream designs. Activities include marbling mastery, sugar scrubs and jar art, clothing transformations, resin magic, aromatherapy candle making and colorful abstract art.

For ages 5-12

There are six sessions, all 1-4 p.m.: May 28-31, June 3-7, July 15-19, July 22-26, July 29-Aug. 2, and Aug. 5-9.

Kids In The Kitchen

A blend of fun activities and essential culinary skills. Activities include sample cooking, etiquette, kitchen safety and organization and creativity in cooking.

For ages 5-12

There are three sessions, all from 9 a.m. to noon: June 10-14, June 17-21, and July 15-19.

Dance and Tumble

Kids will have an opportunity to learn and practice their dance and tumble skills, engage in fun games and unleash their creativity with crafts.

For ages 5-12

There are two sessions, both from 9

a.m. to noon: June 24-28 and July 8-12.

Olympic Style Fencing

Learn the craft behind one of the earliest Olympic sports from a fencing expert.

For ages 6-13

There are two sessions, both from 9 a.m. to noon: June 10-14 and June 17-21.

FIRST COAST CULTURAL CENTER

For summer camp information, locations, pricing and registration, go to firstcoastculturalcenter.org/programs-events/art-camps. First Coast Cultural Center is located at 6000B Sawgrass Village Circle, Ponte Vedra Beach.

Art Camps

Students will create both two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art using various tools and techniques. Camps will be offered at two locations: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday at the First Coast Cultural Center and 8:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday at PVPV/Rawlings Elementary School.

For ages 7-12

There are nine weeks of camps, May 28-Aug. 2. Each week has a different

CAMPS continues on Page 23

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Camps

Continued from 22

theme.

"Fairytales"

Campers will create fairytale-inspired art projects, making their own twists on classic stories.

"Dinosaur Mania"

Kids will learn about dinosaurs, make dino-inspired art and make a dinosaur world, which will include a volcano experiment.

"Enchanted Wood"

Participants will create whimsical and nature-inspired art projects.

"Travel to Italy"

The campers will explore the art, culture and history of Italy and create art inspired by their discoveries.

"Magical Creations"

The kids will create "magic" using both their imaginations and a bit of science.

"Explore the Deep Blue"

The focus of this camp is ocean-inspired crafts, stories and songs, with an emphasis on sea creatures and ancient tales of the deep.



"African Safari"

Participants will create projects inspired by the wildlife and art in Africa.

"Art History Detectives"

Campers will explore art and history across time and space to learn techniques and styles from some of the great masters.

"Travel to South America"

Participating children will learn about the art, culture and history of South America. They will also get a chance to learn some Spanish.

Youth Drama and Improv Camp

Seasoned acting coach Sheri Lahres

leads this camp, where kids will learn improvisation, monologues, scene work and more.

The camp will be offered from 9 to 11 a.m. July 29-Aug. 2 at the First Coast Cultural Center.

For ages 8-13

Campers should bring their own snack, lunch and water bottle.

Summer Culinary Camps

Campers will learn kitchen safety, accurate measurements and how to prepare and cook various dishes, including fresh soups and sauces with herbs from the garden. They will also learn dining etiquette and how to "clean as you go."

For ages 6-12

There are four separate weeks of camp: June 3-7, June 17-21, July 1-5 (closed July 4), and July 15-19. All camps run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

YMCA

The Brown Family YMCA is located at 170 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach. For information, go to fcymca.org/locations/ponte-vedra-ymca or call 904-543-9622.

YMCA at Nocatee is located at 400 Colonnade Drive, Ponte Vedra. For information, go to fcymca.org/locations/ymca-at-nocatee or call 904-671-9622.

Summer Day Camp registration is now open. Registration is available online only, and spots are limited.

For ages 5-12 in St. Johns and Duval counties. Dates vary by location. There will be no camp on June 19, July 4 and 5.

Camp activities include: STEM, arts and humanities, character development, welcome and inclusion activities, outdoor games, swimming and more.

Every two weeks, a new theme will help participants learn new skills, build self-confidence and gain a sense of achievement and belonging.

Themes are as follows: Out of this World (May 28-31 and June 3-7), Super Hero Mania (June 10-14 and June 17-21), Dino-mite! (June 24-28 and July 1-3), Spies in Disguise (July 8-12 and July 15-19).

CAMPS continues on Page 25

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THE DISCOVERY SCHOOL
 JUNE 3-7, JUNE 10-14,
 JUNE 17-21, JULY 15-19

J. ALLEN AXSON
 JULY 15-19

JACKSONVILLE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL
 JUNE 10-14, JUNE 24-28, JULY 22-26

JEWISH COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
 JUNE 12-16, JUNE 24-28,
 JULY 8-12, JULY 22-26

SAN JUAN DEL RIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL
 JULY 8-12 & JULY 15-19

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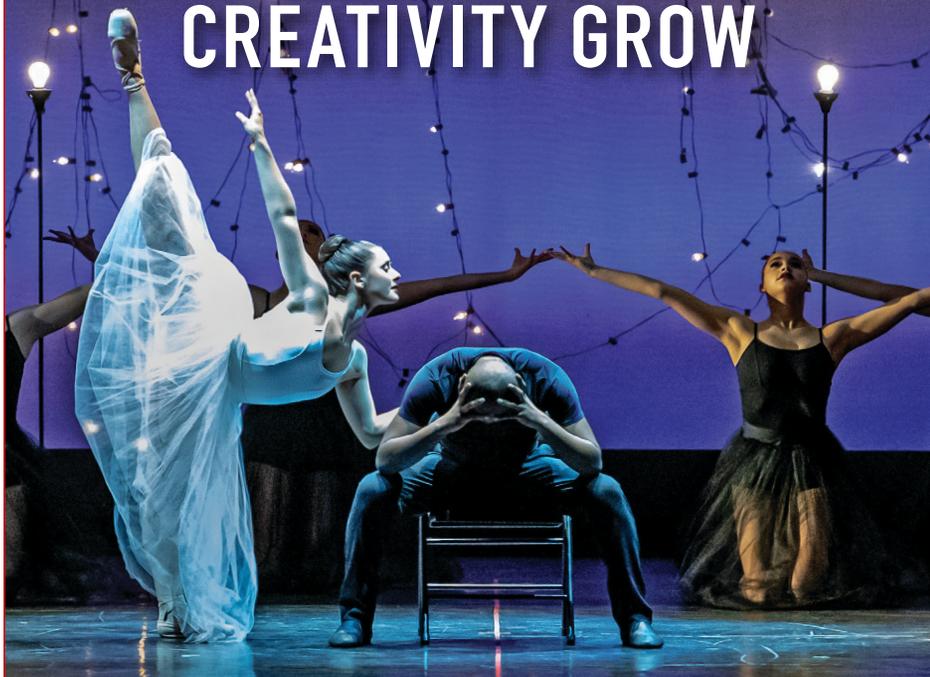
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Florida International United Miss Jr. Preteen 2024 Gianna Capri visits with students at Morning Star School in Jacksonville.

Pageant winner takes the spirit of Aloha to students in Jacksonville school

Gianna Capri, fourth-grade student and Florida International United Miss Jr. Preteen 2024, IUM, spoke at Morning Star School in Jacksonville on March 26 to students in grades nine through 12, as well as students from the elementary level about her message of inclusion and kindness.

“Anthony, MSHS class of 2027, invited his sister, Gianna, to speak with classmates and teachers Monday about her charity work and continuing her Uncle Mike’s mission of living out the love of Christ,” said ninth-grade teacher Laura Brock. “Gianna shared the story of Liho, a dolphin befriended by her uncle that made a lasting impression of kindness. As a reminder of what simple kindness can do, Gianna gifted everyone with a stuffed dolphin. She encouraged all of us to be kind to one another, never fear mistakes and remember we are all loved precisely as we are, for that’s how God made us.”

Gianna brought her same message of compassion to her own class at St. Brendan’s Catholic School in Ormond Beach on March 26. She read the book “We Don’t Eat Our Classmates,” a funny story about a dinosaur named Penelope and her first day of school. Gianna passed out little dinosaurs to her class as a reminder of how to be a good friend.

Gianna talked to all the students at each school about being HEROIC and the International United Miss Scholarship Pageant. HEROIC is the initiative for IUM (International United Miss) and stands for Honesty, Empathy, Respect, Optimism, Integrity and Community.

IUM’s message of leading by example and being a role model for others is some-

thing Gianna’s Uncle Mike would truly appreciate. Wheelchair-bound and non-verbal, Michael Alberico always made a friend and taught those who met him that compassion and kindness come in all forms. Gianna encourages students when she meets with them that people may not all look alike or have the same abilities, but all can have respect and empathy for differences.

International United Miss was founded by Holly Sour and Krisann Binetti in 2016. IUM is a scholarship-style pageant system.

Morning Star School is fully accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference with a mission rooted in the Gospel and strengthened by the sacraments. It was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph, who have been educating students since 1956.

Michael’s ‘Ohana was established in June of 2021 after the death of Michael Alberico a long-time resident of Ormond Beach. Michael’s ‘Ohana raises awareness, funding and gifts for nonprofit organizations especially those within the intellectual developmental disability and other special needs community.

Alberico loved visiting the Hawaiian islands. In honor of Alberico and his passions for the Hawaiian islands Michael’s ‘Ohana was established. Gianna will continue to bring Aloha to the State of Florida while keeping her uncle’s legacy alive.

To get involved with Michael’s ‘Ohana, contact Jennifer Capri at ourohanamichaelalberico@gmail.com. For more information on IUM go to International-unitedmiss.com.

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Camps

Continued from 23

19), Under the Sea (July 22-26 and July 29-Aug. 2, and Spirit Wars (Aug. 5-9).

Camp Immokalee

At YMCA Camp Immokalee, kids get to try new things and make lasting friendships and memories.

- Summer resident camp activities include: archery, arts & crafts, BB's, canoeing, kayaking, tubing, banana boat, outdoor cooking, evening campfires, newspaper, songs and skits, nature and outdoor living skills, team building activities, sports and games, capture the flag and other evening games, zip line and more. There are eight sessions, each with its own theme. Register at ymcacampimmokalee.campbrainregistration.com. Registration is now open for rising second-grade to rising 10th grade students.

- Summer day camp is held in 10 weekly sessions between June 3 and Aug. 9. Each week has a different theme. Camp times are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., and breakfast and lunch are provided. Activities include: archery, target sports, land sports, canoeing/kayaking, swimming, arts & crafts, challenge course & zipline and more. Register at ymcacampimmokalee.campbrainregistration.com. Registration is open for rising first grade to seventh grade students.

For information about resident camp, go to camp.fcymca.org/summer-resident-camp.

For information about day camp, go to camp.fcymca.org/summer-day-camp.

Camp Immokalee is located at 6765 Immokalee Road, Keystone Heights.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

How to find the right fit for summer camp

Many adults fondly recall their days at summer camp. The increase in households with two working parents has made it more important than ever to find a camp to accommodate youngsters who need to remain engaged and entertained throughout over summer vacation. That reality has led to more summer camp options, but it's not always so easy finding one that's the right fit for a child.

No two children are the same and kids change quite a bit as they grow up. So a camp that worked for an older child or even one that accommodated a younger camper may not make the perfect fit this summer. With that in mind, parents can consider these tips to find the right summer camp for their children.

- **Ask around.** Even if no two campers are the same, it can benefit parents to ask around when shopping for a summer camp. Summer camp spots are limited and it's not uncommon for competition for available spaces to develop, which can make it more difficult to gather information. However, ask neighbors whose children have outgrown summer camp if there's one they might recommend (or would not recommend).

- **Pursue a package deal.** Though package deals might not result in lower rates, approaching a camp with the parents of your child's friend or friends may work in your favor. Kids undoubtedly will be more excited about camp if their friends will be there as well. Camp officials may see these quasi-package deals as beneficial and a quick and easy way to fill spots.

- **Ask kids how they want to spend summer.** Specialized camps run the gamut from sports camps focusing on a particular sport to general outdoor recreation camps

to camps that cater to young musicians. More general camps offer a wide range of activities throughout the summer, and that might appeal to children less interested in specialized camps. Ask youngsters for their input before making a final decision. Involve kids in the search by showing them websites of prospective camps and asking them what they think of each one. If attending an in-person consultation, bring kids along so they can form their own impression.

- **Make sure the camp suits your schedule.** Kids' preferences are not the only opinions to consider. In households with two working parents, moms and dads must find a camp that aligns with their work schedule. Many camps offer half-day sessions and/or full-day sessions, but some offer just one or the other. If parents need full-day sessions, they might need to begin their search early to ensure they can secure a spot before they fill up.

- **Identify what you can afford.** Camp costs vary significantly, so parents should identify how much they can afford before they begin their search. Doing so may eliminate various camps right off the bat, saving parents precious time as they try to find a camp for their children before spots fill up. Many towns offer local camps at schools, and these may be an affordable option. Parents also should know that many camps allow them to pick certain weeks or days of the week a child will attend rather than insisting kids attend camp for the duration of the summer.

Summer camp season is right around the corner. Parents and children can work together to identify a camp that will ensure this summer is filled with fun.



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MOSH hosts 'Ice Dinosaurs' exhibit

The Museum of Science & History (MOSH) is currently serving as the world-premiere venue for a new traveling exhibition, "Ice Dinosaurs: The Lost World of the Alaskan Arctic." The exhibition opened to the public on March 9, offering visitors the opportunity to be the first to explore the stunning recent discoveries of dinosaurs from the Alaskan Arctic, all new additions to the scientific record of these extraordinary creatures.

The exhibition explores paleontology's final frontier, diving deep into the history of Arctic dinosaurs, including a feathered tyrannosaur, a giant species of raptor and tiny hatchlings of herbivorous horned and duck-billed dinosaurs. Visitors enjoy this immersive, interactive and educational experience, featuring groundbreaking discoveries, animatronic displays, real fossils (some that are touchable) and more. Built around groundbreaking discover-

ies that challenge the traditional understanding of paleontology, "Ice Dinosaurs" invites visitors to learn about the unique adaptations of polar dinosaurs who spent their entire lives above the Arctic Circle, enduring cold, dark and snowy winter conditions. The scientific evidence supporting them being non-migratory,

unexpectedly nesting in the Arctic, and being warm-blooded is presented as the exhibition courses through a year in the life of these animals, more than 73 million years ago. The exhibition combines more than

EXHIBIT continues on Page 29



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Empowering Tomorrow's Minds: The Age of Technological Advancements

Submitted by **Ryan Clark**

CEO, Code Coast Consulting

In the ever-evolving landscape of the 21st century, where technology reigns supreme and innovation is the currency of progress, the significance of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education cannot be overstated. As we witness the rapid integration of groundbreaking technologies like Generative AI, Low Code Platforms, and Quantum Computing into various aspects of our lives. While it initially appears that coding knowledge is no longer required, what we see is the exact opposite. As technology reduces points of friction for the end user, it requires more from the creators, builders, and innovators to dive deeper into the technology. It is no longer merely advantageous but rather imperative.

STEM education serves as the bedrock upon which the future of our society rests. It empowers individuals with the critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and technological literacy necessary to navigate and thrive in an increas-

ingly complex world. With the advent of transformative technologies like Generative AI, which has the capacity to create, innovate, and augment human capabilities, the ability to understand and harness such tools becomes paramount. Low Code Platforms have democratized software development, enabling individuals with varying levels of technical expertise to contribute to the creation of digital solutions. Meanwhile, Quantum Computing promises to revolutionize fields ranging from cryptography to drug discovery, ushering in a new era of unprecedented computational power and efficiency.

In light of these advancements, the integration of coding and technology into educational curricula is not merely about preparing students for future careers; it is about equipping them with the foundational skills and knowledge needed to thrive in an increasingly digital and interconnected world. By exposing students to coding languages, computational thinking, and problem-solving methodologies from an early age, we cultivate a generation of individuals who are not just passive consumers of technology but



active participants and creators.

Moreover, STEM education fosters a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, empowering students to identify challenges within their communities and develop innovative solutions to address them. By nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset alongside technical proficiency, we cultivate a generation of innovators

who are equipped to tackle the pressing issues of our time, from climate change to healthcare disparities.

Furthermore, the demand for skilled professionals in STEM fields continues to outpace the supply, creating a significant skills gap that threatens to impede technological progress and economic growth. By prioritizing STEM education and investing in initiatives in the public and private sector is required so that we can ensure that our workforce remains competitive and capable of driving innovation forward.

In conclusion, the importance of STEM education in the age of technological advancements cannot be overstated. As we continue to witness the transformative power of technologies like Generative AI, Low Code Platforms, and Quantum Computing, it becomes increasingly clear that equipping our children with a solid foundation in coding and technology is not just beneficial but necessary for navigating and shaping the future. By investing in your child's STEM education today, they will have a brighter, more innovative tomorrow!

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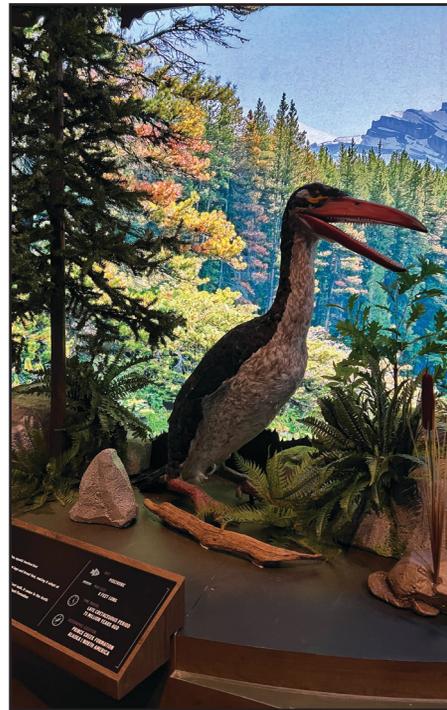
Exhibit

Continued from 27

20 animatronic and static dinosaurs, two full skeletons, two skulls and numerous mammals and fish. Interactive games and experiences invite guests of all ages to master STEAM concepts while learning about new and exciting dinosaur species still being discovered today in the high Arctic.

“Hosting the world premiere of ‘Ice Dinosaurs’ reinforces our commitment to bringing in brand-new, cutting-edge exhibitions for the Jacksonville community to experience first,” said Anthony Mortimer, vice president of exhibitions and education at MOSH. “Dinosaurs captivate the imagination because new details about their lives are still being discovered now, millions of years after the species’ extinction. The mystery surrounding these incredible creatures continues to fuel our collective interest in them, and we are looking forward to sharing this one-of-a-kind experience with Northeast Florida residents and visitors throughout the spring and summer.”

The exhibition is based on the research of paleontologists Gregory Erickson of Florida State University and Patrick Druckenmiller of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, co-directors of the Arctic Paleo-Research Consortium (ARPC), a multinational group of professional and



citizen scientists who seek to unravel the mysteries of dinosaurian polar occupation. Imagine Exhibitions will donate a portion of proceeds from this exhibition to the ARPC to continue this groundbreaking research.

“The debut of ‘Ice Dinosaurs’ at MOSH provides the first public viewing of the lost world of Arctic dinosaurs, the quest to find their fossils and the science behind the discoveries,” said Erickson. “Guests will find themselves immersed in the Alaskan paleo-Arctic 73 million years



ago where they will embark on a journey throughout the seasons, witnessing how a plethora of newly discovered species, including feathered raptors and tyrannosaurs, unexpectedly thrived in the harsh polar environment.”

“We always strive to bring new and interesting exhibits to more people around the world,” said Tom Zaller, president and CEO of Imagine Exhibitions. “‘Ice Dinosaurs’ is the newest exhibition by Imagine and promises to shed light on fresh discoveries in the prehistoric world.



I’m excited for visitors in the Jacksonville area to embark on a journey that unveils incredible new details about ice dinos, and to unlock mysteries that, until now, have been frozen in time.”

“Ice Dinosaurs,” created by Imagine Exhibitions, runs through Sept. 6. Admission to the traveling exhibition is included in the price of general admission. Admission is free for children age 2 and younger and MOSH members. For more information or to purchase advance tickets, go to themosh.org.



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Contributed photos

Jacksonville resident receives fellowship for research

In a dedicated effort to protect coastal and marine habitats and species, the Guy Harvey Foundation (GHF) collaborates with local, national and international organizations to conduct scientific research and fund affiliated researchers who share their commitment to ocean conservation.

One of GHF's key initiatives involves recognizing graduate students and graduate program candidates across Florida colleges and universities who conduct research that will help support the sustainable management of marine fish.

To that end, the Guy Harvey Fellowship, formerly the Guy Harvey Scholarship Award, in partnership with the GHF and Florida Sea Grant, selects up to eight outstanding scholars to each receive a \$5,000 research stipend and the opportunity to share their work with the greater Sea Grant network through Florida Sea Grant's Communications Team.

Award recipients are expected to share their progress, including participating at public and scientific events to improve their science communication skills.

Jacksonville native William Sample

received the \$5,000 research stipend and a certificate personally designed and signed by Guy Harvey, world-renowned marine wildlife artist, conservationist and GHF founder/chair emeritus.

Sample is a PH.D. candidate studying biology at Florida International University in Miami. His research focuses on how environmental factors influence juvenile bull shark habitat use and foraging ecology in the coastal Everglades. Sample's study aims to focus on the energy landscapes sharks encounter, how they change over time and space and how sharks adapt to them.

Given the challenges sharks may face from climate change and sea level rise, Sample's work will be important for the conservation of juvenile sharks and their habitats and in informing restoration and management efforts. By using historical data from more than 150 tagged bull sharks and new methods such as high-resolution accelerometry, he aims to provide insights applicable beyond his study area.

"We worked with the Guy Harvey Foundation to establish a fellowship

program to create a cohort of student researchers that will not only help to support and enhance the development of their academic research but also strengthen Florida Sea Grant's connection with the next generation of Florida's marine and coastal scientists," said Sherry Larkin, director of Florida Sea Grant. "We're hoping this fellowship provides the opportunity for recipients to engage and share their research with the greater Sea Grant Network."

Established in 2010, the partnership between Florida Sea Grant and the Guy Harvey Foundation has provided scholarships totaling \$439,000 to support the research of 90 students at 12 different Florida universities. This fellowship not only bolsters academic research but also strengthens the connection between Florida Sea Grant and the next generation of marine scientists.

"Our commitment to funding and helping pave the way for young scholars to become the next wave of ocean conservation stewards is vital to the Guy Harvey Foundation's mission," said

Harvey. "Highlighting the extraordinary research these students have undertaken and rewarding their hard work highlight the importance of keeping the ecosystem of our oceans healthy and the scientific community motivated."

Applications for the 2025 Guy Harvey Fellowship will open later this year. Stay informed about eligibility criteria and deadlines at flseagrant.org/student-opportunities or contact Florida Sea Grant Student Programs Coordinator Cassandra Sexson at students@flseagrant.org.

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Lecture topic: marine animal health

The University of Florida Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience Evenings at Whitney Lecture Series continues at 6 p.m. Thursday, April 11, with the program titled “Sea Turtle and Marine Mammal Health Assessments: Insights into Marine Ecosystem Health.”

Dr. Annie Page, associate research professor and clinical veterinarian at Florida Atlantic University Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, will be the speaker.

This free lecture will be presented in person at the UF Whitney Laboratory Lohman Auditorium, 9505 Ocean Shore Blvd., St. Augustine. Those interested also have the option of registering to watch via Zoom live the night of the lecture.

Register to watch online, go to ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZsY-u-NrTjalOw2pELgnMA.

The talk will cover health assessments of wild sea turtles, dolphins and whales and will include examples of current and recently completed research projects from the Marine Wildlife Veterinary Medicine & Research Program at FAU Harbor Branch.

Page also serves as the Harbor Branch associate director of education and is co-director of the Marine Science & Oceanography Master’s Program. She is the clinical veterinarian for the Harbor Branch Marine Mammal Stranding, Health & Rehabilitation program, and provides veterinary services for the Harbor Branch campus.



Page earned her DVM from the University of Georgia, College of Veterinary Medicine in 2011, where she focused on aquatic animal medicine and diagnostic pathology within the public/corporate health track. In 2015, Page earned her Ph.D. in veterinary pathology from the University of Georgia, College of Veterinary Medicine. Throughout the course of her career, she has developed expertise in wildlife medicine and rehabilitation, molecular diagnostics, disease ecology and veterinary pathology and has covered topics such as conservation biology, environmental and public health, microbiology, immunology, toxicology and genomics.

The next lecture in this series will be May 9. Dr. Derek Cummings, professor, Emerging Pathogens Institute associate and director for education and graduate programs at the University of Florida, will speak on “Novel Approaches to Control Mosquito-Borne Diseases.”

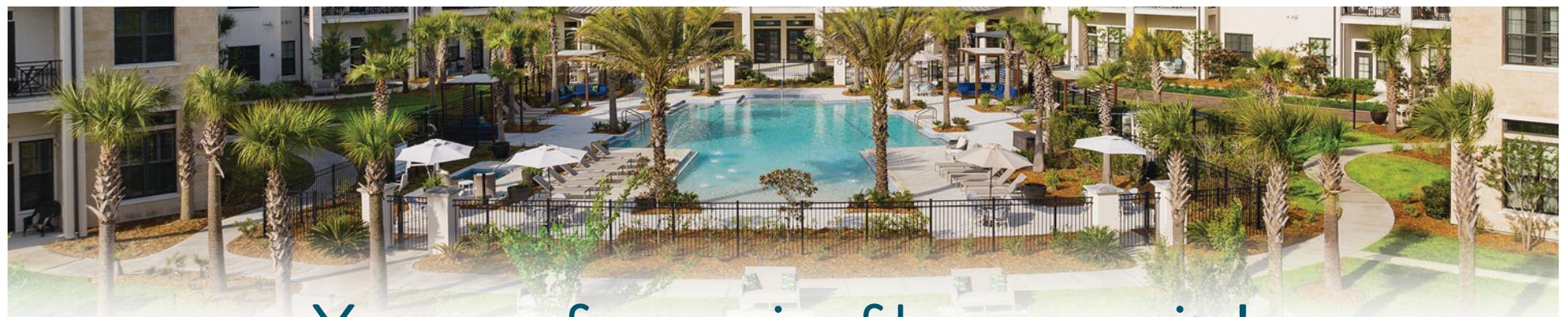
Birding & Photo Fest is April 24-28

Florida’s Birding & Photo Fest returns to the St. Augustine area April 24-28 for its 22nd year with nearly 100 photography and birding events. This immersive event combines interactive field workshops, dynamic photography sessions and classroom seminars with some of the world’s best nature photography professionals.

There’s a reason Florida’s Birding & Photo Festival is the best around. The natural settings found in St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and The Beaches are the perfect places for new and experienced photographers to hone their craft. The sun-drenched beaches, delicate dunes, winding Intracoastal Waterway and cool maritime hammocks are home to an endless array of avian species, including wood storks, vibrant pink roseate spoonbills, Monk’s parrots, herons, egrets, terns, pipers, osprey, American bald eagle, anhinga, pelicans and more.

This year’s Florida’s Birding & Photo Fest is headquartered at the new St. Jude Celebration Hall at St. Anastasia, located on St. Augustine Beach. This spacious venue can comfortably seat up to 300 people and is just minutes’ away from the festival’s various

PHOTO FEST continues on **Page 33**



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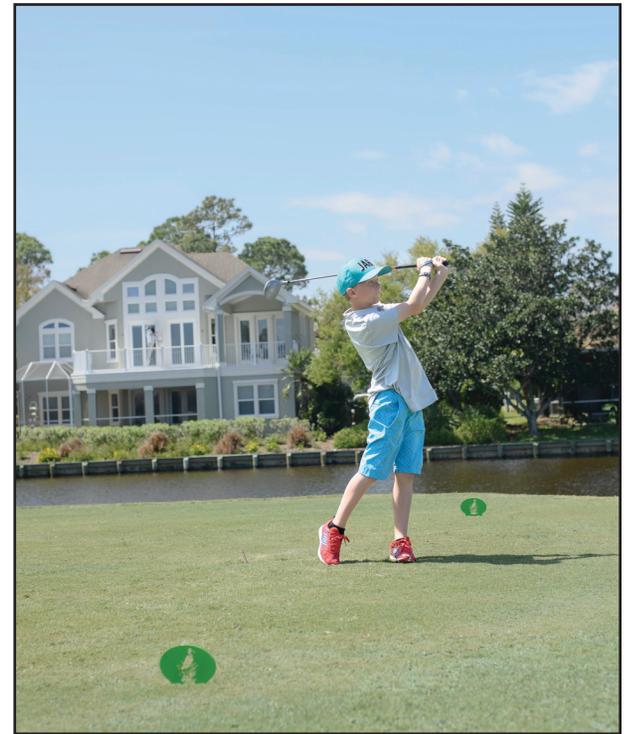
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Charity golf tournament raises \$70K

Viv Helwig and his team had one goal for the second annual Vested Metals Charity Golf Tournament in Memory of John Mark Leach: make it bigger and better than the first.

Even the weather was in on the plan; March 25 dawned bright and beautiful, a truly spectacular Florida spring day at

Marsh Creek Country Club in St. Augustine Beach.

This year's charity tournament brought together 124 golfers and raised more than \$70,000 for local charities: THE PLAYERS Championship Boys & Girls Club, Flagler College Athletics, St. Johns Housing Partnership, Fellowship of Christian Athletes,

UF Health St. Johns Foundation, READ USA Inc., Safe Families for Children and Adaptive Superstars. The chosen charities are all a testament to the spirit of the late John Mark Leach.

"John Mark was a beautiful soul who left the world a better place through his giving spirit," said Helwig, president and founder of Vested Metals International (VMI), a specialty metals and steel supplier based in St. Augustine. "He loved his family so much, spent time supporting the next generation, and loved this area. It only seemed right to select charities that support those things. By 2033, we plan to have donated at least \$1 million in his name. This year's tournament was a wonderful addition to that."

Highlights of the tournament included Leach's favorite treats, cold ice cream sandwiches delivered to the golfers at the halfway point, and a ginger ale toast at the reception by Leach's former colleague, Ric Snyder, vice president of business development at VMI.

Dave Myers hosted the putting contest and announced each golfer, prizes such as a new beach cruiser, golf bag, gift baskets

and gift cards went to tournament winners, and members of the Leach Family, Flagler College, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and St. Johns County Government were in attendance as were friends, supporters and sponsors from all over the country.

The 'Leach Family Cup' received four new winning names, which will be etched beside a favorite quote by Leach, "It's Friday, but Sunday's coming." Congratulations were extended to Aaron Johnson, David Upchurch, John Matulia and Seth Corneal playing on behalf of The Network Operations Company (The NOC).

"It takes a village to make this happen, and we have the best village," Helwig said. "This would not be possible without our amazing sponsors, volunteers, employees, golfers, and, of course, the blessing and support of John Mark's family. We would love to see even more players on the course next year — we've got that million in our sights! Stay tuned for an announcement on next year's date for the third annual Vested Metals Charity Golf Tournament in Memory of John Mark Leach!"



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Bingo event raises funds for Mission House, BEAM

A bingo fundraiser will be held 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, April 23, at Culhane's Irish Pub on Atlantic Beach to benefit Mission House and BEAM on Jacksonville Beach. The public is invited to attend this event coordinated by the CBV Cares Realtor Group of Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realty on Ponte Vedra Beach.

Tickets to the event are \$20 and includes two bingo cards and one drink ticket compliments of Culhane's Irish Pub. Attendees may "pay to play" bingo via cash at the door. Prizes will be awarded to bingo game winners and those who purchase raffle tickets. Proceeds from bingo will be split evenly between Mission House and BEAM. Proceeds from raffle tickets will go toward funding other nonprofit organizations in the Beaches area supported by CBV Cares.

Mission House is a day shelter and provides a place for homeless people in the area to shower and gain clothing, medical attention, meals and counseling to assist in their finding employment and a place

to call home again.

Mission House also has a medical clinic open two days a week to provide medical care with the help of area medical professional volunteers. For more information on Mission House, go to missionhousejax.org.

BEAM is a community-based organization serving low-income residents in times of need to prevent homelessness, provide emergency funding to cover rent and utility expenses and assist with food insecurity.

For more information on the services BEAM provides go to jaxbeam.org/about-us. CBV Cares is a charitable fundraising organization created by Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realty real estate agents who support area charitable organization efforts.

For more information, call Beaches CBV Cares Chair Carole Bayer at 904-860-5000 or Co-Chair Nancy Hammond at 816-820-6103 or go to facebook.com/CBVcares.

Photo Fest

Continued from 31

field locations. Workshops are held throughout Florida's Historic Coast, offering a sumptuous backdrop for photographers.

Shooting locations include St. Johns County Beaches, the incredible bird rookery at the St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park, the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Maritime Museum, Flagler College, Washington Oaks Garden State Park, Anastasia State Park, the GTM Research Reserve, Castillo de San Marcos National Monument and historic downtown St. Augustine.

The festival's educational workshops and classroom sessions include hands-on practice photographing birds, horses, historic architecture and portraits, techniques like flash and macro photography, working through the creative process, editing programs, composition, printing and more. There are courses appropriate for beginners, experts and everything in between.

This year's keynote speakers are Jennifer Leigh Warner and Emilie Talpin.

Warner will present "Putting Your Images to Work," a conversation about how photographs have the power to promote positive change and create policies that make real impacts on wildlife conservation. Warner is a fine-art conservation wildlife photographer, writer, public speaker and workshop

leader for Wildside Nature Tours.

COM SYSTEM Ambassador Emilie Talpin will deliver a keynote address focused on "Telling Better Stories." In this lecture, Talpin will talk about her adventures in bird photography from the shores of Northeast America to the riverbanks of her homeland in France. A late-in-life photographer, Talpin focuses on birds, wildlife and macro photography.

Field workshops and classroom seminars are facilitated by the best international nature and wildlife photographers, artists and local naturalists.

The caliber of talent at Florida's Birding & Photography Festival makes it one of North America's premiere events. This year's presenters include David Akoubian, Diane Bollen, Joe Brady, Linda Burek, David Crooks, Milo Davis, Ayolane Halusky, Caleb Hoover, Kevin Loughlin, Todd Nettelhorst, Jack Rogers, Emilie Talpin, Keith Wallach, Dan Walters, Jennifer Leigh Warner and Brett Wells.

In addition to crowd-favorite topics, this year's festival welcomes a host of new seminars and workshops. New workshops this year include horse action photography, shorebird photography, drone photography, bird language, invisibility tactics, sunrise chorus, owl prowl, off-camera flash for still life, food and portrait photography, AI and identifying birds found near water in St. Augustine.

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NOTICE IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR FLORIDA PROBATE DIVISION

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 unfolds in action. Renowned artist Brenda Council will be joining the family to create a sculpture of Harriet Beecher Stowe in Mandarin, before a public viewing at the home. The sculpture will be brought back and installed in

Post 129 sent pair to nationals as part of memorable year

By Anthony Richards

Sendings representative both to Boys Nation and Girls Nation from the same area of a state is very unusual, but it is even more rare to have them both come from the same American Legion post. That was the case when the St. Johns County Post 129 in Jacksonville Beach during the 2023 program, which included a trip to Washington, D.C.

Post 129 is a member of the school's 100th anniversary program, and the post has accepted a challenge to send a pair to the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, this fall. The post is currently accepting applications for the academy after the school's 100th anniversary.

For both, the opportunity to take part in something so historic and something that will always stand as a testament to their experience and journey in Post 129. For the first time, the post is getting to send a pair to the academy.

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Fundraiser to benefit INK!, Ocean Sole

The St. Johns County Education Foundation, which operates as Investing in Kids (INK!), has announced an upcoming fundraiser to benefit the education nonprofit and Ocean Sole, a nonprofit based in Ponte Vedra Beach and Kenya whose mission is to clean polluted beaches, build conservation awareness and connect people with unique artwork to benefit low-income communities.

The Art of the Possible event will be held in conjunction with Asado Life, a renowned waterfront restaurant in St. Augustine with a sense of community, compassion and unique culinary style. The event will benefit STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) programs in St. Johns County School District.

Activities will be held from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Thursday, April 18, at Asado Life, 173 Shipyard Way, for an evening of purpose and networking along with asado cuisine, live music and the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on education and families in need throughout St. Johns County and beyond.

Individual ticket prices are \$125 per person. VIP packages are \$200 and include preferred seating, a large Ocean Sole sculpture and two beverage tickets; and each table of eight is \$925. Attendees may buy a ticket for a teacher to attend for \$120. For ticket information and online purchases, go to runsignup.com/TicketEvent/flipflopsoiree.

The event features the tradition of asado cooking, which dates back centuries to the time when the Spanish colonists brought cattle to Argentina. The gauchos, or Argentine cowboys, quickly adopted the practice of cooking meat over an open flame.

The local restaurant will create the traditional cooking methods with modern day fine dining. On April 18, the five-course Asado Trio meal will include Parrilla Roasted Prime Picanha, House-made Argentinian Malbec Infused Chorizo and Signature Spiced All Natural Chicken Thighs Chimichurri. A vegetarian option is also available.

All food will be prepared by Asado Life's chefs, featuring locally sourced



Contributed photo

INK! Teacher of the Year Celebration 2023 with Tracy Clauson St. Johns County District Teacher of the Year 2023 on stage with the emcees and Ocean Sole sculptures.

ingredients.

INK! has cultivated success for students and teachers through funding, initiatives and inspiration since 1994. Participation and donations at The Art of the Possible will help provide educational resources, innovative programs and classroom support to teachers and students across St. Johns County, ensuring that local children have access to a brighter future.

“As CEO of Ocean Sole, I'm excited about our partnership with INK! for the inaugural Art of the Possible event,” said Erin Smith. “Our experience at Ocean Sole has taught us the invaluable role of art in education and empowerment, particularly for women. Through transforming flip-flops into meaningful art, we've seen how creativity fosters creativity and collaboration, enhances learning and fosters economic empowerment. The INK! and Ocean Sole collaboration allows us to

share our passion for integrating art with STEM, demonstrating that the addition of art makes learning more engaging and comprehensive. We're proud to support an initiative event that prepares students for a future where they can innovate, collaborate, learn, lead and make a positive impact on their world.”

According to Cathy Newman, INK!'s executive director, event sponsors include: All American Air Charitable Foundation, The Volen Group — Keller Williams Luxury International, Old Town Trolley Tours, Leonard's Photography and Grand Canyon University.

The event will feature a silent and live auction, photo booth, custom selfie station, door prizes and live acoustic music. Unique items available in the auctions include a five-night stay at a four star beachfront resort in Mexico; golf and a three-night stay at the Palmetto Dunes Oceanfront Resort in Hilton Head; a

World Traveler Package including choice of locations in Tuscany, Bali, Thailand, Paris and Greece for two; guitars autographed by various music legends including Jimmy Buffett and Bruce Springsteen; NFL signed helmets; 2018 USA Women's Hockey autographed photo; PGA Tour Champions custom memorabilia; local golf course packages; gift certificates; services and baskets from local restaurants, spas, attractions and more.

“We are excited to host the inaugural Flip Flop Soiree with Ocean Sole at Asado Life to bring our community together and raise awareness for the work that INK! does supporting STEAM programs within the St. Johns County School District as well as the conservation education initiatives that Ocean Sole supports locally and globally,” said Newman.

For more information, contact Newman at 904-547-7120 or email Catherine.Newman@stjohns.k12.fl.us.

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GUEST COLUMN

Florida provides safe haven for homeless, strengthens communities

In Florida, we are blessed to have a citizen legislature. This means that my fellow representatives and our senators live, work and play in the communities we call home. We see what is happening on the ground in every part of our state, and hopefully have the courage to take bold action during our time in Tallahassee; a time in which we collectively identify things that need fixing. One of the things that we all agree on, regardless of political affiliation, is that chronic, unsheltered homelessness in Florida is on the rise. If we do nothing, the problem will only get worse in both human and economic costs. We will not stand by and watch Florida's great cities become San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver and New York. Simply put, the status quo is not an option.

This year the legislature passed House Bill 1365: Unauthorized Public Camping and Public Sleeping in response to this impending crisis. This bill protects our shared public spaces while simultaneously respecting the dignity of every human being. It states unequivocally that no one should fend for their own on the streets without access to basic services, especially those who through circumstances outside their control find themselves ravaged by addiction, mental illness or both. It is a uniquely Florida model, utilizing both carrot and stick, and will both protect our communities and offer help to those who truly need it.

This bipartisan legislation, signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis, prohibits counties and cities from allowing extended sleeping or camping on public property. This is done with the goal of preserving our public parks, libraries and even our downtown sidewalks. For cities, businesses and communities to thrive, these public spaces must be protected.

The bill also allows counties and municipalities to designate a specific area for public camping when there is insufficient shelter space to accommodate those in



State Rep. Sam Garrison

need. It also imposes necessary safety protocols, such as 24-hour security, basic sanitation and access to behavioral and mental health services. While some critics have decried this as too expensive or not addressing the root causes of unsheltered homelessness, it rather demonstrates our commitment to the humane treatment of our brothers and sisters in crisis. It also stands in stark contrast to the current practice of telling the unsheltered

homeless to fend for themselves while the “experts” wax eloquently about magically producing housing for all.

The Florida Model has the potential to be a game changer because it lets each of Florida’s 67 unique counties and their cities decide which solutions work best for their community while setting standards and providing guardrails. The needs of Clay County are vastly different from those in Broward, Palm Beach and Santa Rosa. Our vision is to give locals flexibility to address homelessness in their own way while setting clear expectations regarding minimum standards that must be followed statewide.

As Chair of the House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee, I can attest firsthand to that we as a state have chosen to put our money where our mouth is. Our homelessness initiatives are one part of a multi-faceted effort this year that includes a comprehensive modernization of our Florida's Baker Act statute, a groundbreaking law establishing behavioral health teaching hospitals throughout the state, and a 10-fold increase in grant funds to local continuums of care that provide services to Florida's homeless population.

With a challenge as complex and pervasive as chronic homelessness, it is all too easy to fall into the trap of comfortable inaction. In Florida, we will learn from the mistakes of our friends across the nation who are paying the price for their inability to act. This is not a perfect bill. It will not eliminate homelessness. But it is a start. And it states clearly that in Florida, the status quo is not an option. We must act now. It is the right thing to do.

State Representative Sam Garrison (R-Fleming Island) was first elected to office in 2020 and serves as the Chair of the Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee. He is slated to become Speaker of the Florida House in 2026.

Contributed photos



The 150th running of the Kentucky Derby will be held this year.



bestbet offers a wide range of food and drink options.

Kentucky Derby event planned in St. Augustine

Immerse yourself in the unparalleled excitement of the Kentucky Derby right here in St. Augustine. As “The Greatest Two Minutes in Sports” returns for its 150th running on May 4 at Churchill Downs, bestbet St. Augustine invites members of the public to the only location in town where they can both watch and wager on the race.

bestbet is marking the occasion with a day filled with premium racing, delicious dining, celebratory beverages and the thrill of victory. Grab your best hat and head to bestbet St. Augustine, 800 Marketplace Drive, St. Augustine, on May 4.

“As we gear up to celebrate the landmark 150th Kentucky Derby, bestbet St. Augustine is thrilled to offer an experience that is unmatched in our city,” said Katie Root, director of marketing for bestbet’s three Northeast Florida locations. “We’re the only venue in St. Augustine where guests can take part in the excitement of watching and wagering on the Derby. With bets starting as low as \$2, we’re offering a day of widespread fun for newcomers and experienced enthusiasts alike.”

Doors open at 9:30 a.m. for bestbet St. Augustine’s Kentucky Derby event on May 4. Wagering begins at 10 a.m.

For those eager to get in on the action, advance wagering begins at 10 a.m. May 3. Official race programs are available for purchase as early as 2 p.m. May 1. Official commemorative glasses will be available for purchase on race day. With races starting at 10:30 a.m., the day promises a full card of top-quality thoroughbred racing, culminating with the historic 150th running of the Kentucky Derby around 6:45 p.m.

In the spirit of true Kentucky tradition, bestbet will serve a curated selection of bourbon cocktails, including the classic mint julep, alongside a full menu of culi-

nary options. Beer drinkers can celebrate with a Derby-inspired brew crafted exclusively for the race by the artisans at Dog Rose Brewing.

The Kentucky Derby is renowned for its fashion as much as its racing, and guests are encouraged to embrace the celebration by dressing in their most impressive Derby attire: hats, gloves, bold plaid, pastels and more. Prizes will be awarded to the best-dressed Derby Dames and Dapper Dudes.

bestbet St. Augustine is located at 800 Marketplace Drive in St. Augustine, conveniently on State Road 207, near the I-95 exit.

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PAGE 37 THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024



GUEST COLUMN

Strategies to protect your goals from consistent inflation



By Chris Thompson

If you're like most investors, you've noticed the impact of higher inflation in recent years — whether at the gas pump or the grocery store. American investors are experiencing the effects of prolonged inflation for the first time since the early 1980s. As a result, many are concerned about how infla-

tion levels will impact their ability to reach their long-term financial goals.

While it may not be possible to avoid the effects of inflation altogether, there are several strategies investors can utilize to mitigate the impact of inflation on their financial plan. Here are three investment considerations that may help address inflation concerns and better prepare your goals for long-term success.

1. Keep your money invested

When the inflation rate soared in 2022, stock and bond markets declined. Some investors responded by pulling money out of the market. This can be counterproductive as investors too often miss much of a market's recovery gain before they put their money back to work.

For example, the U.S. stock market (as measured by the Standard & Poor's 500 stock index, an unmanaged index of stocks often used as a benchmark of market performance), declined 25% between January and October 2022. But by the end of 2023, the S&P 500 regained nearly all of the ground lost in the bear market.¹

It is normal for markets to go through ups and downs. Investors that stay the course and keep their money invested commonly see their investments make up gains that were lost in a sudden downturn. While it may be tempting to remove yourself from the market during volatile periods, it could be helpful to stay invested at a level that reflects your risk tolerance.

2. If time is on your side, take advantage of stocks

Over time, stocks have historically outpaced inflation, an important consideration as you try to build wealth to achieve your ultimate financial goals with more confidence. This doesn't mean that year-in, year-out, stocks will keep you ahead of inflation. 2022 is a good example of a year when stocks declined as inflation rose. But if you

have time to let your money work for you, stocks have historically outpaced the rise in living costs.

According to data collected since 1871, stocks have grown faster than inflation for holding periods of 20 years or more.²

Investors who can ride the highs and lows of markets are often better suited to keep up, if not pass, the rate of inflation.

3. For short-term money, seek higher yields

You may have money set aside for short-term needs, such as your emergency fund or to cover upcoming expenses. In these times of elevated inflation, you'll want to find ways to earn more competitive yields on your short-term savings.

Search out options such as money market funds, CDs, short-term U.S. Treasury securities and other savings vehicles that offer yields that may keep pace with inflation. Utilizing these tools may allow you to stay more liquid with your investments while hedging against the impacts of inflation.

Whether an economic cycle brings conventional or elevated inflation it should be considered as a factor of your long-term financial plan. A financial adviser can help develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses the inflation environment today and over the long term.

1 S&P Dow Jones Indices.

2 NBER, Bloomberg, American Enterprise Investment Services, Inc.

Chris Thompson, CFP, CMFA, CRPC is a private wealth adviser and managing director with Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. He specializes in fee-based financial planning and asset management strategies and has been in practice for 31 years. To contact him, <https://www.ameripriseadvisors.com/chris.thompson/profile>, 904-380-2290 at 818 A1A North Suite 301, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL. Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards Inc. (CFP Board) owns the CFP certification mark, the Certified Financial Planner certification mark, and the CFP certification mark (with plaque design) logo in the United States, which it authorizes use of by individuals who successfully complete CFP Board's initial and ongoing certification requirements. The Certified Military Financial Advisors program is not affiliated or endorsed by the U.S. Department of Defense, or any other federal or state government

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Stock investments involve risk, including loss of principal. High-quality stocks may be appropriate for some investment strategies. Ensure that your investment objectives, time horizon and risk tolerance are aligned with investing in stocks, as they can lose value.

The S&P 500 Index is a basket of 500 stocks that are considered to be widely held. The S&P 500 index is weighted by market value (shares outstanding times share price), and its performance is thought to be representative of the stock market as a whole. The S&P 500 index was created in 1957 although it has been extrapolated backwards to several decades earlier for performance comparison purposes. This index provides a broad snapshot of the overall U.S. equity market. Over 70% of all U.S. equity value is tracked by the S&P 500. Inclusion in the index is determined by

Junior Achievement honors outstanding community leaders for hall of fame

Junior Achievement of North Florida has announced that its Hall of Fame Luncheon, the organization's largest annual fundraiser, is set to take place on May 22. This prestigious event will be hosted at the University of North Florida's Adam W. Herbert University Center.

The Hall of Fame Luncheon serves as a crucial fundraiser for Junior Achievement of North Florida, supporting its mission to inspire and prepare young people for future success through financial literacy programs. Sponsorship opportunities are now available, ranging from the top-tier \$15,000 presenting level to the \$2,500 chairman level. Every dollar raised will directly contribute to providing essential programs for students in North Florida.

Shannon Italia, president of JA of North Florida, emphasized the importance of community involvement.

"Our programs help to shape our youth

and put them on the path to economic success, but we can't do it alone; we need the community to help," she said. "We invite businesses, organizations and individuals to join us at this event to learn more about how we can work together to create the leaders of tomorrow."

The Hall of Fame is not only a fundraising event but also an opportunity to recognize outstanding individuals and businesses within the community. Awards to be presented include the Thompson S. Baker Award, the Educator of the Year Award, the Volunteer of the Year Award and the Company of the Year Award.

The Thompson S. Baker "Solid as a Rock" Award will be presented to Henry Brown, CEO of Miller Electric Co. Brown, the 25th recipient of this esteemed award, embodies the values of community leadership, hands-on involvement, and philanthropy.

Exposed to what it takes to be an entrepreneur as a child as a third-generation leader of the company, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, uncle and mother, Brown's commitment to Jacksonville aligns with the mission of Junior Achievement.

Brown's dedication, exposure to entrepreneurship in his formative years, love for Jacksonville, commitment to family, and shared values with Junior Achievement make him a real-life example of the organization's vision, a world where young people have the skillset and mindset to build thriving communities.

"It is an honor to be recognized by Junior Achievement of North Florida, especially an award that underscores Miller Electric Company's commitment to philanthropy within the First Coast community," said Brown, CEO of Miller Electric Company. "This recognition showcases our firm

belief in the importance of supporting and lifting up the communities we're part of. A strong community is all about sharing values, working together and making a positive difference. We're thrilled to be on this journey, and we're excited to keep working towards a brighter future together."

Four additional award winners will be recognized at the luncheon: Tikila Shakespeare, a teacher at Fort Caroline Middle School, will receive the Educator of the Year Award; John "Trey" Stephens and India Sullivan from Ally Financial will be honored with the Volunteer of the Year Award, and the Company of the Year Award will be presented to Mercedes-Benz USA.

For more information on sponsorship opportunities contact Stephanie Saman at ssaman@janfl.org, (904) 398-9944, ext. 231, or go to northflorida.ja.org/events/ja-of-north-florida-hall-of-fame.

Inflation

Continued from 37

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The basics of financial literacy

The ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic showed how fragile economies can be and gave millions of people the impression that their financial well-being may not be as controllable as they imagined it was prior to 2020. Personal finances are indeed vulnerable to forces that shape both local and global economies, but individuals are not helpless



against such variables.

Financial literacy is a term that can be defined in various ways, but is perhaps most usefully characterized as an individual's ability to utilize various financial skills. Budgeting, investing and sound borrowing strategies each fall under the umbrella of financial literacy, and understanding how can help people better prepare for what's to come.

Budgeting

Budgeting is one of the foundations of financial literacy and its value is not unrecognized. According to a 2023 survey from NerdWallet conducted by The Harris Poll, 74 percent of the more than 2,000 adults surveyed indicated they have a monthly budget. However, 84 percent of survey respondents who have a budget admitted they exceed it. This area of financial literacy is most useful when individuals not only recognize the need to budget, but also the benefits of living within a budget once it's established.

Investing

One of the more notable lessons of the pandemic is just how quickly inflation can affect cost of living and quality of life. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the cost of store-bought food increased by 23.5 percent between February 2020 and May 2023. While that was an extraordinarily high increase for such a short period of time, inflation affects the value of a dollar, and financially literate individuals recognize that a dollar saved today will be less valuable 20 years

from now. Investing helps individuals grow their money so they can meet all of their future expenses. NerdWallet notes the average stock market return is about 10 percent per year (though that, too, is vulnerable to inflation), which shows just how vital sound investing is to securing your financial future.

Borrowing

Borrowing money is not bad, even though it's often discussed through the lens of credit card debt. Credit card debt is a significant issue, as data from the Federal Reserve indicated Americans' total credit card balance exceeded \$1 trillion in the third quarter of 2023. But borrowing to buy consumer goods and borrowing to finance an education or home purchase are two wildly different things. Numerous studies have shown that lifetime earnings are significantly higher among college-educated adults than individuals whose formal education ended with high school. In addition, the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller U.S. National Home Price Index indicates the historical annual average national home appreciation rate was 4.8 percent between 1987 and July 2023. In relation to financial literacy, borrowing to fund an education and/or purchase a home is a far more effective long-term financial strategy than borrowing to purchase consumer goods.

Financial literacy can help individuals lay a sound financial foundation that can make them less vulnerable to unforeseen variables that threaten the stability of local and global economies.

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Extract Juicery plans grand opening at new location

Extract Juicery, a popular cold-pressed juice and smoothie bar, has announced the grand opening of its newest location in St. Johns County. The new store, located at 104 Ashourian Ave., Suite 104, will celebrate with a weekend event, April 26-27.

The company took over the former Clean Juice location, retaining the staff and bringing Extract's fresh new menu options to St. Johns County.

"We are thrilled to bring the Extract Juicery experience to St. Johns County," said owner Kevin Walker. "Our cold-pressed juices, smoothies and acai bowls provide delicious, nutritious fuel for busy people seeking health and wellness. We look forward to becoming part of the community."

Beginning at 8 a.m., the first 50 guests in line will receive a \$50 rewards credit with any purchase. The credit can be used during future visits. Daniel Thomas of the Jacksonville Jaguars will be doing a meet-and-greet with a minimum purchase. Extract will also provide delicious samples of gourmet toasts, smoothies and cold-pressed juices available for customers waiting in line. The store will also hold raffles for free prizes, including a free juice cleanse, gym memberships, lululemon gift cards, an autographed football and an Apple watch.



Photo credit: www.extractjuicery.com

Extract Juicery sets itself apart by using a cold-press process to extract the maximum nutrients from organic fruits and vegetables. This method produces juices bursting with vitamins, minerals and enzymes and a fresh flavor. Menu options include juices like Green Glow,

Golden Pine and Beet-iful, as well as delicious smoothies such as Choco-Nuts, Island Sunrise and Vanilla Butter Berry. The juicer also offers acai bowls, wellness shots, toast, wraps, sandwiches, salads and gluten-free brownies.

Acai bowls packed with antioxidants



provide an extra nutritious breakfast or snack. New to the St. Johns County menu are fresh-made salads, grain bowls and more. Customers can order online or through the Extract Juicery app for quick grab-and-go service.

Walker opened the first Extract Juicery in Wheaton, Illinois, in 2021 after struggling to find convenient options for fresh, cold-pressed juices and smoothies.

"I started Extract to make it easy for people like me — busy parents, professionals and athletes — to get great-tasting, nutrient-dense fuel into our bodies," he said. "Our juices provide pure plant power to help you power through your day."

Walker has plans for further expansion in 2024.

The St. Johns County store will be open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday. For more information and online ordering, go to extractjuicery.com.

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PulteGroup honored at Laurel Awards

The Northeast Florida Division of PulteGroup, one of the nation's leading homebuilders, was recently honored by the Northeast Florida Builders Association with 26 awards at its Laurel Awards celebration.

"We are grateful to receive these Laurel Awards and the recognition from our industry peers," said Justin Cook, president of PulteGroup's Northeast Florida Division. "I am proud of our innovative and thoughtfully designed homes as well as the accomplishments of our team. They work exceptionally hard to deliver excellent quality and service, and these awards reflect their dedication and commitment."

PulteGroup received six awards for its model homes showcasing Pulte's consumer-inspired floor plans and curated design options. Best Model Home awards were presented to the Oakhurst in Double Branch, the Mystique in The Preserve at Bannon Lakes, the Stardom in Del Webb Wildlight and the Thompson in Wells Landing. The Oakhurst in Double Branch and the Stardom in Del Webb Wildlight also received Best Interior Merchandising awards.

As demonstrated by these models, Pulte builds homes with the homebuyer in mind. Every part is designed to best meet a family's needs.

The company's sales team received 20 Million Dollar Circle awards, recognizing new home sales achievements on closed new home sales.

For more information about PulteGroup's Northeast Florida Division, go to pulte.com/jacksonville.



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Members of the Northeast Florida Division of PulteGroup at the Laurel Awards celebration hosted by the Northeast Florida Builders Association.

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Providence Homes wins Energy Star award

Providence Homes is proud to announce that it has received the 2024 Energy Star Partner of the Year — Sustained Excellence Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This marks the eighth consecutive year that the industry leader has been recognized by the EPA and the U.S. Department of Energy.

Sean Junker, president and COO of Providence Homes, expressed the company's pride in their enduring dedication to sustainability.

"We are so proud of our ongoing commitment and continued growth as a 100% Energy Star-certified home builder," he said. "Today, we are designing and building the highest-quality and most energy-efficient homes we have ever built at Providence Homes."

The Energy Star Partner of the Year — Sustained Excellence Award is reserved

for organizations lauded for their continued leadership in environmental protection through superior energy achievements. The award highlights Providence Homes' success in offering homebuyers sustainable living solutions that do not compromise on quality or comfort.

The Sustained Excellence distinction, the cherry on top of Energy Star accolades, is conferred upon elite organizations that have consistently outperformed in energy efficiency and upheld the stringent standards set by the Energy Star program for a minimum of two successive years.

For more information about how Providence Homes is leading the charge in energy-efficient home building, or to learn more about the 2024 Energy Star Sustained Excellence Award, go to providencehomesinc.com and energystar.gov/awardwinners.

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New model home opened at TrailMark

Contributed photos

GreenPointe Developers has announced the opening of a new model home by Drees Homes at the nature-first community of TrailMark in St. Johns County.

The new Grayton II model joins Drees' decorated Palmetto model home. The Grayton II is one of six new floorplans Drees Homes has added to their collection of 11 one- and two-story home designs at TrailMark.

"We appreciate our relationship with Drees Homes, and we are thrilled to see their expansion and success at TrailMark," said Gregg Kern, vice president of development, GreenPointe Developers. "Our premier builder team offers beautifully crafted home designs to meet the needs and lifestyles of families of all ages and sizes. Our residents also enjoy a wonderful community lifestyle with connections to their neighbors, the great outdoors and many recreational offerings at TrailMark."

The model home's interior design exudes an earthy calmness in shades of cream, burlap, mossy green and charcoal. Textural and smooth transitions add dimension and style.

The Grayton II is a one-level, four-bedroom ranch plan with an airy, open great room that connects to the kitchen and dining spaces for easy entertaining. An optional wall of windows also connects



The Grayton II by Drees Homes features an airy, open great room that connects to the kitchen and dining spaces for easy entertaining.

to a generous covered outdoor living area where one can add an outdoor fireplace.

The owner's suite is a secluded oasis away from the other rooms of the house, offering back yard views and luxurious extras such as a large walk-in closet, separate vanity areas and a built-in bench in the shower. The expansive media room comes equipped with DreeSmart technology features that support the home's technology needs now and into the future. Drees is an Energy Star partner builder, building homes to the highest standards for energy efficiency.

In addition to the six new plans Drees



The Grayton II by Drees Homes exudes an earthy calmness in shades of cream, burlap, mossy green and charcoal.

Homes is introducing at TrailMark, the builder also offers five plans for a total of 11 versatile floor plans ranging in size from 2,398 square feet to 3,715 square feet. Drees Homes at TrailMark is priced from the \$500,000s.

TrailMark has been carefully designed around its natural environment, offering miles of trails and parks, a community amenities center with a beach-entry pool overlooking a large central lake, fitness center, a variety of sports courts, playing fields and endless opportunities for residents to connect with nature and their neighborhood.

TrailMark's premier builder team, which also includes Dream Finders Homes, Lennar and Richmond American Homes, offers single-family, one- and two-story homes in a conservation area setting priced from the \$300,000s to the \$900,000s. Dream Finders Homes' Reverie at TrailMark, a 55-plus community for active adults, offers single-family homes enhanced with abundant recreational amenities priced from the \$300,000s to the \$700,000s.

To learn more, visit TrailMarkLiving.com or follow TrailMark on Facebook and Instagram.



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In the Arts



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THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024 · PAGE 42 www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

Jacksonville Symphony to present 'Carmen'

The Jacksonville Symphony will present Georges Bizet's timeless and cherished opera, "Carmen," at 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 12, and 3 p.m. Sunday, April 14. Sung in French with English supertitle translations, a world-class cast and the orchestra share the stage for the largest production of the Jacksonville Symphony's 2023-24 season, transforming Jacoby Symphony Hall into an opera house, complemented by vivid 30-foot projection screens serving as "sets."

"Carmen" is an opera about love, obsession, inescapable charisma, betrayal and revenge. It centers on its namesake, a beautiful gypsy woman who robs a soldier and convinces him to assist her escape from jail. From start to finish, the opera unfolds into a tale of love, jealousy and murder, with Carmen's mysterious and elusive nature taking center stage. For centuries, the story has captivated audiences with its drama, allure and emotion — and unknowingly, Bizet created a character who turned into a cultural icon transcending time and boundaries.

"Carmen is a performance that represents female empowerment and sexuality, and incorporates society's historical, yet arguably present, common fear toward it," said Courtney Lewis, music director of the Jacksonville Symphony. "The thought-provoking, dramatic, emotional and powerful production will be heightened through our unique, 'symphonically staged' opera, where the symphony performs on an elevated playing space on



Contributed photo

The Jacksonville Symphony will present Georges Bizet's "Carmen" April 12 and 14.

the stage rather than traditionally in the pit, which is sure to convey an even more thrilling experience. We look forward to bringing this one-of-a-kind masterpiece to Jacksonville and our very own Jacoby Symphony Hall."

Led by award-winning stage director Gregory Keller, who hails from the Metropolitan Opera, and conductor Lewis, the opera will unfold before audiences as they experience a journey that's sure to capture hearts with its fiery story and also

features a world-class cast of vocalists, the Jacksonville Symphony Chorus and students from The Bolles School. Many of these operatic superstars have garnered top awards from across the globe and come from the Metropolitan Opera and other esteemed operatic houses.

Tickets start at \$50 and are on sale now. For more information and to purchase tickets to see "Carmen," go to JaxSymphony.org.

Players by the Sea to open Cabaret Collection series

Players by the Sea (PBTS), Jacksonville Beach's premiere community theatre, is introducing a new series, Cabaret Collection: Legends and Rising Legends opening this weekend. Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased on the website or by calling the box office.

To kick off the Cabaret Collection series, the Legends Cabaret will take place on Friday, April 5, at 7:30 p.m. in our studio theatre. General admission tickets are sold for \$30. This performance will feature music and storytelling celebrating past and present musical legends across all genres from Whitney Houston to Stevie Wonder.

Following that performance, there will be the Rising Legends Cabaret at 2 p.m. Sunday, April 7, in the mainstage theater. General admission tickets are sold for \$20, and \$15 for students. This performance will feature musical theatre numbers and songs from popular Broadway productions like "Legally Blonde" and "Memphis."

For more information about this Cabaret Collection series, go to playersbythesea.org/cabaret-collection.

Violin professor to present free concert

On April 9, The Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Library will present Simon Shiao, violin professor since 2003 at the University of North Florida.

Shiao continues to be an active performer around the world. Recently, he performed a recital in London at St. Martin-in-the Fields Cultural Embassy Concert Series, was an artist in residence at the Grand Teton Music Festival Winter Concert Series and served as a guest artist at University of Utah.

Shiao arranges regular opportunities for his violin students to work with visiting artists such as the Tokyo String Quartet, Dover Quartet, members of the Berlin Philharmonic and renowned soloists. The graduates have gone on to attend graduate programs, to perform in professional symphony orchestras and to accept teaching positions throughout the U.S. The students performing in this series come from all corners of the state.

The concert at the library is free. Doors open at 6 p.m. The concert starts at 6:30 p.m.

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– Courtney Lewis, Music Director

**Only Buy Tickets at
JaxSymphony.org or 904.354.5547**

Notre-Dame Cathedral organist to offer free concert

Vincent Dubois, the titular organist at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, will perform a free concert at 4 p.m. April 14 at St. John's Cathedral, 256 E. Church St., Jacksonville. Doors open at 3:15 p.m.

Dubois is professor of organ interpretation and improvisation at the Hochschule für Musik in Saarbrücken, Germany, and is recognized as one of the finest concert organists in the world today.

A graduate of the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris, Dubois took the world's stage in 2002 by winning two major organ competitions: the Recital Gold Medal at the Calgary International Organ Competition and the Grand Prize at the International Competition of Toulouse, France.

Prior to his appointment at Notre-Dame in Paris in 2016, Dubois served as titular organist at Soissons Cathedral (2001-2014) and Saint-Brieuc Cathedral (1996-2001).

Dubois has performed in major concert venues throughout Europe, North America, Asia and the Pacific, including performances for numerous international music festivals. He is featured in solo recital on several commercial recordings. His performances have been broadcast over Radio France, the O.R.F. Vienna,



Contributed photo

Vincent Dubois, organist at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris

CBC Radio Canada, Australian Radio and American Public Media's Pipedreams.

The April 14 concert, presented by Beaches Fine Arts, will be followed by a reception during which Dubois will present photos and discuss the restoration of Notre Dame Cathedral.

James D. Johnson Memorial Organ Concert

Vincent Dubois

SUNDAY 4/14 • 4:00 PM

St. Johns Cathedral

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Titular organist at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, France, Mr. Dubois is one of the finest organists in the world today. At the reception following this concert, he will give a talk with photos about the restoration of Notre-Dame. "Dubois possesses maturity far beyond his years. He plays with consummate passion and breathtaking virtuosity, yet with absolute technical control." (The American Organist)

Emilio Solla & Tributango

Emilio Solla & Tributango

SUNDAY 5/12 • 4:00 PM

Kim Collier, photography

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Latin Grammy winner and multi-Grammy nominee Mr. Solla has brought together a phenomenal quartet of renowned tango maestros to perform the music of Argentina, his homeland. Featuring tango standards, the concert will also bring new compositions in the traditional style. "Solla has reached an artistic level where his mastery of performance practice and creativity mesh into a single vision of the musical act, be it improvisational or composed." (All About Jazz)

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Viano String Quartet 11/5
The Queen's Six 12/15
Galvin Cello Quartet 1/21

VIDA Guitar Quartet 2/2
Kenari Saxophone Quartet 3/10
Llewellyn Sánchez-Werner 3/22
*Vincent DuBois 4/14
Emilio Solla & Tributango 5/12

*All concerts except 4/14 are held at our home venue: St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church 465 11th Ave. N Jacksonville Beach



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Beaches Fine Arts Series is a 501-c3 nonprofit organization, Sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture.



Sweet Art Gallery to hold opening exhibit April 13

Sweet Art Gallery, 310 Front St., Ste 875, Ponte Vedra Beach, is planning an opening exhibition for artist Al Razza from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 13.

To RSVP, call 904-686-2787.

Razza received a Bachelor of Fine Art degree from Massachusetts College of Art in 1977. He also attended the Art Institute of Boston, the University of Rhode Island and Florida Atlantic University.

In 1991, Razza won one of the first South Florida Art Consortium Fellowships, awarded for artistic excellence by the consortium and the National Endowment for the Arts.

His work has been exhibited in museums and galleries and is included in private and public collections. He

is the owner of the Razza School of Art in Coral Springs, Florida, where he teaches drawing and painting and maintains a studio.

This is the second location for Sweet Art Gallery, a contemporary modern art gallery and home to works by more than 35 established artists. Since 2005, gallery owner Dede Sweet was one of the first to offer contemporary fine art in Naples, where the other gallery is located.

The gallery offers in-home showings to allow customers to view the art in their own space before buying.

The gallery is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and also by appointment. For more information, call 904-686-2787 or go to thesweetart-gallery.com.

Haydn, Schumann featured at concert

Florida Chamber Music Project's (FCMP) will celebrate the father of the string quartet, Joseph Haydn, along with Robert Schumann at its Sunday, April 7, performance. The concert begins at 3 p.m. at the Beaches Museum Chapel at the Beaches Museum at 505 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville Beach. It is sponsored by Ann Wingate in loving memory of her husband Earl M. Barker Jr., former FCMP board chair.

"Haydn's String Quartet in G Major, Opus 77, No. 1 is an example of how he evolved as a composer," said FCMP Artistic Director Susan Pardue. "Along with the other last of his quartets, it is described as Beethovenian. Robert Schumann's String Quartet in F Major, Opus 41, No. 2 is among the first of his quartets and Haydn's influence can be heard throughout."

Tickets are \$30 and are available for purchase through Eventbrite. Single tickets are also available for purchase at the door, as are student tickets at a cost of \$10.

Beaches Museum Chapel is wheelchair-accessible and has free parking along Pablo Avenue near 4th Street North of Beach Boulevard. Attendees are invited to attend a post-concert reception.

The Florida Chamber Music Project was founded 11 years ago by violist Susan Pardue. Members include violinists Patrice Evans and Ann Hertler and cellist Laurie Casseday. All are members of the Jacksonville Symphony.

For advance tickets online, go to fchambermusic.org.

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Sports

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Panthers score early and often to beat Sharks

Both lineups continue to heat up lately

By Anthony Richards

It has been quite the run for the Nease Panthers and Ponte Vedra Sharks softball teams of late, as they have won their last four games and have done so by scoring runs, lots of them.

During the stretch, the Panthers (8-4) have won four in a row, which included defeating the rival Sharks 7-3 on March 26, which is one of the sweetest of the wins they have had and definitely had the most bragging rights on the line.

The Panthers did not hesitate to strike early and often against both the Sharks (9-6) and in the game following, a 19-0 romp of St. Augustine High on March 27.

They scored four runs against the Sharks and did not look back, even after the Sharks attempted to get a comeback going with three runs in the top of the sixth, however it proved to be a hole to climb out of.

Seniors Corinna Cioffi and Taylor Burton continued their role as run-producers with a combined five RBIs against the Sharks, including three for Cioffi as she

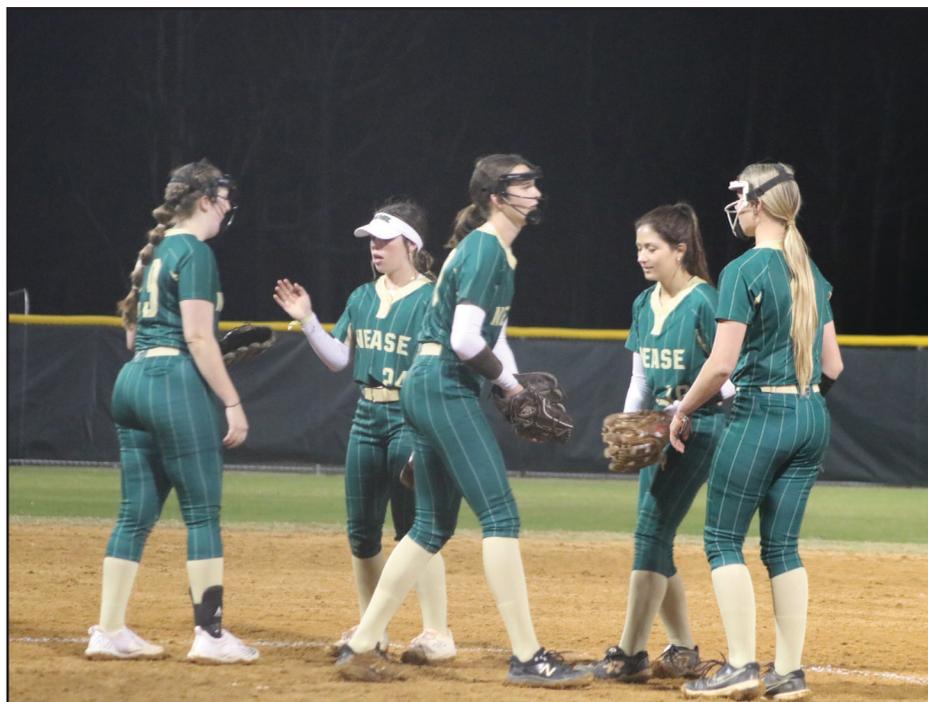


Photo by Anthony Richards

The Panthers have won four in a row, including a 7-3 victory over the rival Sharks.

went three-for-four at the plate in the contest.

Freshman Sydney Davis also drove in a couple of runs thanks to a double.

When the Sharks were eventually able to string together some runs in the sixth inning, it was Drew Gardner who went

two-for-three with a double that led to two runs being scored.

Kristina Campbell picked up the win against the Sharks and Davis earned the save, while Davis followed it up by pitching a three-inning no-hitter as the game had reached a run rule at that point.

There has been no need for save opportunities in the games that have followed, but Davis continued to shine, this time as a starter as she no-hit the Yellow Jackets and had a hit in all four times she came up to bat and did damage on just about every one of those occasions and finished with four RBIs in the 19-run win.

Then, the Panthers handled business against Atlantic Coast High, but this time did the damage late with an explosion of 11 runs in the top of the sixth to eventually put the game out of reach, 16-1 on April 1.

The Sharks have looked the part since their loss to the Panthers as well, as they defeated Glenwood out of Phenix City, Alabama, 4-3, on March 27 and then beat St. Augustine, 17-0, on March 28 and Sandalwood, 12-1, on April 1.

The Sharks have been racking up extra base hits with four doubles against the Yellow Jackets and three more against the Saints.

Aoife Weaver leads the Sharks with nine doubles on the season, while fellow sophomore Nadia Campbell is a terror on the basepaths and has the speed to turn any hit into the outfield gap into a triple and has done just that three times this season.

Sharks flex with two weightlifting district champions

The Ponte Vedra Sharks had a pair of boys weightlifters win district titles in their respective weight classes on March 27. Landon Okla was the traditional champion at 238 pounds and Jon Hughes earned Olympic champion honors in the 169-pound class.

Contributed photos



Landon Okla was the district champion in the 238-pound traditional class.



Senior Jon Hughes stood on the top step as district champion in the 169-pound Olympic division.

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Christine Thoresen,
T & C Home Projects
Legal 83738 Published 4/4/2024 in St. Johns County Ponte Vedra Recorder newspaper

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<p>2016 KIA OPTIMA</p> <p>SALE PRICE \$12,760 92,629 MILES STOCK# GG007669</p>	<p>2020 GMC ACADIA</p> <p>SALE PRICE \$24,530 33,957 MILES STOCK# LZ162068</p>	<p>2023 CHEVROLET EQUINOX</p> <p>SALE PRICE \$19,988 38,315 MILES STOCK# PS176073</p>	<p>2014 CADILLAC CTS-V</p> <p>SALE PRICE \$39,730 45,023 MILES STOCK# E0114928</p>	<p>2020 TESLA MODEL 3</p> <p>SALE PRICE \$30,730 22,093 MILES STOCK# LF713121</p>



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