

# the register

FIRST ON THE FIRST COAST

## *A First Coast* **SUMMER**

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Don't miss this opportunity to scoop up this 1st floor condominium in the most coveted condo community in Old Ponte Vedra. Just a short walk to the beach and it's private footbridge to the Ponte Vedra Inn and Club, it is a perfect home or investment property that will not disappoint. This unit offers eastern exposure with water to golf views, an open floorplan and spacious Florida sunroom. Convenient oversized one car garage is just steps from the front door and offers additional storage.

### 82 San Juan Drive

4BD | 4.5 BA | 3312sf | \$3,150,000

Welcome to this charming custom-built home nestled in the highly desired area of Old Ponte Vedra, offering unparalleled privacy with lush landscape and gorgeous golf course views. The property boasts just under a half an acre, with a large circular drive, side-entry garage and no immediate neighbor to the north. The first floor has 2 bedrooms with ADA compliant doorways and barrier free showers in both full baths and the second floor has 2 more ensuite bedrooms. The mature trees and landscaping provide shade and privacy, creating a tranquil oasis right outside your door.

### 330 Ponte Vedra Blvd.

6BD | 5 BA | 3330sf | \$6,750,000

Rare opportunity to own one of the last original beach homes on the Boulevard in Ponte Vedra Beach or build your dream home from the ground up. Just 12 homes from the Ponte Vedra Inn and Club, this 3,330 sq. ft. home sits on .54 acres with 100 ft. frontage on the Blvd. and backs up to the 3rd tee box of the PVIC Ocean Course. Spacious circular drive already in place, this home has room for everyone with 5 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms in the main house and 1 bedroom and 1 bath suite off the garage. Formal living and dining rooms, large kitchen, Florida room and a large deck overlooking the expansive backyard and golf course. Easy beach access!

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## about the cover



The photo on the cover was provided by St. Johns Premier Boat Rentals.

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# ONE OF US

*Jeff Spear*

as told to **SHAUN RYAN**

**J**effrey Spear, of Jacksonville Beach, is a food writer and president and creative director for Studio Spear, a global branding company for food, beverage and lifestyle. His most recent book is “My Life in Gluttony: A Culinary Adventure.”

## **Tell me about Studio Spear.**

Studio Spear started out as a graphic design studio specializing in logos and trademarks and what have you. Over time, we earned a national and somewhat international reputation for the work that we were doing, and we started attracting clients who needed packaging design.

Then, over time, I decided that the work that we were doing with food and beverage products — the trademarks and the logos and the packaging, whatever — was more fun than anything else, so we specialized in food and beverage.

We’ve been in business 40-plus years. In that time, kind of organically, we’ve become experts in brand development, strategic planning, global marketing and, as a result, we’ve attracted engagements. We now have clients on every continent except for Antarctica.

Now, mind you, the company is basically me and a handful of consultants or contractors that I work with. We’ve always been a small firm. The people I work with, we’ve been working together for anywhere from 12 to 20 years.

## **How is the company structured?**

I wear a number of hats. I am the president of Studio Spear. I’m the director of strategic planning; I’m the only one at Studio Spear that does the strategic part. Then, I’m also the creative director. As creative director I can work with designers, web developers, copywriters, public relations providers, and direct what we produce so that its strategically in line with what our client needs and expects.

And because I’m the strategic guy, I’m the one that keeps everything in line.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jeff Spear holds scallops up in front of his eyes.

## **All your clients appear to be involved in the food industry.**

They are now. When we started out — we were based in L.A. when we started — I would say that our clients were broadly consumer lifestyle products and services. We were representing or working with real estate developers, toys and game manufacturers, healthy living products and then food and beverage. We did some other stuff in finance and technology and what have you, but mostly it was just the consumer lifestyle arena. Because it was a preference and more fun, I narrowed it down to food and beverage.

Now, the one caveat is: all of this happened before the Food Network ever existed. When the Food Network came into play, all of a sudden food became the cool and groovy thing. So, from having very few competitors, all of a sudden, we had lots of competitors. Everybody wanted to play in that same space.

The thing that keeps Studio Spear alive and competitive and important is the fact that we are global so that we bring international perspectives to everything we do. That helps our clients, whether they’re domestic or international. It helps them compete.

The competitive advantage we bring is significant.

## **Your headquarters is Jax Beach.**

Jax Beach. That’s right.

## **Do you live in Jax Beach?**

Yeah, but the people I work with are scattered all over the country. I used to be based in L.A. for a long time and then Baltimore for a while. When I was in Baltimore, that’s when I had most of my contractors come aboard; they were all in the mid-Atlantic.

I wanted to live someplace where there wasn’t snow. They all had preferences, as well, for various reasons and didn’t want to go anywhere, so we never moved in under one roof.

Now I’ve got people out on the West Coast. I’ve got people in the Northeast. I’ve got people here in Jacksonville. We work well together.

## **Anything else you can tell me about your clients?**

The only other thing that I would add is that over the course of time, our clients, some of them, have been quite visible and recognizable. In particular, what put Studio Spear on the map many, many years ago is we were involved with designing the title art for Michael Jackson’s “Bad.” When you see that word “Bad” on the album, that’s literally my work.

... We did a lot of work in the entertainment industry. A lot of movies, movie titles, record album titles. Not the covers. We didn’t do the posters. Just the title art. That’s in the logos and trademarks arena.

But doing that entertainment work was how we got noticed. We worked for Disney, Baskin Robbins, Anheuser Busch, a lot of big companies.

These days, most of our clients are small gourmet food producers. Every now and then we have a bigger client. Locally we work with Beaver Street Fisheries. They’re a big company. But most of our clients are small food producers in various parts of the world.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ■

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## SPEAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

### How did you get into this line of work?

I've had art training since I was 6 years old. I went to a very good art school in Baltimore where I learned the fundamentals of drawing. Went to the University of Arizona with a focus in graphic design.

That graphic design training is where I started. I worked for other people for probably the first few years of my career but then broke off. I wanted to do my own thing — and I've been doing that ever since.

### Tell me about your books.

I write primarily for food-oriented publications, or I write a food column. ...

That's sort of my writing side, but from the marketing side, from the Studio Spear side, I do copywriting for clients. And they're all food and beverage, so I'm doing food-and-beverage writing.

Microplane was one of our clients for a while. (Microplane is a culinary grater or zester, and it is an iconic culinary tool that every chef has.) One of the things that they had us do was develop a cookbook for them.

So, that brought in our food marketing capabilities but also our writing capabilities. The book was actually co-authored by me and a woman named Dara Bunjon [Editor's note: The book's title is "Yum! Tasty Recipes from Culinary Greats."]

With Dara and myself and a few chefs we brought in to help us out, we developed this book, which is our first cookbook.

I was not really culinary at the time. I have culinary training now, but I didn't have it then. Anyway, over time, I acquired culinary training. I'm not a chef, but I have a fair amount of experience and training.

Then, when I moved to Jacksonville, some friends and I decided we wanted to go into publishing, and so

we created our first book, "The First Coast Heritage Cookbook."

It's now out of print. You can find it on Amazon.

"The First Coast Heritage Cookbook" dealt with the culinary traditions along the First Coast from 14,000 B.C., which is the first evidence of human habitation, to 1821, which is basically the cutoff date, because there are a lot of books that happen from the Civil War onward.

We talked about the culinary influences of the indigenous peoples, the European settlers or conquerors, whatever your perspective is — the French, the Spanish and the British — and the Africans that came with them.

So, I did the research and used the Jacksonville Library, the main library. They have a very good selection of older books. And I managed to get the history of Jacksonville through that and found out what people were eating at the time. Did the research and found out where the foods came from. Then, we developed recipes to go with it.

That was the second book.

This latest book is because of the work I'm doing all over the world. [Editor's note: The title is "My Life in Gluttony: A Culinary Adventure."]

The work I do internationally tends to be in countries that are considered emerging economies. They don't have very sophisticated export programs yet, so I come in and help them develop their brand, communicate the value proposition and compete in markets that they're very unfamiliar with.

So, I'm working in Malawi or working in Georgia or working in Ghana or working in Guyana. These are places where the companies don't necessarily know how to enter these higher-value markets, such as the EU or the Middle East or Northern African countries.

So, I'm coming home and telling people about all these wonderful experiences and

some of the food that I've had, and my friends were saying, "Hey Jeff, you ought to write a cookbook."

So, rather than just write a book that starts with my international work, I decided I would take it back to the very beginning and have a book that focuses on all of the remarkable culinary encounters I've had since I was a child.

The book starts in Baltimore when I was a Boy Scout, and one of the first culinary encounters I had that was truly remarkable. I had to pass a test, and I made tuna noodle casserole. So, the recipe for tuna noodle casserole is in my book.

Then, growing up in Maryland, it's crabcakes.

In Washington, D.C., I encountered flourless chocolate cake. In Los Angeles, it was chili dogs. You know, lots of different things in different places.

Then, I started to travel. In Italy, it was gelato. In London, it was scotch eggs or fish and chips. And then you get into places like Malawi, where I encountered char-grilled mouse. It was a very interesting encounter. And I had some of the best hummus in Palestine, in the West Bank.

So, that's what this book is about. It's all adventures in culinary encounters.

### It sounds like a culinary memoir.

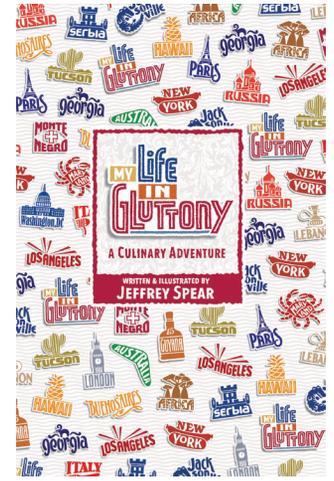
That's what it is.

### When was the book published?

It was published during the pandemic, 2020. I was writing the book while I was overseas on various assignments. I wasn't in any hurry to finish the book, but when the pandemic happened, all of a sudden I had time on my hands. So, I just sat down and finished the book.

The book's done reasonably well. It's available on Amazon, so whenever I promote it, people go online and buy it.

They can get it locally at



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The cover of "My Life in Gluttony: A Culinary Adventure."

The BookMark in Neptune Beach and Happy Medium Books Café in Riverside.

### What do you like best about what you do?

I definitely enjoy eating, so my work is fun. My friends like hanging out with me when I do some of this stuff. They get to experience some of these culinary experiences with me.

### What do you like best about living in Northeast Florida?

The beach. I like the fact that Jacksonville — even though it's growing — is a very manageable place to live. The traffic isn't terrible. The population density issues are not so terrible yet. We'll get there, but we're not there yet.

So, I wanted to move to a smaller place where, you know, the living was easier. It was calmer. I'd been living in big cities all my life. You know, Los Angeles ... The Baltimore-Washington area is a highly, densely populated place. Parking is terrible.

There are amenities in all these places that are definitely worthwhile, but I was just done. I always enjoy going to New York, but I can't wait to get out.

It's quieter and peaceful here. And then from April until November I can cross the street and go hang out on the beach and chill out for a while.



PHOTO BY AMBER ANDERSON

Silver Springs State Park



PHOTO BY ASHLEY BURRELL

Blue Springs State Park

# SUMMERTIME IS SPRING TIME!

## A look at springs you can visit this summer

story by **SHAUN RYAN**  
Contributed photos

**I**n Northeast Florida, we are surrounded by water, primarily the Atlantic Ocean and St. Johns River. But with a short drive, area residents and visitors can enjoy a day at one of Florida's many springs. Here's a list of some of the most notable nearby.

**De Leon Springs State Park:** 601 Ponce De Leon Blvd., De Leon Springs. Open 8 a.m. to sunset, year-round. Fee: \$6 per vehicle. Phone: 386-985-4212. Website: [floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/de-leon-springs-state-park](http://floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/de-leon-springs-state-park). Distance from Ponte Vedra Beach: About 80 miles.

Naturalist John James Audubon visited this spring in 1831. The spring run once turned the sugar cane mill at the site.

Activities here include birding, boat tours, boating, fishing, hiking, paddling, picnicking, scuba diving, snorkeling, swimming and wildlife viewing. The Old Sugar Mill Pancake House is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

**Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park:** 7450 NE 60th St, High Springs. Open 8 a.m. to sunset, year-round. Fee: \$6 per vehicle. Phone: 386-454-1369. Website: [floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/ruth-b-kirby-gilchrist-blue-springs-state-park](http://floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/ruth-b-kirby-gilchrist-blue-springs-state-park). Distance from Ponte Vedra Beach: 107 miles

The main spring run is well-known for its diversity of wildlife species, including turtles, fish and invertebrates. Redbreast and spotted sunfish, largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish can be seen in waters with unparalleled visibility.

Activities here include camping, geo-seeking, hiking, paddling, snorkeling, swimming and wildlife viewing.

**Devil's Den Prehistoric Spring:** 5390 NE 180th Ave., Williston. Open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday through Sunday. Phone 352-528-3344, email [Diveshop@devilsden.com](mailto:Diveshop@devilsden.com) or go to [devilsden.com/home.html](http://devilsden.com/home.html) before visiting. Distance from Ponte Vedra Beach: 121 miles.

Devil's Den is a privately owned scuba diving training center that allows snorkeling.

**Blue Spring State Park:** 2100 W. French Ave., Orange City. Open 8 a.m. to sunset, year-round. Fee: \$6 per vehicle. Phone: 386-775-3663. Website: [floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/blue-spring-state-park](http://floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/blue-spring-state-park). Distance from Ponte Vedra Beach: 107 miles.

Visitors may see manatees, fish, wading birds, ospreys, eagles and kingfishers here.

Activities here include birding, boat tours, camping, fishing, hiking, paddling, picnicking, scuba diving, snorkeling, swimming and tubing.

**Rainbow Springs State Park:** 19158 S.W. 81st Place Road, Dunnellon. Open 8 a.m. to sunset, year-round. Fees vary. Phone: 352-465-8555. Website:

[floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/rainbow-springs-state-park](http://floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/rainbow-springs-state-park). Distance from Ponte Vedra Beach: 130 miles

Rainbow Springs are known for their sapphire-blue waters. Visitors will find ornamental gardens, constructed waterfalls and sloping hills and can walk through lush, mossy hammocks.

Activities here include birding, camping, fishing, geo-seeking, hiking, paddling, picnicking, snorkeling, swimming, tubing walking and running and wildlife viewing.

**Kelly Park/Rock Springs:** 400 E. Kelly Park Road, Apopka. Open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. during the summer. Park Admission Fee: \$3 per vehicle for 1-2 people; \$5 per vehicle for 3-8 people; and \$1 for additional person/walk-ins/motorcycles/bikes. Phone: 407-254-1902. Website: [ocfl.net/cultureparks/parks.aspx?d=22&m=dtlvw](http://ocfl.net/cultureparks/parks.aspx?d=22&m=dtlvw).

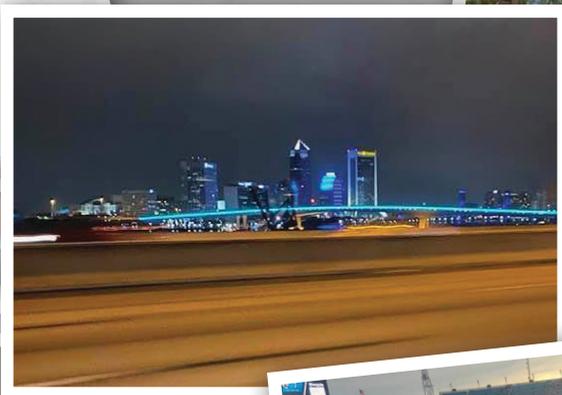
Distance from Ponte Vedra Beach: About 130 miles

**Silver Springs State Park:** 5656 E Silver Springs Blvd., Silver Springs. Open 8 a.m. to sunset, year-round. Fees: glass-bottom boat, \$14-\$30; canoe, \$45-\$85; paddleboard, \$35-\$70; kayak, \$30-\$60. Phone: 352-261-5840. Website: [silversprings.com](http://silversprings.com). Distance from Ponte Vedra Beach: About 100 miles.

The park, famous for its glass-bottom boats, is home to many historic structures, serene gardens and the Silver River Museum.

Activities here include: paddling, hiking, camping. There is also a restaurant and gift shop.

# FACES OF *The First Coast*



Faces Of The First Coast is an exclusive feature for First Coast Register readers to get to know prominent business leaders in Northeast Florida's coastal communities.

*If you would like to be featured in Faces of the First Coast, please contact us at (904) 285-8831.*

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Lucky me! I have been a Realtor in my home, Northeast Florida, for nearly 40 years. I grew up in Jacksonville and moved to the beach in my 20s. I studied architecture and interior design in college, feeding my love of homes and style. After graduation, I worked in media, where I learned the art of listening and asking questions, marketing and advertising.

In 1985, I transitioned from media to real estate, joining Watson Realty's Ponte Vedra office. It was meant to be! Serving customers by customizing promotions for their homes and researching housing options for buyers is exciting. The reward of finding a seller or a buyer the perfect match is what keeps me charged up about real estate. In 1990, I moved to the original Marsh Landing Realty, where I learned about lots and builders and the development process.

In 1993, I opened my own brokerage, Berry & Co. Real Estate. Our first listing was The Ponte Vedra Carlyle, 48 new condominiums on Ponte Vedra Boulevard: new homes, premier location, and Lodge membership for every purchaser! It was great foundation for building a robust general brokerage. We have helped hundreds of buyers and sellers with their residential real estate needs. We take pride in our market knowledge – it is the foundation for the extra level of service we provide our customers.

My customers describe me as “one of our most trusted advisors”... “responsive, kind and honest”... “always felt we were in good hands”...”stands out from the rest regarding professionalism, true customer satisfaction and a real passion to do things the right way.” I help make buying and selling real estate efficient, enjoyable and rewarding by offering my knowledge and insights, so my customers can use my experience to help them make decisions.

While homebase for our office is Ponte Vedra Beach, we also are active in neighboring Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach, Atlantic Beach and Nocatee as well as greater Jacksonville. Our real estate market is ever-changing and always intriguing. I'm grateful for the challenges and opportunities each new day brings.



FACES OF THE FIRST COAST

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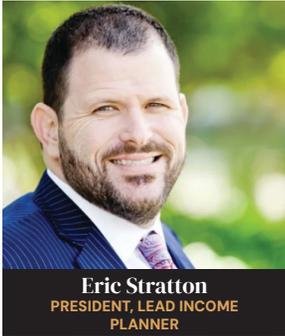
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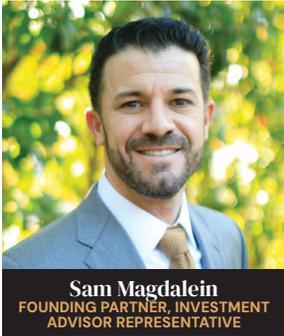
Established in 1993, Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery has been providing our community with life-changing aesthetic procedures for three decades. In that time, we have grown, progressed, and evolved into five locations, six plastic surgeons, eight advanced practice providers, and eight skin health specialists covering Northeast Florida.

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St. Johns Premier Boat Rentals seeks to add to the boating experience as a whole.



Peter and Heather Sutton are a husband-and-wife duo that opened St. Johns Premier Boat Rentals roughly three months ago.

# BOATING WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY IN MIND

story by ANTHONY RICHARDS photos courtesy of ST. JOHNS PREMIER BOAT RENTALS

## St. Johns Premier Boat Rentals taps into lifestyle on the water

**B**oating and summertime go together like few things in the world, because as the temperatures rise it is human nature to spend time around bodies of water both to cool off and for recreational purposes.

Fortunately, for residents of the First Coast there are many bodies of water to choose from whether it is of the saltwater variety with the Atlantic Ocean or the freshwater of the St. Johns River and all the rivers that feed from it.

This summer there is a new boat rental option in town with St. Johns Premier Boat Rental for those who seek the thrill of the water without wanting to dive into boat ownership.

The boat rental business was started by the husband-and-wife duo of Peter and Heather Sutton, and they started the operation roughly three months ago.

“The idea was born out of our desire to



Family memories are waiting on the water this summer.

rent a boat ourselves, but we wanted to find an option outside of St. Augustine or Orange Park,” Heather Sutton said.

They are located in the Fruit Cove area of St. Johns and seek to offer options for boating along the St. Johns River.

According to Heather Sutton, because they were just a family looking for boat rental options prior to owning the business, they feel that customers appreciate the viewpoints they bring with their approach to boat rentals.

“We wanted to cruise the waters in our own backyard, and we felt others were looking for the same thing,” Heather Sutton said. “It’s really taken off so far

and it shows the interest in boating that’s out there.”

One of the ways they approach their business is by making sure they are not just renting a boat but that they are adding to the experience as a whole.

“It’s all about an additional lifestyle offering,” Peter Sutton said.

Some of the features on their boats to add to the experience include televisions, tubes, paddle boards and a container of fuel on board so that they will likely not have to stop and purchase more.

They hope to add jet skis to rent in the future as well.

“We think of what we would appreciate as a family out on the water,” Heather Sutton said. “If it’s not something we would use ourselves we don’t consider it. Our boaters get excited knowing that we share the same sentiment they do.”

Another way that sentiment as a business is with their pricing, as they do not have memberships fees and strive

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 ■

# Pain, Tingling or Numbness in Your Feet?

By Andrea Ide

**P**ain, Tingling, or Numbness in your hands, feet or legs may be due to Nerve Damage. If left untreated this small annoyance can lead to big problems. Unfortunately, most people have no idea what to do about this problem and some don't even realize how big of a problem it is. They tell their doctor who gives them drugs and injections which only mask the pain and there is no surgery, other than amputation, that will heal/stop neuropathy from progressing.

**Neuropathy** is a term used to describe damaged nerves, primarily in the hands and/or feet, that are progressively breaking down due to a lack of blood supply, nutrients and oxygen reaching the nerves along with a lack of communication from the brain. Since the nerves are what the brain uses to communicate with the area and they are breaking down, the brain's ability to communicate with the area lessens over time, allowing for the progression of more breakdown and worse symptoms. It can be caused by Diabetes, Poor Circulation, Poor Nutrition, Chemotherapy, Agent Orange, Misaligned Spinal Bones Placing Pressure on the Nerves, along with over 100 other causes. "Patients experience extreme sensations, loss of feeling, even No Feelings in their Hands and/or Feet along with muscle spasms, pain, weakness, numbness, tingling, and burning and many have a very hard time with balance" says Dr. Nathan Riddle of Riddle Wellness, a Neuropathy testing and treatment clinic.

This condition can eventually lead to further nerve damage, causing **complete loss of legs or arms leading to amputation**, death or brain injury due to falls, burns or other injuries that will not heal, along with organ failure in some cases.

Are you or someone you love suffering with loss of balance, numbness or pain from Nerve Damage in your hands and/or feet that just won't heal? You don't have to any longer. This local clinic right here in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL is helping people find lasting relief without the use of drugs or surgery! That's **BIG NEWS!**

## HEALING IS POSSIBLE

More than 20 million people in the U.S. Are dealing with some form of Neuropathy. Most commonly noticed first in the hands or feet, causing weakness, numbness, tingling pain and debilitating balance problems, often frustrated with no place to turn to and no hope of recovery. "By the time they come to see us, they feel like they have tried

everything. Their MD put them on Anti-Seizure or Epilepsy meds like Gabapentin, Neurotin, Cymbalta or Lyrica and told them they will just have to live with the pain," said Dr. Riddle.

## ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

With recent advancements in nerve regeneration technology and treatment options, clinics all over are seeing larger success rates and faster results with their neuropathy patients.

"This new technology paired with our multifaceted approach, has been life altering for our patients and our clinic," said Dr. Riddle.

The development and success of these new, highly effective Neuropathy Protocols by Dr. Riddle and his team at Riddle Wellness have been the talk of the town in recent months. "Neuropathy patients have been coming in from all over the state and the results that they are getting is truly amazing," said the Patient Coordinator at the Clinic. There are some things people can do at home to aide in the healing process of their neuropathy however, **healing neuropathy is an all-encompassing process that will require lifestyle**

new treatment option! They state it has about a 98% effective rate!

## FIND LASTING RELIEF

**Claim Your Voucher Now for a Consultation & Examination** to determine if you are a good candidate for treatment... Dr. Riddle and his care team are here once again to help readers learn about new options for finding pain relief! Call the clinic today to receive your comprehensive (valued at \$250).

## New Treatment Options for Neuropathy

*"Numb feet and legs better!"*

-Jean L

*"Reducing gabapentin with Riddle Wellness neuropathy protocols!"*

-Ray F

**changes, home care and may or may not include chiropractic, (varying from patient to patient) along with guidance from a medical professional that is experienced, skilled and trained to treat neuropathy.**

Dr. Riddle and his skilled care team in Ponte Vedra Beach FL have been treating neuropathy for years now in and judging by their 5 Star patient reviews, and all their patient video testimonials, they have been doing a very good job providing excellent patient care. One person had all but given up, they were crying in their testimonial. They were so thankful and its all because of this amazing

The clinic utilizes the most advanced Pain Free Testing and a full, easy to understand report of finding with Dr. Riddle going over your options for care if you are able to move forward.

**Call 904-395-5598 and use Code NUMB0021.** They have agreed to reduce their usual cost of \$250.

But hurry, due to the number of patients the office can see, this is a limited time offer, with only 25 spaces at this exclusively discounted rate. These will be on a first come, first serve basis, messages left will count. **My advise, don't suffer any longer, waiting around for it to get worse...** If you or your loved one is experienc-

ing pain, numbness, tingling, pins and needle sensations, cramps and burning in your feet, or hands, along with the many other bodily symptoms this horrible condition plagues people with, take action because it will progress.

Not everyone is able to start care at the clinic but, those who do are thankful! Find out if you are a candidate for their Neuropathy Protocols so they can help you regain the feeling in your hands or feet, stop the pain and start living life again! "Our Neuropathy Protocol is a multifaceted approach to heal neuropathy by nurturing the nervous system, increasing circulation, blood and oxygen, working to rebuild, strengthen and balance the body, all while stimulating the damaged nerves. Revitalizing and healing the damaged areas, enabling them to reactivate and function at an increasingly higher rate over time, all while increasing the patients quality of life dramatically," said Dr. Riddle.

Over the years they have treated thousands of patients with chronic conditions of Neuropathy, Sciatic nerve pain, Back & Neck problems, Whiplash Injuries along with Knee Pain. The office is well known and has a good reputation. Patients drive hours to this clinic and the vast majority enjoy superior, lasting relief. In fact, many who have suffered and tried other treatment options with no luck, only to have been told that they are just stuck with their pain and discomfort, have credited the care team at Dr. Riddle office for giving them their lives back!

Call them now at their **Ponte Vedra Beach, FL** location, for a full, thorough Consultation and extensive Neuropathy Examination at \$49. Use **Code: NUMB0021** (saving you over \$200) to determine if and how Dr. Riddle and his team can help you recover, just as they have helped so many others that suffer with the Pain and Numbness of Nerve Damage.





# IT'S TIME FOR SOMETHING COOL!

## Here are some local places where you can get a frozen treat

story by **SHAUN RYAN**  
Contributed photos

**T**here's no better time than summer for a delicious frozen treat, and fortunately for area residents, there's no shortage of shops offering a wide range of products and flavors.

Lets' take a look at a couple of the newest additions to the local frozen treat marketplace.

**Cookiebird Ice Cream Bar**, located at 138 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine, celebrated its grand opening June 2. Owners of the neighborhood ice cream shop are Mike and Kate Alfieri.

The shop serves soft-serve ice cream in a variety of flavors in flavored waffle cones with a range of premium toppings. Among its other offerings is a "sandwich" of sweet brioche milk bun with ice cream, which is then heated and sealed with a dusting of powdered sugar.

Hours are noon to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, and noon to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The phone number is 904-815-3399

**Rita's Italian Ice & Frozen Custard** opened May 15 at 840 A1A North, Ponte Vedra Beach, with a celebratory grand opening held on June 7. Like other Rita's franchises, this one, owned by Scott and Jenny McLaughlin features Italian ice, frozen custard, gelati and many more items.

The shop is currently open noon to 9 p.m. seven days a week year-round. The phone number is 904-686-1495. The email address is ritaspontevedra@gmail.com.

Here's a look at some of the other shops. The list is by no means exhaustive.

**Ben & Jerry's**, 295 Pine Lake Drive, Suite C101, Ponte Vedra, has been promoting its non-dairy options, which are made with high-quality oat milk.

These alternative treats are especially desired by those who are lactose intolerant, have dairy allergies or follow a vegan lifestyle.

The shop is open noon to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and noon to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

The phone number is 904-441-1240. The Facebook page is facebook.com/BenJerryNocatee.

**DeNucci's**, located at 2210 Sadler Road, Fernandina Beach, is open 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week. Phone: 904-310-6837. Website: denuccis.com

**Flo's Premium Ice Cream**, located at 880 A1A N Ste. 11, Ponte Vedra Beach, is open 3-9 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, 3 to 9:30 p.m. Friday, 2 to 9:30 p.m. Saturday and 2-8 p.m. Sunday. Phone: 904-999-9013. Instagram page: instagram.com/flos.icecream.

**Gator Ice Cream**, located at 1010-B 3rd St. N., Jacksonville Beach, is open noon to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 1-10 p.m. Sunday. Phone: 904-435-4581. Website: gatoricecream.com.

**Island Time Ice Cream & Frozen Yogurt**, located at 306 Centre St., Fernandina Beach, is open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week. Phone: 904-432-7147. Website: islandtimefrozenyogurt.com

**Kelly's Homemade Ice Cream**, located inside Foxtail Coffee Co., 260 Front St., Suite 260 in Sawgrass Village, Ponte Vedra Beach, features handcrafted ice cream and sorbet, all made from scratch. Hours are 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week. The phone number is 904-834-7290. The website is foxtailcoffee.com/locations/ponte-vedra-beach.

**Mayday Ice Cream** has several locations locally, each with its own hours and phone number. The company website is maydayicecream.com.

- 100 Marketside Ave. No. 303 Ponte Vedra Beach. Phone: 904-770-6308. Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

- 1198 Beach Blvd., Suite 7, Jacksonville Beach. Phone: 904-732-9948.

Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday though Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

- 2400 Third St. S., Unit 202, Jacksonville Beach. Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday through Saturday.

- 461 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine. Phone: 904-342-2593. Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday.

- 1765 Tree Blvd., Suite 5, St. Augustine. Phone: 904-342-7816. Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

- 90 Riverside Ave., Suite 605, Jacksonville. Phone: 904-551-0361. Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

- 1432 Hendricks Ave., Jacksonville. Phone: 904-551-7188. Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

- 725 Skymarks Drive, Suite 12, Jacksonville. Phone: 904-518-4196. Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

- 4853 Big Island Drive No. 3, Jacksonville. Hours: Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday

**Millie's Homemade Ice Cream & Coffee**, located at 830 A1A N. Suite 16, Ponte Vedra Beach, is open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, and 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday through Sunday. Phone: 904-686-1437. Email: jaxtruck@millieshomemade.com. Website: millieshomemade.com.

**Mox Ice Cream & Coffee**, located at 1013 Atlantic Blvd., Atlantic Beach, is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Website: moxicecream.com.

**The Pink Parlor Ice Cream**, located at 125 Rainier Lane, St. Johns, is open noon to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Phone: 904-705-4141. Website:

## BOATS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

to have price points that can fit varying budgets.

Boaters can choose a half or full day rental and the cost of a boat is as low as \$150.

“This was a gap we really wanted to address when it came to boat rentals,” Peter Sutton said. “We are so lucky to have the St. Johns River here for us to enjoy and no one should be left out.”

As a new business, St. Johns Premier Boat Rentals currently has a fleet of four 24-foot pontoon boats, but they are looking to expand and grow their options in the future.

Their fleet of pontoons offers a certain flexibility that they believed other boats do not, as they are large enough to fit 10 people comfortably, but the pontoon is also not too much manage for a couple just looking to go out on the water for the day.

“Our boats are a little larger than a lot of others out there, but the price is per boat and not per person,” Heather Sutton said. “We feel you can never have too much space when on a boat.”

## TREATS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

thepinkparloricecream.com.

**Rita's Italian Ice & Frozen Custard** has several other locations in addition to the new one described above. Here's a look:

- 13529 Beach Blvd. Suite 101, Jacksonville. Phone: 904-685-5073. Website: ritasice.com/location/ritas-of-hodges-station-fl. Hours: Noon to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, noon to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

- 393 3rd St. N., Jacksonville Beach. Phone: 904-372-9634. Website: ritasice.com/location/ritas-of-jacksonville-beach-fl. Hours: Noon to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, noon to 10 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

- 380 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine. Phone: 904-461-0977. Website: ritasice.com/location/ritas-of-st-augustine-fl. Hours: Noon to 9 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday, noon to 10 p.m. Thursday through Saturday.

**Smallcakes Cupcakery and Creamery**, located at 13740 Beach Blvd. No. 113, Jacksonville, is open 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and

Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Phone: 904-574-8665. Website: smallcakesjax.com.

**The Sweet Spot**, located at 32 St. George St., St. Augustine, and at 41 PGA Tour Blvd., Ponte Vedra, is open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week.

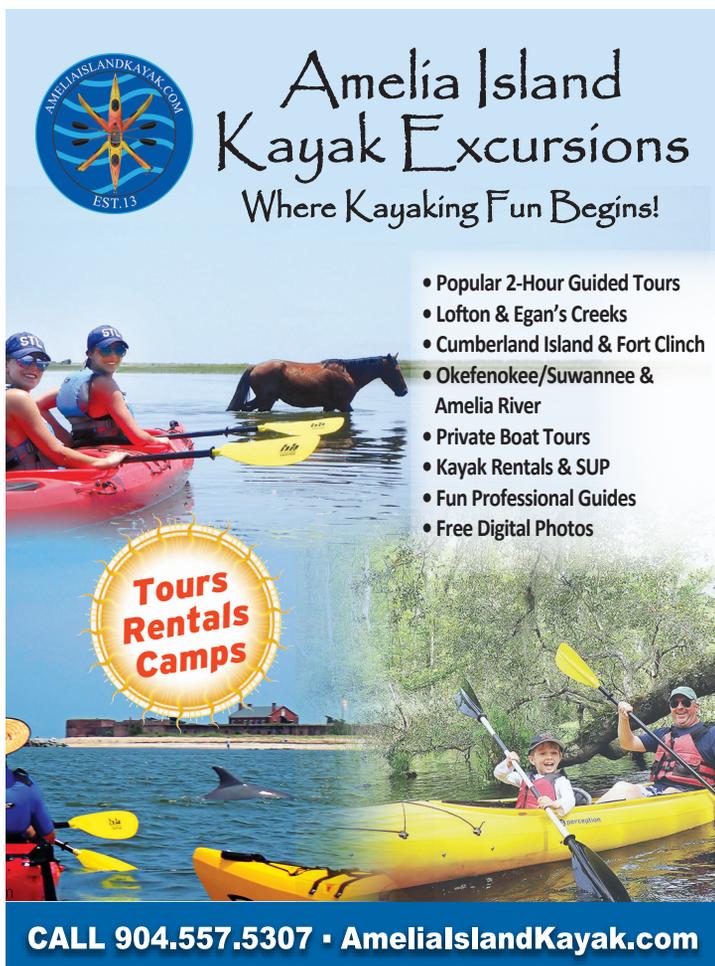
**Twisted Turtle Creamery LLC**, located at 425 W. Town Place, Suite 116, St. Augustine, is open 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 1-7 p.m. Sunday. Phone: 904-460-2643. Email: twistedturtlecreeamery23@gmail.com. Website: twistedturtlecreeamery.godaddy.com.

**Whit's Frozen Custard** has a few locations in the area. All are open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week. Here's a look:

- 38 Ocean Blvd, Atlantic Beach. Phone: 904-853-5384. Website: whitscustard.com/locations/atlantic-beach

- 1232 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville Beach. Phone: 904-595-5891. Website: whitscustard.com/locations/jacksonvillebeach

- 12525 Philips Highway, Suite 113, Jacksonville. Phone: 904-503-5944. Website: whitscustard.com/locations/south-jacksonville

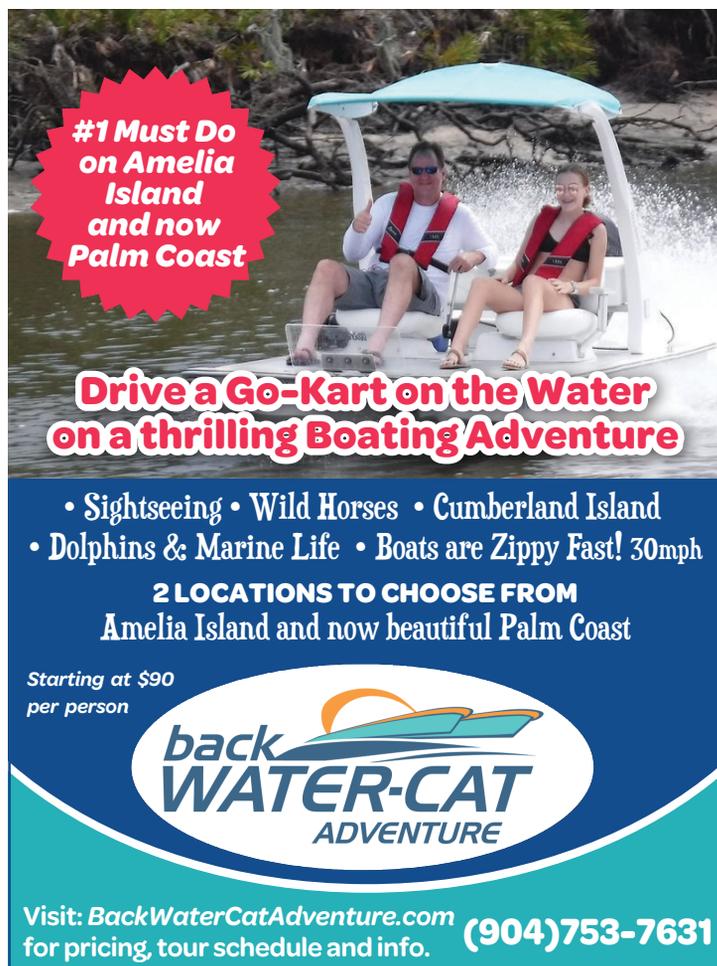


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# JAGUARS' ROOKIES JOIN SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES AT CAMP

story and photos by  
**ANTHONY RICHARDS**

**T**he Jacksonville Jaguars teamed up with Special Olympics to provide a memorable experience for 63 local special needs individuals.

It is an annual event that the Jaguars host each summer and one that the special needs community in Northeast Florida looks forward to.

The experience included a jam-packed day of fun experiences including a tour of EverBank Stadium, as well as a stop in the locker room where each attendee was given their own personalized jersey and got to see their name placed above their locker.

The locker nameplates were given to each attendee to take home as a souvenir to remember the day that was, which also included the Special Olympics athletes signing one-day contracts to become members of the Jaguars team.

Taylor Simpson was one of the Special Olympics athletes that took part in the day's festivities, which as a diehard Jaguars fan was a dream of his.



He was excited to be able to go through the experience with his family by his side.

"We've always been big football fans, and I think it is great fun to be out there on the field," Simpson said.



Simpson's favorite player is Trevor Lawrence, and he was looking forward to the opportunity to throw during the drills because his favorite position is quarterback.

Other than getting to be on the field with the players, his favorite part of the day was when he got his jersey and saw his name on the back of it.

After their contract signings, they made their way to the field to take a photo where the professionals play and then went to the flex field where they met and took part in various drills with members of the Jaguars' rookie class.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ■



# FUN IN THE SUMMERTIME ON THE H2O

story by **AMBER BULLINGTON TIPTON**  
Contributed photo

**O**ur area is rich with many of the coolest options to get “out on the water.” The best part is that we live here and don’t have to pack for a long trip! This summer is the perfect time to get outdoors and enjoy all that our area and nature have to offer.

Boating, kayaking, SUP (stand-up paddleboarding), jet skiing, swimming, fishing, lounging, exploring springs or tidal pools, or stopping off on a sandbar are just a few of the endless opportunities for fun, relaxation and adventure on the water!

Why is water important and why are we drawn to the water? Approximately 70% of the Earth’s surface is covered in water, approximately 50%-75% of the human body is made up of water and being on the water is proven to be beneficial to our general health and is peaceful and refreshing for the soul.



Amelia Island Kayak Excursions kayakers encounter a dolphin near Fort Clinch.

Water is life!

Among the fun ways to experience the water this summer is by taking a boat out for a spin. Whether you have your own boat or rent one for the day, there's nothing quite like the feeling of cruising along the water with the wind in your hair and the sun on your face. You can explore new areas, discover hidden coves and even try your hand at fishing or other

water sports like skiing, wakeboarding, etc.

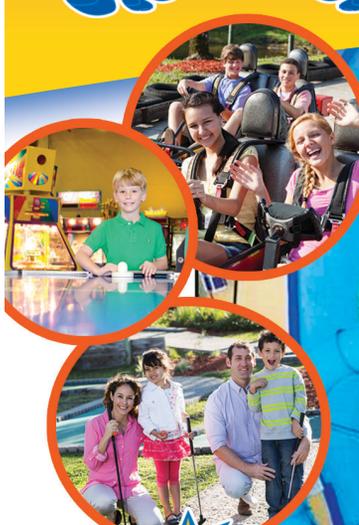
For those looking for another water adventure, kayaking is a great option. Kayaking allows you to get up close and personal with nature, as you paddle through calm waters, navigate through

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 ■



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## CAMP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

“I know everyone in this (rookie) class is really passionate about serving the local community,” said Jaguars kicker Cam Little, who was recently drafted in the sixth round out of the University of Arkansas.

According to Little, some of the guys have even done things and always looked to get involved in supporting community initiatives while they were in college and that will only carry over now that they are professional athletes.

Being out on the field and interacting with fans at the camp could not help but flood back the memories of when Little was a child and got to get up close and

personal with his favorite athletes.

“I went to a lot of Oklahoma City Thunder things when I was younger and I still remember those days,” Little said. “Just to know the impact that I can have on the younger generation is something I put up there with every accomplishment I’ve ever had on the field. It can go



unnoticed a lot, but it’s such a necessity to use the platforms that we have as professional athletes.”

It was a touching moment for all those involved, and the smiles and laughs were endless for both athletes, Jaguars players and the families watching from the sidelines.

Special needs is something that has always been close to Little’s heart and as a result he developed a relationship with the Down Syndrome Connection of Northwest Arkansas while in college.

“Obviously, I’m looking to continue that legacy here as well, and it’s definitely something that’s near and dear to my heart,” Little said. “I’m currently on the search to find a Down syndrome association around here, and eventually I want to start a foundation of my own.”

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[ first coast summer ]

# JACKSONVILLE ZOO LIGHTS UP SUMMER WITH ILLUMINIGHTS

story by **ANTHONY RICHARDS** photo courtesy of **JACKSONVILLE ZOO AND GARDENS**

The Jacksonville Zoo is a popular place for the family to visit throughout the year, and their spectacular exhibits are known to bring about amazement.

The latest of these exhibits include IllumiNights Summer Spectacle, which seeks to highlight the zoo's beauty and shine it in a whole new light.

The spectacle will feature colorful light displays designed to capture the imagination of visitors and bring a new vibe to the animals that are the main attractions while learning about them from experts and experiencing some close-up opportunities for interaction.

IllumiNights Summer Spectacle will be lighting up the night until July 28 and



The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is featuring IllumiNights Summer Spectacle on various nights until July 28.

will take place from 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

It is the third annual spectacle and one of the unique aspects is that it strives to make no night the same with various musical performances and other interactive acts rotating on

the calendar.

Part of the musical selection will even include the opportunity for attendees to perform karaoke, adding to the live entertainment vibe.

The event will take place in the zoo's botanical gardens with tickets ranging from \$20

to \$40 for members and \$25 to \$50 for non-members.

Tickets will include admission to the zoo's 4D theater and wildlife carousel and food and refreshments available for purchase.

The zoo closes at 5 p.m. and the gates will re-open for the IllumiNights at 6:30 p.m. Separate tickets will need to be purchased exclusively for the spectacle.

A happy hour special will be held each event night from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the zoo's Watering Hole, which has been recently renovated.

The specific nights the spectacle will take place changes throughout the summer, so the times for that week can be found by going to [jacksonvillezoo.org/illumiNights](http://jacksonvillezoo.org/illumiNights).

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For more information email [FJAcFoundationEvents@Ascension.org](mailto:FJAcFoundationEvents@Ascension.org)

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Richard Parkes and Chance Gerisch are the owners of Toon Town Pickleball in downtown Jacksonville.



Toon Town has a unique look, and it is pretty obvious how the facility got its name.

# TOON TOWN PICKLEBALL BRINGS UNIQUE VIBE TO DOWNTOWN JAX

story and photos by  
ANTHONY RICHARDS

**P**ickleball continues to be a growing craze in America and now it has hit downtown Jacksonville and in a big way with the opening of Toon Town Pickleball.

Toon Town has become the largest indoor pickleball facility in Jacksonville as it has six courts and is about 20,000 square feet in size.

However, not only does the facility stick out because of its pure size, but what makes it impossible to miss is the fact that the walls of its exterior and interior are brightly colored and consist of cartoon artwork, hence the name Toon Town.

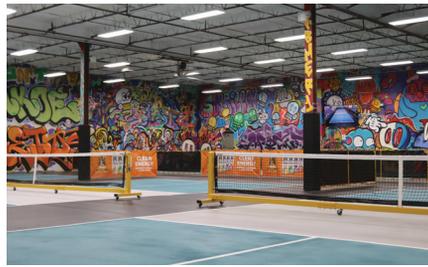
Co-owner Chance Gerisch bought the warehouse about seven years ago with the purpose of using it to house food trucks, which is also when the idea for the outside of the building was discovered.

"I was in the food truck business at the time, and we were at a food truck rally, and I saw some kids doing graffiti art on canvases," Gerisch said. "I told them, 'Why don't they come down,' and they just had at it."

The idea for the business model is unique in many ways but it is an aspect that Gerisch and fellow owner Richard Parkes believe the people of Northeast Florida will gravitate to, while also bringing even more attention and interest into the happenings in the downtown Jacksonville footprint.

"We were 'Toon Town' before we were even Toon Town Pickleball, so it really was one of those cases where the name found us," Parkes said. "From a business standpoint, we just knew it couldn't be named anything else."

After Gerisch got out of the food truck



Toon Town is the largest indoor pickleball facility in Jacksonville as it has six courts and is about 20,000 square feet in size.

business he still had the building and was wondering what he could do to utilize the space.

"This guy (Parkes) came walking in one day, and I had never met him before in my life, and said 'We need pickleball in here,'" Gerisch said. "I had never even heard of pickleball at the time."

Three years later, the idea presented by Parkes became a reality as Toon Town Pickleball held a grand opening on June 8.

One of the things they wanted to come across as soon as people walk through the doors of Toon Town is the social atmosphere that they have strived to create.

"It's a very social game and we like to embrace that," Parkes said. "We play what we call open play where the 'next up' plays, so one game you might be playing with someone and then the next game you might be playing against them. It creates a very social and competitive dynamic."

According to Parkes, it was important for the courts to have the same surfaces as outdoor courts even though they are

indoors.

"There are only seven indoor pickleball courts with outdoor surfaces in Jacksonville and we have six of them," Parkes said.

Other features include each court being equipped with cameras and technology that allows players to record their play and there are 85-inch televisions that can show the play going on.

"It's great for capturing and playing back those wild shots that take place on the court that would otherwise be forgotten," Parkes said.

There are seating areas between each court where players can wait while the ongoing games wrap up or for friends and family members who want to support their loved ones playing.

Giant fans hang from the ceiling throughout the facility to help the air flow circulate throughout and keep playing conditions cool, and there is a vending machine designed for pickleball where players can select their paddles and balls.

Toon Town offers beginners clinics and has leagues for players of all skill levels, proving that anyone is welcome to pick up a paddle and play and every type of player can call the facility their own.

Being located downtown and pretty much across from the stadium near the exit ramp of the Hart Bridge, they are looking forward to football season and the amount of foot traffic and interactive things they can do on Jaguars' gamedays.

"We're even planning on doing away game gatherings, so it can be a great mix of football and pickleball," Parkes said.

Toon Town is a member-based facility, but walk-ins are welcome. Upcoming clinics and leagues can be found by going to [jaxtoontown.com](http://jaxtoontown.com) for more information.



# PERGOLAS, SCREENS MAKE SUMMER BETTER IN SUNSHINE STATE

story by **SHAUN RYAN**  
Contributed photos

Summer is the season when residents all along the First Coast seek to spend as much time in their backyard oases as possible. But that sunlight can be a bit relentless if no shade is available.

Which is why homeowners contact businesses like Titan Outdoor Solutions. “We’re an outdoor solutions specialist,” said company President Melanie Fraser, who co-owns the business with husband Bill Davis. “We specialize in shade. We are the North Florida dealer for Struxure smart pergolas and Fenetex Retractable Screens. We also do things like pavers, travertine, outdoor kitchens, fireplaces, all that good stuff.”

When a customer calls to inquire about adding one of these products, Titan sends out a design consultant and performs the consultation free of charge. Because each homeowner’s needs are different, all jobs are customized. And all of the



Titan consultants have a background in construction.

“We do customized jobs that other people cannot do,” said Fraser. “The skill

level of our employees, and my husband in particular, is above and beyond. ... My husband built aluminum sailboats. He was a Boeing flight test manager. He built airplanes. And he’s a master carpenter. He knows his mediums; he knows how to make it work.”

Titan’s work is sought not just locally but internationally as well. The team is sometimes sent to places in the Caribbean, for instance. Recently, it tackled a job in Mexico, where it required a five-hour drive just to reach to work site.

“If we can get there, we’ll get it done,” Fraser said. “There’s no job that’s too tough for us.”

In the United States, as well, Titan has done work for a lot of commercial projects, restaurants, hotels and more. Recently, it did an installation for a casino in Sacramento, California.

Fraser attributes Titan’s success in part

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 ■



Tropical Bay Breeze



Sunnyside Sangria



Spicy Matcha Margarita

## SUMMER IS HERE! TIME TO COOL OFF WITH A COCKTAIL

### FOR THE REGISTER

Contributed photos

The kids are out of school, the A/C is blasting and the sun is shining late into the day — Summer is on, and The Spice & Tea Exchange has recipes, infusions and ingredients that will take your beverages to new refreshing heights.

Whether you're heading to a backyard barbecue with a cocktail pitcher in hand or wanting to elevate your cocktail hour by the pool, the expansive and innovative recipes by The Spice & Tea Exchange blend new, bright flavors and offer unique twists on classics.

With ingredients so dynamic and versatile, you may even find yourself crafting your own custom drink for summer 2024. Until then, explore these excellent recipes, with ingredients and how-to preparations just a click away.

• **Tropical Bay Breeze** — Layered with Hibiscus Flower – Cut & Sifted tea, this vibrant beverage transports you to a vacation on the water. Combine Mango Tango Herbal Tea infused vodka, Mango Sugar simple syrup, pineapple juice and fresh lime to create a cocktail perfectly sweet and tart. For ingredients and recipe, go to [spiceandtea.com/Tropical-Bay-Breeze](https://spiceandtea.com/Tropical-Bay-Breeze).

• **Sunnyside Sangria** — Perfect for prepping ahead of time, this light and crisp white wine sangria infuses a dry white wine with Green Tropical Green Tea. Make a homemade syrup with Mango Sugar and Peppermint Herbal Tea, add lemons, frozen fruit, pineapple juice, and brandy to your favorite pitcher, and store until party time. Top with sparkling wine or club soda and

garnish with sprigs of fresh herbs. For ingredients and recipe, go to [spiceandtea.com/Sunnyside-Sangria\\_2](https://spiceandtea.com/Sunnyside-Sangria_2).

• **Spicy Matcha Margarita** — Spice up your summer with a cocktail tailored to your desired heat and sweet. Rim glasses with Chile Lime Sea Salt and add tequila, lime juice, pineapple juice and agave to a shaker. Add matcha from the Matcha Tin — Ceremonial and fill with ice. Shake vigorously, strain, and pour over ice. Garnish with limes or pepper slices, depending on how spicy you want your summer to be. For ingredients and recipe, go to [spiceandtea.com/Spicy-Matcha-Margarita](https://spiceandtea.com/Spicy-Matcha-Margarita).



Blood Orange Tea Sparkler

• **Blood Orange Tea Sparkler** — For a snappy, tangy cocktail, infuse Blood Orange Smoothie Herbal Tea with a citrus-forward gin. Combine Florida Sunshine Sugar with blood orange zest for a zing on the rim of your favorite tropical glass. Fresh blood orange juice and ginger beer make this sparkler tingle your taste

buds. For ingredients and recipe, go to [spiceandtea.com/Blood-Orange-Tea-Sparkler](https://spiceandtea.com/Blood-Orange-Tea-Sparkler).



Watermelon Hibiscus Mimosa

• **Watermelon Hibiscus Mimosa** — This beautifully pink coupe cocktail blends Hibiscus Sugar simple syrup with fresh watermelon and orange juice. Top with sparkling wine or make it a kid-friendly mocktail by swapping in seltzer or sparkling white grape juice. For ingredients and recipe, go to [spiceandtea.com/Watermelon-Hibiscus-Mimosa](https://spiceandtea.com/Watermelon-Hibiscus-Mimosa).

The Spice & Tea Exchange has four locations on the First Coast:

- 59 Hypolita St., St. Augustine. Phone: 904-826-3770
- 167 San Marco Ave., St. Augustine. Phone: 904-495-4493
- 1960 San Marco Blvd., Jacksonville. Phone: 904-423-1671
- 316 Centre St., Fernandina Beach. Phone: 904-432-7897

## PERGOLAS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

to its emphasis on customer service.

In addition, it only works with manufacturers that offer lifetime warranties and products that don't deteriorate, which is important to homeowners in Northeast Florida, which has a salty environment.

"The last thing we want is for someone to spend a bunch of money and something happens in, like, seven years," Fraser said. "Some other smart pergolas, they only have a five-year warranty."

The smart pergolas sold by Titan are hurricane-rated for winds of up to 145 mph with the louvers closed.

"With them open, it can blow as hard as it wants to," said Fraser. "It's not going anywhere."

This quality is good for permitting, especially when

the pergola is attached to the home.

Beyond the product, Titan offers a 25-year warranty on the installation.

Smart pergolas are a big trend right now. The louvers in these are automated. That regulates the amount of sunlight the homeowner wants to admit. It also makes it easier to protect the outdoor space from rain.

In addition, these pergolas have integrated gutter systems to channel that rain away.

Another big trend is the outdoor kitchen as al fresco dining is becoming very popular.

Titan opened in 2016 as a factory installer for Fenetex Retractable Screens. When that company began to grow, it did not want to become a dealership, so Fraser and Davis agreed to start a dealership.

To learn more about Titan Outdoor Solutions, go to [titanshuttersandscreens.com](http://titanshuttersandscreens.com).

## FUN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

narrow channels and explore secluded beaches. It's a great way to get some exercise while also enjoying the peace and serenity of the water. This option offers the perfect way to unwind and escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

One of the best parts of spending time on the water this summer is the chance to experience new things and create lasting memories. To make getting outdoors even easier, if you do not have your own gear or are just looking for someone to explore with, check out Amelia Island Kayak Excursions for kayaking, SUP, or private motorboat tours.

As a local family-owned/operated, multi-award-winning business, with their fun and professional guides, they enjoy providing

authentic experiences for their guests. Guests can explore the stunning waterways of Amelia Island, Cumberland Island and the surrounding areas. They offer kids and teen summer camps too! Also, they have been consistently rated as the No. 1 kayaking company in the area for over a decade. Whether you're looking for a peaceful solo adventure or a fun group outing, I recommend Amelia Island Kayak Excursions.

So don't let the 2024 summer get away from you! Make a list of your summertime goals, grab your family and friends, pack your sunscreen and snacks, and head out for a day of fun and adventure on the water. Take advantage of living in such a special place where there are so many options to enjoy the waterways right in your own "backyard." What are you waiting for?

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

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TABLE TALK

# THE TASTING TOURS: ST. AUGUSTINE'S DINING & SIPPING LEGACY

story and photos by  
**LEIGH CORT**

**I**n 2011, two dynamic businesswomen met one evening at the original Cellar 6 wine bar on Aviles Street in historic St. Augustine for a glass of vintage Beaujolais. Today, they both have their own version of the birth of their new business.

Andrea Jones-Downs recalls wine at Cellar 6, and JoAnna Page-Engel recalls images of margaritas on the beach! Either version is fine with them over the years since both locations were very enjoyable. However, the conversation couldn't have been sharper; they enthusiastically agreed on their three passions: drinking, eating and talking!

Depending on the number of glasses they enjoyed that night, they were both ready to leave prior careers and embark on something together. JoAnna had been the owner of a successful hair salon and spa; she was the owner/broker of a thriving real estate company working part-time and known as Jumpin' JoJo on a St. Augustine pirate ship. Andrea's reincarnation was going to be from her years as a cruise director on Disney's Premier Cruise Lines and the owner of First Coast Talent Agency in Jacksonville for film, TV, commercials and videos.

"What do we want to do now? What do we love to do? What do we enjoy doing on vacations? What do friends want to do when they visit St. Augustine?"



Niki Kemper, JoAnna Page-Engel and Andrea Jones-Downs

All their light bulbs pointed to starting a food tour company. Speaking the following morning, they realized that their "wine talk" was completely on target. They launched The Tasting Tours at the bar of the Casa Monica Hotel, which was the home/base for their first year. Why? Because they served wine!

Not only did these two entrepreneurial and career-minded women "click" because of their personalities but the new venture made business sense, too. They nurtured and grew The Tasting Tours by doing everything themselves as

a two-woman organization, progressing from \$5,000 annual gross to \$1-million-plus. They didn't have sophisticated high-tech online booking, but instead used a spiral notebook to take Tasting Tour reservations.

Today, with nine full-time employees and a personal touring staff of up to 20 professional guides, they continue to expand their footprint of offices and event space, too. They touch the heartbeat and bring into focus many new and legendary St. Augustine restaurants, wine bars, specialty food eateries, bakeries and more than 30 venues, including Island Boulevard across the famous Bridge of Lions.

Don't forget about St. Augustine's brilliant history. Andrea and JoAnna cherish St. Augustine's historic chronicles and legends. Their guides are licensed from the City of St. Augustine and pass an extensive historical test. After being tutored by Tour Managers, they can qualify to take guests on either pedestrian strolling tours through history or drive one of The Tasting Tour's nine-guest electric vehicles.

Both "Rolling & Strolling" tours make delicious stops during the day's, or night's, adventure, which includes four or five restaurants and/or bars. Each guide hand-selects from more than 30 stops and often customizes the tastings

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27 ■

## TASTING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

for return guests to make sure that they experience a cornucopia of culinary favorites!

The team of culinary professionals who work for The Tasting Tours brings added excitement for many of their guests. Your guide could be a private chef, former restaurant owner, sommelier, event planner or a local “foodie” who has dined their way around the region. Whether you are a party of two or 22, each stop has happy staff waiting to welcome your tour group with a perfectly set table, bar, lounge or rooftop open-air verandah.

The variety of restaurants and menus always surprises you with what is being served. The Tasting Tours prides itself on selecting the best dining/tasting venues in town and planning a balanced tour of gourmet delights. From craft cocktails and wines to fresh fruit mocktails, your tasting pleasure is important to making their selections for you. From chocolate decadence to charcuterie, lamb chops and dessert buffets, seafood specialties or five-star chef choices, their



The strolling option in The Tasting Tours' "Rolling & Strolling."

commitment to excellence is on their plate every day.

The Tasting Tours is a huge advocate of supporting local businesses and giving back to the community. This has been their mission since the company's



The rolling option in The Tasting Tours' "Rolling & Strolling."

launch. They have contributed more than a million dollars back into the local economy through their daily food tours. If you're a perfectionist for checking on reviews, whether travel, dining or just shopping around, their business has received prestigious honors — from the Hall of Fame and Travelers' Choice Awards to 13 consecutive years recognized with TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence.

Driving the company's growth over

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32 ■

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## TABLE TALK

# HILLARY'S CHICAGO PIZZA ... MADE WITH LOVE!

story by **LEIGH CORT**  
Contributed photo

Some restaurant stories are about the food. Others are about mystique and buzz that circulates long before you eat there yourself. Many are about the ambience and service. Hillary's Chicago Pizza is about the owners, Hillary Lake and Bruce Longanecker Jr., who have created their tiny restaurant out of passion for community and a lifetime of love for their city — Chicago!

The story unfolds its layers of history that began with The Sedgwick Stop, their first neighborhood tavern and eatery along Chicago's train line at one of the stops on Sedgwick Avenue. What a great name for Bruce and Hillary's successful "Cheers-style gathering place" that was not only easy to locate but known for serving the best burger in town and best chicken sandwich in their gastro pub. Articles about them all agreed that their mission was "to make everyone feel at home."

The neighborhood pub "where everyone knows your name" couldn't have been better suited to anyone other than Bruce and Hillary. Years later, their St. Augustine eatery now exudes the same heartfelt familiarity at Hillary's Chicago Pizza, which seats 30 guests on any happy night at the bar or handful of tables.

Located at the crossroads of U.S. 1 and State Road 312 in St. Augustine, there is numerology happening here that couldn't be a better karma for Hillary: 312 is also the Chicago area code and their official address is 1974 (Hillary's birth year)! This couple's destiny was



Hillary Lake and Bruce Longanecker Jr.

planned long before they landed in Northeast Florida.

Bruce and Hillary came to Florida for family connections, although they had no ultimate plan about their culinary future. What they did know was that they couldn't find their favorite Chicago-style pizza anywhere.

Bruce was, at the time, commuting from Jacksonville to Chicago and always bringing a warm deep-dish pizza (in the overhead compartment) to his darling wife. The timing of the COVID pandemic prompted them to consider making these iconic pizzas themselves, becoming familiar faces at many farmers markets from Nocatee and Atlantic Beach to Fernandina Beach. Their fans counted the days until their return, and each weekend they "sold out."

When they heard about a proper kitchen and small eatery in St. Augustine becoming available, the magic happened quickly. They purchased the space with a beer-and-wine license at a perfect crossroads for Hillary's Chicago Pizza to call

home. In a year, their reputation has grown in what they call their "launching pad" to excite pizza lovers and fans of food from the Midwest. And it offers "way more than pizza," according to Bruce.

"It's our gathering spot," said Hillary. "It's a happy neighborhood meeting place and especially a nightly reunion of new Midwest neighbors."

With pride in their made-in-house scratch kitchen that somehow produces an overwhelming number of the most scrumptious Chicago deep-dish and thin-crust pizzas, their little Mecca is a magnet for pizza lovers who just can't get enough of their distinctive flavors and top-drawer ingredients. With fans who are either dining in or taking out — or are counting the days until Bruce arrives with whole pizzas at the farmers markets — Hillary's Chicago Pizza is gaining momentum.

The Tutorial: If you are the first timer, there are two types of pizza in Chicago.

The thin-and-crispy style that's cut into squares and

referred to as "tavern style" is often served complimentary in some Chicago taverns as a great way to get customers to buy more beer!

The deep-dish pizza, which was invented by a chef in a local Chicago pizzeria (around 1943 as the story goes), is more of a special occasion treat. The pizza is really deep, the cornmeal crust rolled out by hand with a lot of ingredients that takes at least 45 minutes to cook. In Chicago, the trick is to pre-order before you arrive. This is also suggested at Hillary's. It's worth the wait.

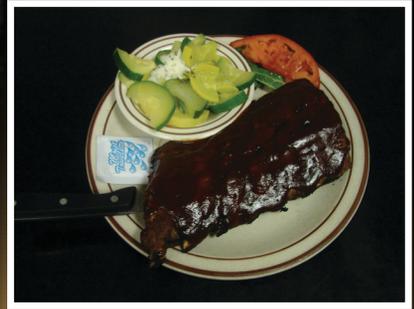
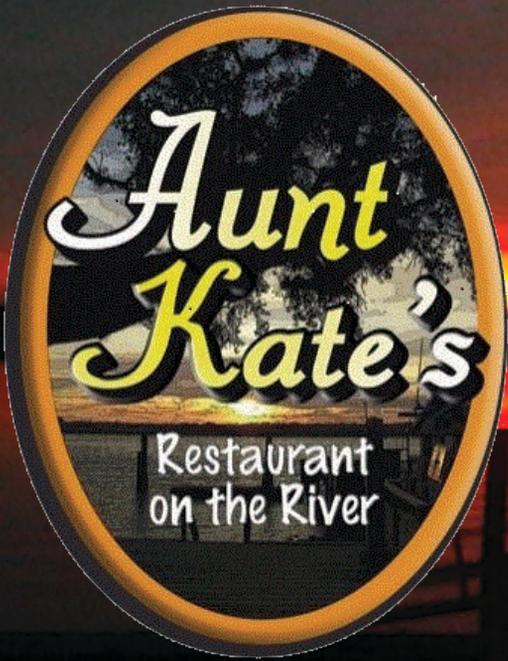
For the adventurous lover of "Crafts on Draft," with 24 craft beers, ciders and prosecco on top, jump into a few favorites like Homemade Apple Pie Cider, Mad Manatee IPA, Peanut Butter Porter or Karate in the Garage IPA.

While waiting for your pizza, try a key lime Caesar salad, warm pretzel with beer cheese or an appetizer of goat cheese in marinara. You can always do what the locals do and take home your favorite pizzas. And for a crowd, their catering extends to delicious baked pastas from lasagna to spinach-and-ricotta stuffed shells, grazing boards, salads and creative Italian-inspired appetizers.

Shhh it's a Secret: If you care to enjoy a "mash up" of Chicago and St. Augustine, do not miss Hillary's Hot Honey Thin Crust Pizza with pepperoni, goat cheese, mozzarella, provolone and finished with housemade datil honey. You will not want to share this, even with someone you adore!

Hillary's Chicago Pizza is open daily (except Monday) from lunch through dinner. See the new menu at: [HillarysChicagoPizza.com](http://HillarysChicagoPizza.com).

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# ST. AUGUSTINE FOOD + WINE FEST PUTS FOCUS ON LOCAL FOOD



Jan Gourley and Mark Berman.

photos by **SUSAN GRIFFIN**

**T**he Annual St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival was a four-day celebration of the tantalizing tastes that make the area great. The festival includes the River Walk Tastings, Smoke on the Walk, Epicurean Master Classes, a main tasting event and Sunday Jazz Brunch. The Harvest Awards and tasting winners were also announced on the opening night.



Heart & Soul Food



A chef during the Sunday Jazz Brunch.



Clare and Vance Berry.



Carol Maurer and Waine Banyas.



A variety of food from local eateries was on hand during the main tasting event.



Craig Smith stands in front of the St. Johns Food Service VIP tent. St. Johns Food Service celebrated their 75th anniversary and was a proud sponsor of this year's event.



Attendees sample food and beverages from vendors during the main tasting event.

[ wine & dine ]



Jeffrey Spear offers his insight during the food demonstration event.

# SPEAR PUTS ON FOOD DEMONSTRATION

photos by **SUSAN GRIFFIN**

**H**appy Medium Books Café and All Spiced Up partnered to present an event featuring author and chef Jeffrey Spear at All Spiced Up on May 16. The event included a food demonstration and wine pairings.



Ana Hernandez, Dana Shuttters and Jeffrey Spear.



Wines were provided by Slinging Grapes in Jacksonville.



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## TASTING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

the years now belongs to their director of sales, Niki Kemper, who began her journey originally as a tour guide in 2016. As she steadily climbed the ranks through dedication and hard work, she delivered exceptional guest experiences as tour manager. Andrea and JoAnna

honored her as a shareholder, and their three familiar faces continually represent the superiority of today's hospitality industry.

Whether team building, planning a girlfriend getaway, seeing history from a uniquely different angle or taking a romantic evening to find a lovely route around town that's typically used by locals, The Tasting Tours is a memorable and authentic look at life in St. August-

tine in each area you visit. The cuisine is perfectly woven into the tapestry of nearly 500 years of history, and all you have to do is show up!

PS: Surprise someone you love with a private horse-and-carriage ride. The Tasting Tours can make all the arrangements for you. I might just be in the elegant carriage three blocks away with my honey and our favorite vintage Bordeaux!

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2375 Ponte Vedra Blvd. is perfectly positioned on the first block of South Ponte Vedra along the shore of the Atlantic ocean

# SEASIDE ESTATE CELEBRATES PONTE VEDRA BEACH LIVING

story by **JANET WESTLING**  
Contributed photos

In the seaside community of Ponte Vedra Beach, on Florida's First Coast, lies an exquisite estate set in high dunes overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Ponte Vedra Beach is home to many splendid homes but none that more embody the spirit of the coast than 2375 Ponte Vedra Blvd., set on a high knoll beyond an elegant gate.

Perfectly positioned along the shore of the Atlantic Ocean in the first block of South Ponte Vedra Boulevard, this four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath home offers a beautiful, completely renovated home in an oceanfront setting with Intracoastal views that could grace the cover of Coastal Living magazine.

This private residence with well-appointed living spaces, features two sweeping oceanfront porches, a private beach walkover and a 21-by-21-foot rooftop deck with panoramic water and preserve views perfect for outdoor entertaining. This elevated and dominant position allows for extraordinary ocean views, in a spectacular setting, in a historic seaside resort epitomizing the Florida lifestyle!

Lush grounds include a putting green and a large turf lawn that offer plenty of room to hit some golf balls or enjoy a game of catch.

As you step inside, the first floor offers a media/game room perfect for play time

or gathering to watch a favorite movie with friends and family and an office/guest bedroom.

The main living area with an open floor plan is on the second floor and has been completely renovated and includes a living, dining and kitchen that flow together with form and function.

With ceilings of more than 20 feet in the main living room, walls of windows bring natural light and stunning ocean views to be enjoyed inside or out. Two sets of sliding glass doors open to the wrap-around oceanfront balcony perfect for dining al fresco, lounging around or soaking in the sun.

A newly designed white chefs' kitchen is complete with beautiful quartz counters, two sinks, GE Monogram stainless appliances and a Bosch dishwasher and a butler's pantry/ laundry room. A powder room located off the kitchen is also accessible from the side deck for the sun seekers. Two bedrooms and a full bath complete the main level with a guest bedroom with a sliding glass door that opens to the oceanfront balcony and the other bedroom with scenic views across the Guana Preserve to the Intracoastal.

The third floor overlooks the main living room below with an in-suite guest room to the right and the master to the left. The guest room features a bay window with seating space, perfect for enjoying a good book and watching

the sun set across the Intracoastal. The spacious master suite opens to a private oceanfront balcony and the suite includes a spa-like master bath with Intracoastal views.

From the private balcony take a set of stairs up to the rooftop deck where you can experience uninterrupted water views from sunrise to sunset and everything in between.

This beautifully designed home is perfectly positioned to take advantage of all that North Florida and its coastal communities have to offer for family vacationers; it will accommodate gatherings of all sizes.

About 34,000 residents call Ponte Vedra Beach home and thousands more come from around the world to play on its beautiful uncrowded beaches and enjoy world-renowned golf courses and tennis facilities each year. Visitors are often astounded to hear tales of Ponce De Leon landing on its shores as well as German saboteurs during World War II.

Its past is intriguing, and its present is exciting. Walk the beach, watch waves roll in from foreign shores, and put a shell to your ear to hear whispers from the past. Then breathe deeply of the ocean breeze, and you will catch a hint of Ponte Vedra Beach living, which we all agree is simply the best!

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# GATOR BOWL TO CELEBRATE 80 YEARS IN PRIMETIME

story and photo by  
**ANTHONY RICHARDS**

Major anniversaries are a big deal and are meant to be celebrated in a big way.

That will be the case for the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl, which will play its 80th game and do so in primetime on January 2 at 7:30 p.m.

The date and time were officially announced on June 6 along with the contest's television viewing details, as it will be shown nationally on ESPN.

"We're thrilled to celebrate these two outstanding teams going head-to-head in the 80th annual TaxSlayer Gator Bowl, TaxSlayer CEO Jamie Saxe said. "This is a historic year for the big game, and it marks our 14th as the title sponsor. It's an honor to be a part of this tradition once again and to connect our brand to such a prestigious event enjoyed by football fans nationwide."

Just two years ago, the 78th Gator Bowl ranked as highest non-New Year Six bowl games with more than



The 80th Annual TaxSlayer Gator Bowl will be played in primetime at 7:30 p.m. on January 2, 2025.

5.5 million viewers tuning in to watch the game between Notre Dame and South Carolina.

Clemson defeated Kentucky 38-35 in a shootout last year, and the SEC vs. ACC matchup has become an expected tradition and that is set to continue next year.

However, it could look a little different as both conferences added new teams that will now be included into the pool of possible candidates the Gator Bowl

will have to choose from.

New teams in the SEC include Oklahoma and Texas, while the ACC expanded by adding California, SMU and Stanford.

The addition of teams farther west will only help grow the interest of the game and showcases the Gator Bowl as a true national event.

Teams participating in the 80th edition will be announced on December 8, 2024.

For years, the TaxSlayer

Gator Bowl was held in or around New Years Day, including a stretch of January games for two decades from 1996 to 2016, but it will be the first January date since the end of the 2020 season.

"On behalf of the entire TaxSlayer Gator Bowl organization, it is a privilege to showcase and pay tribute to 80 years of history of this iconic game in primetime," TaxSlayer Gator Bowl chairman Andy King said. "We're honored to be affiliated with two of college football's top conferences and look forward to hosting their teams and fans in Jacksonville to kick-off 2025."

Tickets for the 80th annual TaxSlayer Gator Bowl will go on-sale to the public on September 4 in celebration of "904 Day" and will include a special offer for local buyers through Ticketmaster.

For more information about the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl including stadium policies, the organization's philanthropic efforts or to become a member, go to [www.taxslayergatorbowl.com](http://www.taxslayergatorbowl.com).

## HASTINGS UNDERGOING A TRANSFORMATION

### FOR THE REGISTER

At the May 21 meeting of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners, Chair Sarah Arnold issued a proclamation to Hastings community members recognizing May 2024 as Historic Preservation Month. The proclamation included the debut of Hastings' new video "Roots & Renewal: Hastings' Story of Revival." (The video can be viewed [youtube.com/watch?v=o8JB4QngaoU](https://youtube.com/watch?v=o8JB4QngaoU).)

"We are profoundly grateful to the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners for their proclamation recognizing May as Historic Preservation Month," said Jena Dennis, Hastings Main Street chair. "This acknowledgment shines a light on the Hastings community's dedication to revitalization and preservation efforts.

The overwhelming support from our community members in these endeavors not only highlights our rich heritage but also strengthens our economic redevelopment initiatives. We are enthusiastic about the future and remain committed to enhancing the vitality and historical integrity of Hastings."

The proclamation celebrates the establishment of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Historic Preservation Month in 2005, an expansion of National Preservation Week that began in 1975. Historic preservation fosters community sustainability, economic stimulation and local revitalization. This year's theme, "People Saving Places," highlights the efforts of communities, organizations and individuals committed to protecting local and national historic treasures, giving

them well-deserved recognition.

Hastings will host the Nights on Main Street Night Market from 4 to 8 p.m. July 13. It will feature a cottage artisan market, food trucks and live music.

This year, the county is spotlighting Hastings, known as the "Potato Capital of Florida." Hastings has played a significant role as a hub for farming and agricultural activities over the years and remains a charming example of small-town living in today's ever-changing world.

Hastings' community members and local business owners have diligently protected, preserved and restored the town's historic resources. Their efforts ensure that future generations of locals and visitors can enjoy stepping back in time while creating new memories and opportunities for many years.

# PETCO LOVE CAMPAIGN REUNITES LOST PETS

**H**ave you ever had a pet that became lost, unable to find the way home? Or have you ever discovered a pet that looked lost?

Now, a simple-to-use program can help reunite lost pets with their owners.

Nonprofit organization Petco Love has launched its My Ruff Day campaign to increase the number of reunions with their free-to-use, national lost-and-found database for pets, Petco Love Lost.

The platform, used by Jacksonville Humane Society (JHS), uses image recognition technology to help families reunite with their missing pets via one photo. The platform can be found at [petcolovelost.org](http://petcolovelost.org).

“My Ruff Day” is an animated short series that follows lost pets as they try to find their way back home, as told from the dog’s or cat’s point of view. The first episode follows Boomer on moving day as he heroically seeks to find his family’s missing toy, only to find himself lost and alone in his new neighborhood. Good Samaritans step in and, by using Petco Love Lost, are able to reunite him quickly with his frantically searching family. Actor and producer Jonathan Taylor Thomas is the voice of Boomer in “My Ruff Day.”

To watch the animated story, go to [petcolove.org/lost/signup-unite-to-reunite](http://petcolove.org/lost/signup-unite-to-reunite).

Boomer’s story represents the millions of pets that go missing each year. Here are some facts:

- One out of three pets become lost at some point in their lifetime.
- Nearly 10 million pets go missing each year.
- Many loved dogs and cats end up in crowded shelters, especially in the summer months.

“Not every lost pet is as lucky as Boomer,” said Petco Love President Susanne Kogut. “With Petco Love Lost, we aim to change that by uniting communities and organizations with one goal in mind: keep pets and families together for a lifetime of love. Using our database with image recognition technology as the national billboard to report all lost and found pets, we can Unite to Reunite, and send all pets, like Boomer, back into the arms of the families who love them.”

Many participating animal shelters in the United States use Petco Love Lost to help reunite the pets in their care, including JHS.

“We work tirelessly for pets in our

care, and that includes helping lost pets throughout our community get home and back to their families where they belong,” said Denise Deisler, JHS CEO. “There’s nothing more rewarding than reuniting families with their beloved pets and with Petco Love Lost, we’re confident it can lead to many more happy reunions right here in Jacksonville.”

Petco Love encourages everyone to register their pet now in case they go missing later. Petco Love Lost helps reunite pets across multiple platforms, including the Ring/Neighbors app, Nextdoor and Facebook. Petco Love Lost can help people in almost any language, and it provides privacy for those who use it.

To learn more about JHS, go to [jaxhumane.org](http://jaxhumane.org) and follow @jaxhumane on Facebook and Instagram.

For further information about Petco Love Lost, go to [petcolovelost.org](http://petcolovelost.org) or @PetcoLoveLost on Facebook, Instagram and X.



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# FRIENDSHIP FOUNTAIN: A UNIQUE DOWNTOWN LANDMARK

photos by  
**ANTHONY RICHARDS**

**F**riendship Fountain has been back up and running for Jacksonville residents to enjoy since February. Every first Friday of the month vendors and food trucks are welcome to come to the fountain and create a party atmosphere along the St. Johns River in downtown Jacksonville.



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## PALATKA'S BLUE CRAB FESTIVAL REMAINS MEMORIAL DAY TRADITION



photos by  
**SUSAN GRIFFIN**

After nearly three decades, the Palatka Blue Crab Festival remains a Memorial Day staple and a summer tradition for families throughout the First Coast to enjoy.



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Isabelle Renault, President/CEO of St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.



Bestbet president Jamie Shelton spoke during the event.

# ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER CELEBRATES NEW FOUNDATION

## Kickoff event exceeds fundraising goal to establish scholarships for Leadership St. Johns.

FOR THE REGISTER  
photos by SUSAN GRIFFIN

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce celebrated its newly launched foundation on April 25 with its inaugural fundraising event, hosted by bestbet St. Augustine.

More than 100 members of the community participated in a charity poker tournament that raised more than \$11,000 — exceeding the event’s fundraising goal — to fund scholarships for Leadership St. Johns, the foundation’s cornerstone program.

“The community will benefit tremendously from the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Foundation,” said Cecil Gibson, the foundation’s board chair. “By offering financial assistance, the foundation’s work will create opportunities for highly qualified candidates to participate in the region’s premier leadership development program, Leadership St. Johns.”

Jamie Shelton, bestbet president



The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce held a foundation kickoff event at bestbet in St. Augustine.

and CEO, offered to host the fundraiser to support the Chamber and the new foundation.

“bestbet is always interested in helping out the communities in which we operate, and the St. Johns County Chamber Foundation checks all our boxes for community involvement,” said Shelton, who serves on the Chamber’s board of directors.

In addition to Leadership St. Johns, the foundation will also focus on creating an emergency fund for businesses to support recovery from natural disasters or economic downturns, as well as workforce development through partnerships with local educational institutions.

“The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Foundation is a natural extension of the Chamber’s work to promote a vibrant, diverse business environment in St. Johns County,” said Isabelle Renault, Chamber president and CEO. “The foundation opens new avenues for programs and philanthropic work to make a difference in the community at large as we work to strengthen our business community.”

The foundation is led by a board of directors comprised of business leaders in the county. The founding members include Board Chair Cecil Gibson (Ameris Bank), Vice Chair

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39 ■



Elaine Brown, mayor of Neptune Beach, and Mischelle Grant.



Mel and Felicia Cox, Vice President/Banking Center Manager (Ponte Vedra Beach location). First Horizon proudly sponsored the event.

# FIESTA AT THE BEACH SUPPORTS SULZBACHER INITIATIVES

photos by **SUSAN GRIFFIN**

**F**iesta at the Beach was a lively evening at the Casa Marina Hotel at Jacksonville Beach on May 7 consisting of fun and food to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Sulzbacher Beaches Health Center. The event helped support homeless and disadvantaged people in the community.



Live entertainment played during the event.



The event celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Sulzbacher Beaches Health Center.

## CHAMBER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38

Orville Dothage (Northrop Grumman), Secretary/Treasurer Erika Alba (Woolsey/Morcom), Nancy Dering Mock (Nancy Dering Mock Consulting) and Chamber President and CEO Isabelle Renault.

More information about the foundation is available at [sjcchamberfoundation.org](http://sjcchamberfoundation.org).

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce is the premier business advocacy organization in St. Johns County. With more than 1,100 member businesses across a variety of industries, the Chamber is committed to delivering continuous service to members and the community through



Coral Twomey, Kathy Larsen, Roy Alaimo, Elizabeth Middlebrooks and Elizabeth Bernardino.

public policy, economic development and business education to cultivate an environment where businesses can

grow and thrive.

Learn more about the chamber at [sjcchamber.com](http://sjcchamber.com).



# RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES OF JACKSONVILLE RAISES \$620K AT MCGALA

FOR THE REGISTER  
Contributed photos

**R**onald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville recently announced the success of the 2024 McGala, which took place on May 11 at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa. Thanks to the generosity and support of our community, the event raised more than \$620,000 to support families with critically ill children.

The McGala is an annual highlight for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville, uniting the First Coast community to celebrate and advance its mission of providing care, comfort and kindness for families during their



children's medical treatments. The event included a touching story from the Rodriguez family featuring 8-year-old Sophia, a walk down memory lane with the history wall, live entertainment, auctions and a red wagon tribute.

Joey Leik, chief executive officer of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville, expressed heartfelt gratitude for the community's support and generosity.

"The success of this year's McGala is a testament to the incredible compassion and commitment of our supporters," he said. "Funds raised go towards providing comfort, care and a sense of normalcy to families during one of the most challenging times of their lives. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to making this night a success."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27 ■

## AIRBORNE EXTRAVAGANZA SET FOR AUG. 23-24

**V**eteran-owned Tango Down Shooting Complex in Jacksonville and The Round Canopy Parachuting Team have partnered for an event like no other — The Airborne Extravaganza, a two-day event on Aug. 23-24 that includes a jump school, follow-on jump, HMMWV Assault Ride, gun demos, a Skydive Spectacular, vendors, food trucks and other thrilling fun.

Event hours 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 24. Jump school will be held Aug. 23 at the Palatka Airport.

General admission advance tickets are \$10 for the Aug. 24 event. Tickets prices and registration will increase on the day of the event. For jump school and other events, along with limited VIP tickets,



registration is available at [tangodown-sc.com](http://tangodown-sc.com).

Tango Down Shooting Complex is Jacksonville's first public shooting range with no membership fees. It is located at 18811 Maxville MacClenny Highway in

Jacksonville. Free parking is available on site.

Tango Down Shooting Complex features pistol bays, long-range lanes, multi-purpose bays and competition bays. A pro shop includes ammo, firearms and gear, along with firearms rentals, limited gunsmithing and customizations. Available training courses include vehicle defense tactics; a comprehensive pistol course; concealed carry — tactics and techniques; shooting and moving in the home (S.M.I.T.H.); and precision rifle.

Event sponsorships and vendor spots are available. Contact Kelly Lyon at 904-814-2795 or email [lyon1kel@gmail.com](mailto:lyon1kel@gmail.com).

Learn more at [tangodown-sc.com](http://tangodown-sc.com).

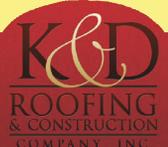
# MCGALA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

The funds raised from the McGala will enable Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville to continue offering vital services, including lodging, transportation, meals and a supportive environment for families to focus on what matters most: the health and well-being of their children.

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville thanked attendees, volunteers and sponsors, especially Champion of Hope Title Sponsor Vystar Credit Union and Ambassador of Care Presenting Sponsors: Fields Auto Group, Stephanie and Tim Cost, Joe and Nan Ferrara and Florida Blue, who helped make McGala an unforgettable evening.





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# CHEMO NOIR RUN AND TASTING EVENT HELD AT JAX BEACH

photos by SUSAN GRIFFIN

**C**hemo Noir held its annual one mile run and wine tasting event at Jacksonville Beach on June 15. The event helps to raise money to help those financially who are battling cancer.





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# AN EVENING OF GLAMOUR AND ART

## Gala promotes arts, raises funds for First Coast Cultural Center

story and photos by  
SHAUN RYAN

The First Coast Cultural Center hosted its fifth annual Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts gala April 28 at the TPC Sawgrass clubhouse. The affair was rich in elegance with an Audrey Hepburn/"Breakfast at Tiffany's" theme, enhanced by sparkling faux diamonds, pearls and crystal. Guests dressed for the occasion, and period music provided a

kind of soundtrack to the evening.

As always, the event featured artists working on pieces live on site. This year, ceramic artist Catherine Lynn, painter and charcoal artist Claire Weaver and oil painter Katherine Weaver demonstrated their talent at various places in the venue.

Live music was provided by violinist Alyssa Albert. Candice Sirak, manager for the cultural center's Sound Designs Music Therapy program, invited guests to collaborate with her on the creation of short songs.

The keynote speaker was Aundra Wallace, president of JAXUSA Partnership, an economic development agency that oversees efforts in seven

Northeast Florida counties. He spoke on the importance of art to the economic success of a community.

One of the gala's highlights was its awards ceremony with six people being recognized for their work in, or support of, the arts on the First Coast. In addition, the Volunteer of the Year and the Employee of the Year were named.

The gala is a fundraiser for the First Coast Cultural Center and this year raised a record \$786,000, which includes pledges made until January 2025.

The center moved into its new location at 6000B Sawgrass Village Circle, Ponte Vedra Beach, in December. For further information, go to [firstcoastculturalcenter.org](http://firstcoastculturalcenter.org).





Two smaller pieces by Jessica Pinsky. "Dissection XI," at top, is made from assorted fibers. "Dissection X," at bottom, is made from assorted fibers and resin.



Textile artist Jessica Pinsky stands next to her recreation of her daughter's painting. The work, "For Mira I," is hand-painted cotton warp and assorted fibers.



"Blurred VI," cotton and rayon, handwoven on a Jacquard loom.



"Blurred IV" is handwoven on a Jacquard loom using cotton and rayon.

# FROM LOOM TO GALLERY

## Ponte Vedra exhibit features textile artist

story and photos by  
SHAUN RYAN

Scrolling through the photos on her iPhone in search of inspiration, textile artist Jessica Pinsky kept finding inexplicable images of what appeared to be blurry globules.

"I'm like, 'What is this?'" she said. "I see it again and again. I don't remember taking this picture. I don't know what this is!"

The mystery was soon solved. Her children, just one year old at the time, had gotten hold of her phone and kept pressing the button. The images were close-ups of the carpet.

And these turned out to be the inspiration Pinsky had been seeking.

"I was like: That's kind of beautiful; I could weave that," she said.

Using Adobe Photoshop, she combined the photos with drawings made by the children. Then, using a digital Jacquard loom, she created large, woven reproductions of the images. Several of

these creations — part of a series Pinsky calls "I Can't Remember Anything" — have been on display since May 21 at the First Coast Cultural Center; they are part of a broader exhibition of textile works by the artist.

Originally from Akron, Ohio, where she learned as a child to love art by way of visits to a local museum, Pinsky went on to earn a master's degree in painting. But she wasn't happy working in that medium.

"Halfway through grad school, I started cutting up all my paintings and sewing them back together," she said. "I loved sewing, and I thought: How can I make my work more sewing and less painting?"

That's when weaving, with its complex intersections of yarn, caught her attention.

"I got my first loom right after grad school and fell madly in love with it and never looked back," she said.

And, for the past 15 years, she's been creating her artwork on a floor loom.

Speaking to gallery visitors during an opening reception for her local show, Pinsky contrasted painting and weaving.

"When you're making a painting,

you're making a micro-decision every second," she said. "Every brush stroke, every moment, you're deciding something. Weaving is the opposite. You make lots and lots of decisions, and then you execute them."

Today, Pinsky runs a gallery in Cleveland, where she also has a nonprofit community textile organization, Praxis Fiber Workshop. Also an adjunct professor at the Cleveland Institute of Art, she exhibits her work around the country.

She describes her work as "personal and narrative" and "very abstract."

"They're actually about issues that tend to be really hard to talk about, like difficulty getting pregnant, the crazy time that women have navigating early motherhood and stuff like that," she said. "I think, just traditionally, women are told that lots of those topics are very taboo, and so it's nice to be able to talk about them through art."

She admitted that those viewing her art would not necessarily perceive the works' background, but each piece is clearly expressive. If the details are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46 ■

## LOOM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45

obscured, the power behind the woven image is easily felt and appreciated.

Despite her adeptness with her medium, Pinsky said she received no formal weaving training.

"I taught myself out of the Deborah Chandler 'Learning to Weave' book," she told the assembly during the exhibit's opening reception, earning her an affinity with the other weavers in the room, several of whom recalled their own experience with the guide. "It's the best book to teach yourself how to weave."

Being self-taught, Pinsky did not learn any of the prevailing "rules," and found herself unencumbered by them. The result may contribute to an "unexpected" quality in her work.

Among the pieces on exhibit at the First Coast Cultural Center are several smaller weavings she did in a series, each measuring about 10-by-10 inches. These were created over a three-month period within a set of self-imposed limitations, or parameters.

"I kept the color palette very neutral, and I tried to make the most contrast or do different things within this strict parameter," Pinsky said. "And it was awesome. I took them off the



"Dissection III," at top, is created from assorted fibers and resin.  
"Dissection IV," at bottom, is made from assorted fibers.

loom, I looked at them and it was like a diary of my life of those three months, when I was trying to get pregnant for the first time."

Also on exhibit are examples of her large black-and-white weavings, all of which she had only a week to create. To accomplish this, she eschewed color and held to the same material.

Gallery visitors will find that Pinsky doesn't only weave images; she also creates a three-dimensional effect by causing some portions of her work to droop. This is done in part by strategically leaving gaps in the warp, allowing the weft to behave in different ways. For coloring, she often does some post-production dye work.

Pinsky continues to find inspiration in her children. For a couple of pieces in the show, she recreated paintings made by her daughter.

"I'm fascinated by her because, like kids in general, they just make so many decisions," Pinsky said. "They don't second-guess themselves. Grownups do that."

Admission to the exhibit is free and open to the public. It will be on display through July 5.

The First Coast Cultural Center is located at 6000B Sawgrass Village Circle, Ponte Vedra Beach. It is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. For further information, go to [firstcoastculturalcenter.org](http://firstcoastculturalcenter.org) or call 904-280-0614.

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