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Insider's
Tournament Guide
INSIDE

Thursday, March 6, 2025

PonteVedraRecorder.com

VOLUME 56, NO. 18 \$1.00

Sharks stave off Panthers comeback bid for rivalry win

By Anthony Richards

No matter what sport it is, when Ponte Vedra High and Nease High meet on the athletic playing field it always seems to be an epic battle and that was the case once again when the Sharks defeated the Panthers 10-7 in a boys lacrosse matchup on Feb. 26.

The Sharks jumped out to a 7-2 halftime lead as they controlled the pace and found success with offensive opportunities.

"Every year is a close group, but this year, especially so," Ponte Vedra junior J.P. Dolan said. "We all just know each other, and I've been playing with a lot of these guys since I moved in fourth grade. We know what each other is go-

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Kids Springin'
For Fun –
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PLAYERS CHARITY OF THE DAY FOR MARCH 12

Jacksonville Humane Society rescues homeless pets with help from THE PLAYERS

By Holly Tishfield

The Jacksonville Humane Society is gearing up for another exciting year of partnership with THE PLAYERS, one of the rescue's yearlong Paw Partners, and celebrating a new milestone — being featured for the first time as a Charity of the Day during THE PLAYERS Championship week.

"We're grateful for any chance that we get to talk about our mission here at the Jacksonville Humane Society," said Samantha Ahnen, community engagement manager at JHS. "We love working with THE PLAYERS. They're great partners."

As a local nonprofit in Jacksonville, JHS takes in and provides care for more than 8,000 animals per year. Their mission is to provide care, comfort and compassion to animals in need while engaging the hearts, hands and minds of the community to bring



Contributed photo

HUMANE continues on Page 4

THE PLAYERS helps sponsor JHS pet adoptions

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BRIEFS

Creative academy presenting ‘Cinderella’
The creative academy at Christ Church is currently presenting Rodgers’ and Hammerstein’s “Cinderella.” This is the 14th year of performing musicals and their 23rd show.
Show dates are now through March 8. Tickets are available at ticketleap.events/tickets/cec-som-5/cinderella and at the door.
For more information contact Barbara Roberts at barbiekroberts@gmail.com

Joy Andrews to speak at Democratic Club meeting
Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will hold its monthly meeting at 6 p.m. Monday, March 24, at the Ponte Vedra Beach Library, 101 Library Blvd.
Joy Andrews, administrator for St John’s County, will discuss her “State of the County” report, addressing infrastructure, road construction, housing development and school building status.
Chat and chew is at 5:30 p.m. All are welcome.
For more information, go to PVDemclub@gmail.com.

Palm Valley Market every Tuesday
The Palm Valley Market is held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Tuesday inside the Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Road. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, local honey, tea, seasonal treats, soap, jewelry, plants and more.

GTM offers programs
The GTM National Estuarine Research Reserve offers a continual calendar of interesting programs and classes.

Nature’s Palette: Wildflowers at GTM
Discover the vibrant world of wildflowers in this engaging six-week course beginning March 12 at 10 a.m. This series will take you on a journey through GTM’s stunning landscapes, helping you identify and appreciate the beauty of native wildflowers.
Register at gtmnerr.org/calendars.

ACA Kayaking Skills Course
Whether you're a beginner or looking to refine your paddling techniques, this hands-on course will provide essential skills and safety training. The course takes place on March 15, 16 and 22.
Register here: secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/Z-fdvEbNfchjvGLETPuh4Q?t=1740505972

Become a Friend of GTM Member & Save!
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— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

Special election for Congressional District 6 is April 1

A special election for Congressional District 6 will be held April 1.
The 2025 special election is open only to registered voters residing in Congressional District 6. This district encompasses all of precincts 212, 213, 304, 309, 310, 311, and parts of precincts 303, 305, 306, 307 and 308, in southern St. Johns County. If you are unsure which precinct you live in, or if you are eligible to vote in this election, there is an Address Search Tool available on the homepage as well as the Election Dates page at votesjc.gov under “Elections.”
Voters can go to votesjc.gov to update voter

information, view their sample ballot or request a vote-by-mail ballot. Voters who need to update their address are encouraged to do so before Election Day so that they will know their correct polling location.
The deadline to request a vote-by-mail ballot to be mailed for this election is Thursday, March 20, by 5 p.m. All vote-by-mail requests on file expired after the Nov. 5, 2024, general election. Voters wishing to vote-by-mail in this election, or in the 2026 election cycle, must put a new request on file.
For more information go to votesjc.gov or call the Elections Office at 904-823-2238.

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PLAYERS CHARITY OF THE DAY FOR MARCH 11

Five Star Veterans Center helps veterans in crisis

By Shaun Ryan

Many war veterans return to civilian life with physical injuries that must be healed or overcome. Many others return with invisible scars, injuries that aren’t always obvious and can be difficult to treat. But there is a place nearby that is making a difference. It is a residential transition center for veterans in crisis called the Five Star Veterans Center.

Five Star Veterans Center is one of the Charities of the Day for this year’s PLAYERS Championship. The nonprofit, located at 40 Acme St., Jacksonville, provides displaced military veterans safe housing and the supportive services they need to successfully transition to living independently in a place they call home. The focus is on veterans ages 22-55 who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries,

depression, anxiety or other mental health issues. Founded in 2012, Five Star Veterans Center has a 96% success rate and 400 program graduates. With 41 residential beds in its on-site housing, the center offers a 6- to 12-month program that helps the veterans achieve their goals. Mental health service is offered round the clock. A veteran service officer assists residents in accessing their benefits.

In addition to restoration of mental and physical health, the center offers education, job and life readiness preparation and support for former residents even after they have moved on from the center. Veterans can also take part in K9 and equine therapy off site. For anyone who would like to learn more or to donate, go to 5starveteranscenter.org. Veterans tell their stories at 5starveteranscenter.org/veterans-stories.

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Contributed photos



Big smiles in THE PLAYERS gear



THE PLAYERS’ 2023 donation to the Pawsitive Reading program at JHS

Humane

Continued from 1

about an end to the killing of abandoned and orphaned shelter animals. Through Paw Partners like THE PLAYERS, JHS can continue its mission with the support it needs.

THE PLAYERS has sponsored adoption events, participated in fundraisers and donated to some of JHS’s most influential programs. In 2023, THE PLAYERS Cham-

pionship donated a \$45,000 grant to JHS’s Pawsitive Reading program, which brings the joy of reading and the companionship of animals to children in local schools around Jacksonville.

As the tournament’s Charity of the Day on Wednesday, March 12, JHS will have a presence at the championship where interested guests can learn more about adopting/ fostering animals and other ways to get involved.

The Jacksonville Humane Society is also

part of the tournament’s Chip in for Charity, a ticket program that allows guests to support local nonprofit organizations when they buy their PLAYERS Championship tickets by entering a special code at checkout; \$40 of every ticket sale with a charity code will go directly to the charity. To select JHS, enter promo code 906UXX at checkout.

“It’s very generous of THE PLAYERS to invite us to these programs,” Ahnen said. “Our partnership is multifaceted. Not only is THE PLAYERS donating funds towards

some of our programs, but they’re also directly helping the animals find homes through adoption events.”

Birdies for Charity is another way for guests to give back to JHS during THE PLAYERS Championship, where donating a minimum of \$20 and guessing the correct number of birdies made during the competitive rounds of the tournament will win a \$10,000 prize. One hundred percent of each donation made in the charity’s name will go directly to the organization.



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Keynote speaker Amanda Price, CEO of Florida Partnership to End Domestic Violence, addresses Betty Griffin Center Breakfast attendees.



Betty Griffin Center CEO Kelly Franklin speaks at the annual breakfast.



Keith Campbell of Campbell Plumbing and Mechanics speaks during the Betty Griffin Center Breakfast.

Photos by Shaun Ryan

Betty Griffin Center event focus: Home, a place of healing

By Shaun Ryan

Nationally, one in three women and one in six men will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. One in four women will experience sexual abuse. The problem is so pervasive it seems everyone knows somebody who has been there.

Once, survivors in St. Johns County had nowhere to go to escape the abuse. The nearest shelter was in Gainesville. But in 1990, change arrived. An organization now known as The Betty Griffin Center

was founded and has been a lifeline to survivors of domestic and sexual violence for these past 35 years.

Today, the nonprofit operates a 54-bed emergency shelter and offers six transitional apartments, outreach services, training and education.

But funding is critical and events like the Betty Griffin Center Breakfast, held Monday, March 3, at The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach, help the organization continue its mission. The theme was “Home.”

Keynote speaker Amanda Price, CEO of the Florida Partnership to End Domestic Violence, thanked those who support the center’s mission. But she also made a heartfelt plea.

“Please don’t stop supporting it,” she said. “Please support it more. Please volunteer more. Because it’s really critical, and the problem is immense — and it’s not going away. You are a huge component of the solution. You are, in fact, the solution. Nothing will be solved without you.”

Betty Griffin Center CEO Kelly Franklin described how the organization has helped people of every age, newborns to senior citizens. She also spoke of efforts made to help survivors in the center’s residential program to find their own homes.

“I’m proud to share that since July of 2024 we’ve assisted 189 times in helping families work towards permanent housing or assisting them to maintain their own housing if it was a safe choice for them.”

BETTY GRIFFIN continues on Page 11



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Susan Cramer is senior director, tournament merchandise operations, and oversees one of the most popular stops at THE PLAYERS Championship: The Fan Shop. The 40,000-square-foot retail shop features all things PLAYERS and PGA, with new merchandise each year. This year, the Fan Shop has made some significant changes, which are sure to please fans as they enjoy their time at THE PLAYERS.

Susan Cramer

As told to Shaun Ryan

Tell me about the Fan Shop and its importance to THE PLAYERS and the fans.

The biggest thing about the Fan Shop, I would say, if we're having a hot Florida day, we have the best air conditioning on the course, by far. [Laughs]

We are located right by the Nicklaus gate. When you come over the beautiful bridge to walk into THE PLAYERS Championship, you will see the Fan Shop immediately to your right. It's located right behind 17 green and it's near the entrance/exit. So, we're in a prime location.

The reason why the Fan Shop is so important is we are always trying to strive to make a better fan experience outside of the ropes.

This year, we have re-imagined the look of the Fan Shop. We have new fixtures that all of our products will be displayed on. But basically our strategy is to continue to be a leader embracing change and to deliver the best fan experience that we possibly can.

We also want to make sure that our fans have the opportunity to see the greatest product in our industry that we showcase. So, our buying team is always looking for the new things and the greatest things that are out there.

Also, we have unique elements throughout the Fan Shop, so it's not only shopping, but it's different things that you can look at, whether it's imagery of the trophy, Tour players, etc. So, we try to make it a full experience. The Tour player images are always fun because our fans are always taking selfies in front of their favorite Tour players. That's really fun to watch.

We always want to give our guests a memorable first touch point and a last touch point. Being where we're located, we do get a lot of fans as soon as they walk in because they always want to get the greatest gear out there.

And we have a bag check where we'll store for free for the day. You can check your bag with us and then pick it up at the end of the day, which is a great fan enhancement, as well.

I guess the biggest thing of all is we want to create a world-class event inside the Fan Shop for core fans of the game, golf fanatics and non-golfers alike. We really want to make sure that we are servicing everybody. Whether you like golf or you don't like golf, we want to make sure that we have something for you in there.

Tell me more about this year's changes.

All of the new fixtures that we have inside the Fan Shop will be the first time anybody will see them. We debuted them out on the West Coast [WM Phoenix Open], and they're at the Cognizant Classic, but it's the first time people are going to see them here at THE PLAYERS Championship.

So, it's a whole brand new look. When you come in this year, it's totally reimagined. New layouts. New fixtures. Fun stuff.

What are your duties?

I oversee all of our onsite retail. My team works with the buying team on what they're bringing in. Our biggest focus and job is making sure everything you see when you come into the Fan Shop — whether it's carpeting, air conditioning, the tent, the fixtures, the layout of all



Contributed photo

of the vendors, how many the cash registers we have — anything that you see is what my team takes care of.

Our team also helps receive all of the merchandise. I'm responsible for doing the layout of where each vendor goes inside the Fan Shop, and just overseeing the daily operations and making sure all of our fans have great customer service and are having a wonderful experience while they're here at THE PLAYERS.

Tell me about your staff? How many are there?

Our team works with the staff at TPC Sawgrass, too — so we will have 12 managers onsite and we will have about 150 volunteers per day. And we also have 75 vendors per day that come and support their brands and help us re-stock and keep the Fan Shop looking great.

How long have you been with THE PLAYERS, especially the Fan Shop?

I've been employed by The PGA Tour for 29 years. All of my managers are employees of The PGA Tour.

What do you like most about what you do?

I think just seeing the fans get so excited when they find the perfect item or souvenir to bring home, and just making them happy, having an enjoyable experience.

How long have you lived in Northeast Florida?

We moved to Northeast Florida two years ago. With all of the travel I do, I was allowed to work remotely. But my better half, he's worked for The PGA Tour for a very long time, too. He's now the executive director of THE PLAYERS Championship [Lee Smith], so we moved to Ponte Vedra. He and I moved here two years ago from Jersey City.

What do you like about living in this area?

I think I like that, even though we're in Florida, there's still a little bit of the seasons. You can tell when it's winter, and you can tell when it's fall.

I love being near the ocean. I think that's really fun.

And it's easy to get in and out of — especially with all the travel that I do.

Anything else?

We just all love what we do, and we love all of the different tournaments that we go to throughout the year. My team travels to about 15 events a year, all over the country. So, we absolutely love what we do. We love giving the fans a great experience, and we just want them to leave happy.

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PLAYERS CHARITY OF THE DAY FOR MARCH 13

First Tee uses golf as platform for building better community

By Anthony Richards

The First Tee of North Florida and THE PLAYERS have a long history of working together to use golf as a platform to make an impact on the local community, and the nonprofit organization will once again be recognized as a “charity of the day” during the first round on Thursday, March 13.

“We’re one of the longest standing charities THE PLAYERS has been associated with, and that’s something we’re proud of,” said Jeff Willoughby, First Tee of North Florida executive director.

According to Willoughby, being a

“charity of the day” provides a little bit more exposure to all those in attendance with the organization’s logo on the scoreboard and other signage visible around the grounds of TPC Sawgrass.

This will especially be vital marketing as they are currently accepting registration for their summer camps and other programs designed to get kids involved through the nonprofit.

“We understand that we’re not here and able to do what we do without the community’s support,” Willoughby said.

According to Willoughby, the First Tee of North Florida raises roughly \$1.6 million a year to keep more than 100,000

children in North Florida in its programs offered.

Fans during the week of THE PLAYERS can also take part in the 17th Hole Challenge next to the fan shop, which for years now has been associated with First Tee of North Florida and raises money for it.

“At the end of the day, a lot of golfers know and are aware of what we do, but there’s even more behind the programs than just what’s on the golf course,” Willoughby said. “We hope that our students can become a better person, it’s just a bonus if they can play some good golf as well,” “We want to promote leaders in the community, and we want them to want to give back to the community that gave so much to them.”

The events the First Tee of North Florida has throughout the year is how they get even more exposure and reach people in the community who could be possible donors.

Some of the events coming up include

the Fourth Annual First Tee Women’s Classic on April 7 beginning with a shotgun start at 9 a.m. at the Slammer & Squire golf course at World Golf Village.

The golf tournament was created to be a celebration of women in the game of golf and in the community and its goal is to raise money to create more pathways for girls and youth to discover golf and its opportunities.

Another fun event will be the 20th Taste of Golf, which is a foodie event that will feature about a dozen chefs from local golf clubs and will be held at the TPC Sawgrass clubhouse on April 23 from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

“The same way we try to work with the kids about diversity, they also have to know that there’s different ways to find that path that suits them,” Willoughby said. “We try to put the kids in front of the donors because it shows firsthand what these kids have become through the program.”

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GUEST COLUMN

Perfect Vision for the Perfect Swing

Why golfers need their eyes at the top of their game

By Dr. Arun C. Gulani

In golf, your eyes are as important as your swing. Every shot — whether it’s a long drive, tracking the ball in mid-air or reading the break on the green — depends on how precisely you see. Yet, common vision imperfections like nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, presbyopia (reading vision loss with age) and even early cataracts can subtly affect performance, making depth perception, contrast and clarity unreliable. Additionally, the waning of your previous Lasik surgery could also impact vision quality.

How golfers rely on dynamic and static vision across multiple distances:

- 1. Nearsightedness (Myopia): Makes distant objects blurry, affecting the ability to spot fairways, follow ball flight and assess wind conditions.
- 2. Farsightedness (Hyperopia): Causes strain when focusing on near objects,



Former PGA Tour Commissioner Deane Beman, left, and Dr. Arun Gulani

- leading to difficulty reading greens or lining up putts.
- 3. Astigmatism: Distorts vision at all distances, making slopes, distances and ball alignment harder to judge.
- 4. Presbyopia (age-related reading vi-

- sion loss): Affects near focus, making it challenging to see scorecards, rangefinders or GPS screens clearly.
- 5. Early Cataracts (age-related clouding of the natural lens): Affects overall brightness especially in less-than-perfect

lighting, and cause glare, loss of contrast sensitivity or an inability to track movement effectively — costing precision, confidence and strokes.

Beyond 20/20: Vision Enhancement for Golfers

In the same way that a professional golfer fine-tunes every aspect of their game, vision correction should go beyond just achieving 20/20. Vision can be optimized for heightened contrast, superior depth perception and clarity at all distances — tailored to the unique needs of each golfer.

For Younger Golfers:

LazrPlastique (next-gen Lasik) — a no-cut, no-blade, advanced laser procedure that not only corrects nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism but also preserves the natural optics of the eye for maximum performance. This next-generation technique enhances visual sharpness, ensuring that fairways look crisp, greens are vivid and ball flight is trackable with precision.

VISION continues on Page 11



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The Ponte Vedra Croquet Club hosted its fourth annual Women's Golf Croquet Academy on Feb. 20 to 21.



Photos courtesy of Ponte Vedra Croquet Club

More than 24 participants took part in this year's academy.

Croquet club aims to grow game with women's academy

By Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra Croquet Club continues to do its part to grow the game as it recently hosted its fourth annual Women's Golf Croquet Academy on Feb. 20 to 21.

The objective of the two-day event was to continue to foster skill development and camaraderie among female croquet players.

It was organized by MaryCarol Stearns alongside esteemed instructors Debbie Davidoff, Ellie Griffith and Cheryl Bromley.

More than 24 participants took part in this year's academy, and some came from across the country, including making the trip to Ponte Vedra Beach from



Participants engaged in structured warm-ups, strategic drills, and even learned to execute jump shots.

Wisconsin and North Carolina.

The academy was open to women of all ages and skill levels, and it filled up

quickly, which the Ponte Vedra Croquet Club believes is a reflection of the increasing enthusiasm for women's participation in competitive croquet.

Each instructor strived to create a supportive and empowering environment where women could not only refine their croquet techniques but also build the confidence to compete in tournaments alongside both men and women after having attended the event.

Participants engaged in structured warm-ups, strategic drills, and even learned to execute jump shots.

Beyond skill-building, the event emphasized community and connection, with a complimentary happy hour at the end of the first day and inclusive meals, snacks and refreshments provided

throughout.

Four years ago, when the women's academy started the Ponte Vedra Croquet Club hoped that it would become a place where women can improve their game in an environment surrounded by women who share their passion for croquet by tapping into the strategic and social aspects of the sport.

The Ponte Vedra Croquet Club is located at 100 Mosquito Control Road in Ponte Vedra Beach. For more information about upcoming events or for anyone interested in coming in for a free lesson, go to www.pontevedracroquet-club.com or contact Heather Collins at pvccheather@gmail.com or 904-834-1614.

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- Constructed with durable poured concrete and rated to withstand 200+ mph winds, this home features impact-resistant glass windows designed for ultimate protection.
- The gourmet kitchen is a chef's dream, complete with quartz countertops, Thermador appliances, a 52-bottle wine cooler, double ovens, a separate wet bar, and an additional ice maker.
- Upstairs, you'll find two bedrooms, including a spacious bonus room, perfect for a home gym or office, each with en-suite bathrooms for complete privacy.
- A substantial laundry room and generous storage spaces enhance the home's functionality.
- The expansive great room features soaring vaulted ceilings, providing a grand yet inviting space for family and entertaining.
- Two luxurious primary suites are located on the first floor, each with serene pool and water views, offering ultimate comfort and relaxation.
- The home also includes a state-of-the-art security system, air purification system, and water softener for peace of mind.
- Enjoy the outdoor oasis with a saltwater pool, a spacious paver pool deck, and large collapsing sliders that open to the tranquil surroundings.
- Additional features include an outdoor half bath with an exterior shower and 4.5-car parking capacity, with two 2-car garages and extra space for up to six vehicles.
- Located just a short stroll from the Ponte Vedra Beach Inn & Club and the Lodge & Club, this property is perfectly situated for a beach and golf lifestyle.

Don't miss out on the chance to own this exceptional estate in one of Ponte Vedra Beach's most desirable locations.
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Vision

Continued from 9

For Middle-Aged Golfers:

LenzOplastique — a lens-based, specialized approach designed to address both distance and near vision challenges as presbyopia sets in. This allows golfers in their 40s and 50s to see their drives clearly while still reading their putts and scorecards effortlessly.

For Older Golfers or Those with Cataracts:

LenzOplastique-based next-generation cataract surgery combined with advanced lens technology ensures that golfers in their 50s, 60s and beyond can regain youthful vision without the limitations of reading glasses or bifocals helping golfers maintain a competitive edge.

For Golfers with previous Lasik or Radial Keratotomy surgeries:

Custom-designed techniques and technologies allow vision restoration for all distances, ensuring that the greens are more readable, shadows don't interfere with depth perception and color contrast remains vivid under changing light conditions.

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confidence and precision — free from the limitations of glasses or contact lenses.

Seeing the Course Like Never Before

- World-renowned professional golfers we have helped with these next-generation techniques often report that:
1. Greens appear more detailed, making it easier to judge undulations and speed.
 2. Contrast is heightened, allowing for clearer distinction between shades of green, sand traps and fairway textures.
 3. Glare is minimized, especially during early morning tee times or late-afternoon rounds when sunlight can be most disruptive.
 4. Depth perception improves, making club selection, approach shots and putt reads more accurate.

By going beyond basic vision correction and into the realm of performance-driven visual optimization, golfers can elevate their game naturally — without glasses, contacts or unnecessary visual compromises.

Tournament Week: A Moment to Sharpen Your Edge

As THE PLAYERS Championship showcases world-class golf, it's an ideal time to evaluate whether your vision is as sharp as your game.

This Tournament Week, don't just watch the pros — see like one.

Betty Griffin

Continued from 5

Toward that end, Keith Campbell of Campbell Plumbing and Mechanics, pledged \$50,000 annually to help survivors get the housing they need.

Following Campbell's announcement, Horschel Family Foundation CEO Brad Nelson announced that the foundation was pledging \$100,000 over four years in unrestricted funds.

"We are so honored to be a part of the Betty Griffin Center and have this partnership that we know is going to go on for years to come," he said.

The funding is critical to the center's mission. About 30% of its budget comes from the federal government, and it's a source that cannot always be guaranteed. For that reason, Franklin said the center is looking for new ways to fund its needs and mission.

Price said her organization advocates for the domestic violence shelters in Florida and mentioned the Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act, which has recently been reintroduced in Congress and enjoys bipartisan support. The bill would fund



Photo by Shaun Ryan

Brad Nelson, CEO of the Horschel Family Foundation, speaks during the Betty Griffin Center Breakfast.

services for survivors.

Two survivors also spoke at the breakfast.

One guest read three of her poems in which she offered hope, shared her prayers and reminded others that they were not alone.

Following her, another survivor described how a victim advocate with the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office introduced her family to the center, which allowed them to rebuild their lives.

She said the Betty Griffin Center provides a pathway "from isolation to empowerment, turning trauma into hope."

To learn more about the Betty Griffin Center, to volunteer or to donate, go to bettygriffincenter.org.



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Spring camp registration opens at the link

Whether your child loves to build, create, cook or move, the link has the perfect camp to ignite their imagination and keep them engaged all season long.

Here are a couple of camps for this year's spring break, March 17-21:

Creative Culinary & Art Fusion Camp

A blend of delicious experiments and artistic expression.

Ages: 5-12

9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

Hosted by Kara Anderson

Spring Fling Week is here, and it's all about fun, friends and fabulous messes!

Get ready to dive into marbling magic while creating table garden masterpieces. Then, we'll whip up tasty treats using fresh herbs — just make sure there's some left to share with your family!

But that's not all. We'll keep the energy high with awesome games and friendly competitions to get everyone moving and grooving.

Sign up for a week full of laughs, creativity and unforgettable memories as we become masters of messy fun together.

Campers should bring a packed lunch and refillable water bottle. Please note that the link is a "no nuts" zone.

STEM & Robotics Camp

Robotics challenges, Carrera slot cars, drones and more.

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday

Hosted by Ivan Ramirez

Explore the exciting world of LEGO robotics and engineering tailored for ages 6-12.

• **Spike Essential:** Ages 6-8. Students will join Maria, Sofie, Leo and Daniel on their great adventures! Help build and program new experiences for the team as they explore and play. This curriculum introduces block coding while having fun building GREAT Adventures.

• **WEDO 2.0:** Ages 7-9. Take the next

step with hands-on projects that inspire curiosity and teamwork, perfect for budding scientists.

• **Spike Prime:** Ages 9-12. Dive into advanced robotics and coding challenges, nurturing critical thinking and innovation.

Campers should bring a packed lunch and refillable water bottle. Please remember that the link is a "nut free zone."

Available spots are limited. Learn more and register at <https://www.thelink.zone/camps>.

The link is located at 425 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra, in the heart of Nocatee Town Center.

Spring break camp to sharpen baseball skills

By Anthony Richards

The U.S. Baseball Academy will be holding a spring break baseball camp at Bartram Trail High School in St. Johns on March 17 to 20.

The academy holds camps throughout the year across the nation and this one will be for any players ages 7 to 14 years old and living on the First Coast.

Each day during the camp will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and it is designed to have a low player-to-coach ratio, which is designed to be conducive to creating an excellent learning environment where each player gets the proper one-on-one teaching needed.

The U.S. Baseball Academy is regarded as the nation's largest baseball camp company with operations in 45 states.

However, although the program is nationally acclaimed through the U.S. Baseball Academy, the camp will use area coaches, so it will maintain a certain local vibe while using the principles and approach that has been



Photo courtesy of U.S. Baseball Academy

The U.S. Baseball Academy is holding a spring break baseball camp at Bartram Trail High School in St. Johns on March 17 to 20.

accepted nationally.

Part of the camp's format will include morning sessions focusing on hitting and defense, while the afternoon sessions will shift to focusing on situational baseball games, competition drills, and a Wiffle ball world series that campers will compete in.

Prizes will be awarded to the winners of the world series, and each participant will receive a T-shirt and camp certificate.

Lunch is not provided by the camp, so campers are asked to bring a bag lunch each day during the camp.

Because the camp strives to have a low player-to-coach ratio, space in the camp is limited and pre-registration is required.

The registration deadline is March 8, and any parents interested in signing up their children can go www.usbaseballacademy.com and click on the "find camp" tab in the upper right-hand corner of the page to search all the camps taking place.

Bartram Trail High School is located at 7399 Longleaf Pine Parkway in St. Johns.



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Contributed photos



Alyssa Amato, owner and founder of Sunhoney.



Sunhoney-branded merchandise are some of the bestsellers.



A vibrant blend of bold colors and coastal charm at Sunhoney.

From blog to boutique: Sunhoney brings colorful, beachy aesthetic to Jax Beach

By Holly Tishfield

When you step into Sunhoney, the vibrant boutique in Jacksonville Beach, you'll be surrounded by a blend of bold colors, coastal charm and playful styles. Vibrant tees, trendy sweat sets and a DIY charm bar are just a few of the items that will greet you.

Shop owner and founder Alyssa Amato always knew that she wanted to open her own store. Her dream began with a fashion blog and social media following that she steadily grew throughout the years.

A native Jacksonville resident, Amato moved to New York City for college, where she majored in business with a minor in fashion marketing. She interned at Harper's Bazaar in the e-commerce department, learning the ins and outs of

managing online sales. All the while, she kept up with her fashion blog and planned for a day when she could create her own brand.

Amato moved back to Jacksonville after college, to the beach and sunshine that she missed so dearly and opened Sunhoney as an online store in 2019. Where did the name 'Sunhoney' come from? Her love of all things Floridian, of course.

"I knew I wanted to incorporate 'sun' because of the Sunshine State, and I wanted it to be girly, but also easy to remember and pronounce," Amato said. "I was playing around with cute nicknames that people call each other and I ended up morphing 'sun' and 'honey' into one word. When I said it out loud, I knew that was going to be it."

Sunhoney began by selling wholesale

boutique items in a strictly online format, but over the years it evolved into a successful, local brand name and an in-person store. These days, Amato says her Sunhoney-branded merchandise, such as the beachy T-shirts and sweatshirts, sell faster than other wholesale boutique items.

Amato splits the storefront with her fiancé, owner of the popular 904 Pop Up event and 8103 Clothing, who encouraged her to begin creating Sunhoney-branded merchandise two years ago. Amato collaborates with a designer and also creates her own designs for branded merchandise, with the store taking pride in offering items that are handmade right here in Jacksonville Beach.

"I feel like the community is so supportive. People who come into the store love to hear my whole story and they're always

so encouraging," Amato said, reflecting on her time in the Beaches small business community. "I feel like it also inspires other people to do what they want and not be held back just because they may be a woman in the space."

Looking to the future, Amato is looking forward to growing the Sunhoney-branded merchandise offerings and hopes to host more community-centered events. In previous years, she collaborated with other local business owners to host Self Care Girls Days, an event where community goes together for activities, shopping and socializing.

"It's so cool to see customers become friends," Amato said. "I've met some of my best friends through the shop, so doing more community-centered events to get girls more involved is a big goal of mine."

Women of HVAC offers career opportunities

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

The inspiration behind this pioneering program comes from the personal journey of one of the founders.

Having graduated from college years ago, Crissy Collins began her career in training & development but found herself struggling to make ends meet, even with multiple jobs, including waiting tables. After more than a decade, she transitioned into the HVAC industry, where she encountered numerous young men who

had chosen to forgo traditional college education in favor of learning a skilled trade.

These workers were achieving six-figure salaries at an age when she had been a struggling college graduate.

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

The Women of HVAC paid internship is an extraordinary opportunity for women in Duval and St. John's counties to break into the HVAC field. This

program will provide paid internships and on-the-job training to equip participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to become successful technicians and installers in the HVAC industry.

World's Greatest Heating and Air is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment. The company believes that diversity enhances innovation, productivity and overall success. By launching the Women of HVAC paid internship, the organization is taking a significant step toward addressing gender imbalance in the HVAC industry.

The program is currently accepting applications. Interested candidates are encouraged to apply through the company's website. Successful applicants will receive hands-on training, mentorship

and the opportunity to build a rewarding career in the HVAC field.

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

For more information about the Women of HVAC paid internship program or to submit an application, go to:

- worldsgreatesthvac.com/post/blast-off-to-success-introducing-the-women-of-hvac-paid-internship-with-world-s-greatest-heating-and-air
- or go to facebook.com/Worldsgreatestheatingandair
- or contact Collins at ccollins@wghvac.com.



Photo by Abbey Eaves
Savannah Rahn, owner of Honeycomb Floral Co.



Photo by Katie Wilson
Honeycomb Floral Co. setting up a floral arch.



Contributed photo
Honeycomb Floral Co.'s pop-up mobile floral cart.



Contributed photo
The business caters to a wide variety of floral needs.

A blossoming community at Honeycomb Floral Co.

By Holly Tishfield

With a bit of kindness, a dash of community and a whole lot of flowers, Honeycomb Floral Co. and its owner, Savannah Rahn, have made waves in the Northeast Florida floral space.

When Rahn decided to open her floral business, she was coming off the tail end of a job at a local flower shop. She had always enjoyed expressing her creativity through unique mediums and practiced arranging bouquets for friends and family as she attended college.

Honeycomb Floral Co. was born in May of 2020, the culmination of Rahn’s creative passion and desire to work with flowers in an unconventional way. It

arrived amid the pandemic, a time when people needed joy perhaps more than ever.

“When I started my business, I wanted it to be something collaborative, where I could find a sense of community,” Rahn said.

She started small, setting up a table with floral arrangements at local shops that welcomed her and building relationships with other small business owners in the process. Honeycomb Floral Co. has come a long way since then, but Rahn still enjoys doing pop-up floral appearances and credits her early success to the local businesses that supported her and the family who encouraged her.

Beyond pop-ups around holidays

where Rahn sells handmade bouquets, Honeycomb Floral Co. is well known for its Flower Bar and small-group workshops. The Flower Bar experience, which can be booked for private events or parties, is where Rahn brings her chic, mobile flower cart with buckets of individual-stemmed flowers for guests to arrange into a personalized take-home bouquet.

Honeycomb Floral Co. knows a thing or two about weddings, as well. In the five years since opening, the floral business has catered flower needs for everything from elopements to full-scale weddings, with needs ranging from bridal bouquets to floral centerpieces. She has set up arrangements in cities from Jack-

sonville and St. Augustine all the way to Tallahassee and Daytona Beach.

As a first-time business owner, Rahn says that the community of fellow female business owners has been nothing but supportive from the very beginning.

“I think for women in business, at least from my experience in the floral community, there’s definitely a sense of community over competition,” she said. “It’s cool to learn from one another and lift each other in our successes.”

Over the next five years, Rahn hopes to further expand Honeycomb Floral Co. while nurturing the community of like-minded individuals she’s built along the way, and, of course, bring a little floral charm wherever she goes.



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Contributed photos



A birthday picnic setup at the beach.



Gina Granert, owner of First Coast Picnics.



An intimate First Coast Picnics setup for two.



A nighttime beach picnic setup with string lights.

First Coast Picnics makes gatherings special

By Holly Tishfield

If you've ever seen a video on the internet and thought to yourself, "I could do that," Gina Granert knows exactly how you feel. She took things a step further and turned that tentative idea inspired by a TikTok video into a successful reality here in Northeast Florida.

"I've always had a passion for creating beautiful, intentional gatherings, so when I saw the opportunity to bring something unique to the First Coast, I knew I had to

do it," she said.

A first-time business owner, Granert opened First Coast Picnics in 2021 as a way to provide luxury picnic experiences inspired by bohemian and coastal styles.

Clients can select a theme, with options ranging from Amalfi Coast or English Countryside-inspired to Autumn Luxe or Winter's Glow styles, and First Coast Picnics will provide everything they need for an unforgettable picnic. Elaborate decorations, fringed umbrellas, cutlery, linens, plates, glasses, faux florals and

string lights are just a few of the tricks that Granert pulls out of her hat on a booking day.

Whether clients book a private picnic experience for a birthday celebration, romantic date night, or simply for the sake of a unique afternoon, Granert and First Coast Picnics promise extraordinary occasions at the beaches, local parks, private backyards or public venues.

Proposals have become another significant component of First Coast Picnics' work. Clients can book a "Proposal" package with options of three-foot tall marquee letters spelling out "marry me" in dazzling lights or floral arch backdrops and an LED sign with the same question. A ring and the love of your life are B.Y.O., of course, but First Coast Picnics will also provide aisle runners, lighted pathways, silk roses, garden trellises and candles.

"Since we started doing proposals, business has been booming, because lots of people are wanting a big event for their proposals," Granert said. "When I see our clients' faces, their reactions

when they see the setup, that's one of my most rewarding moments."

First Coast Picnics started small, but through word-of-mouth and an active presence on social media, the business has become the talk of the town. Granert said they now have many repeat customers and loyal clients who recommend the picnic setup to friends and family. Plus, 105,000 followers on Instagram doesn't hurt, either.

Granert is immensely proud of the achievements her business has accomplished so far and says she looks forward to expanding in the future with larger events and more full-scale tablescaping.

"First Coast Picnics not only allows me to create special moments for clients but also to empower other women in the event industry," she said. "It's been so fun to see people gather around a table and share some intimate moments with their loved ones."

First Coast Picnics currently services the entire First Coast area, from Fernandina to St. Augustine.

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**linkThrive**
WOMEN'S RETREAT AGENDA
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📅 DATE:

APRIL 12, 2025

🕒 TIME:

9 AM - 2 PM

SPEAKERS - ATRIUM

Topic	Leader	Time
Coffee and Mingle		9:00 - 9:15 AM
Opening Remarks	Gurpreet Misra	9:15 - 9:25 AM
Design Your Life: Align with Your Values and Live in Your Sweet Spot	Cordes Lindow	9:30 - 10:00 AM
Unlock True Vitality: By Identifying What Feeds Your Body and Soul	Navenka Gabrielson	10:15 - 10:45 AM
Heart Wellness Redefined: Traditional and Holistic Approaches to a Healthy Heart	Dr. Mona Shah	11:00 - 11:30 AM
Understanding Your Brain: Brain Mapping, Emotions & Happiness	Dr. Mona Shah	11:45 - 12:15 PM
Lunch		12:15 - 12:45 PM
Healing Through Balancing the Autonomic Nervous System	Dr. Marilyn James, D.O.	12:45 - 1:15 PM
Passport to Empowerment: A Luxury Travel Immersive Experience	Vanessa Kromer	1:30 - 2:00 PM
Wrap Up		2:00 - 2:30 PM

ONE-ON-ONE MINI-SESSIONS - IMMERSIVE STUDIO

Topic	Leader	Time
1:1 Energy Reading	Pixie Larizza	15 minute slots
Body Composition	Amanda Holt	15 minute slots
Acupuncture	Sabrina Taj-Taj	15 minute slots
Chair Massage	Ryan Rabalais	15 minute slots
Quick & Easy Toxin-Free Skincare and Makeup Tips	Carlyn Johnson	15 minute slots

ACTIVE SESSIONS - STUDIO A

Topic	Leader	Time
Live the Life You Love - The Superconscious Recode Process	Dr. John Schellenberg	11:00 - 11:30 AM
Introduction to Aromatherapy, Chakras, and Meditation	Pixie Larizza	11:45 - 12:15 PM
Sound Bath	Nicole Kizlinski	12:45 - 1:15 PM
Pilates Mat Class	Navenka Gabrielson	1:30 - 2:00 PM

Elevate, Recharge and Thrive

A transformative women's retreat comes to St. Johns County

On April 12, women from across the region will gather at the link in the heart of Nocatee for a powerful and inspiring retreat designed to nourish the mind, body and soul while exploring the latest innovations in wellness and entrepreneurship. The “linkThrive Women's Retreat — Wellness Reimagined” offers a unique opportunity for attendees to step away from the daily hustle and immerse themselves in a day of growth, learning and meaningful connections. Curated for women entrepreneurs, wellness advocates and creatives, and women from all walks of life, this event blends personal empowerment, business insight and holistic well-being.

What to Expect

- Participants can look forward to:
- **Expert-Led Sessions** — Gain insights from industry leaders on wellness, business strategy and personal growth.
 - **Hands-On Experiences** — Engage in mindfulness practices, movement sessions and interactive sessions tailored to fuel inspiration.
 - **Networking & Collaboration** — Connect with like-minded women in

an ecosystem designed for support and success.

- **Entrepreneurial Showcase** — Explore wellness products and services at the Expo, featuring local businesses and thought leaders.

Held at the link, a hub for connection and innovation, the retreat embodies the spirit of collaboration and empowerment. Whether attendees seek a breakthrough in their business, a recharge for their well-being or a deeper sense of purpose, this experience promises to uplift and transform.

Join the Movement

The “Elevate, Recharge, and Thrive” retreat runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and offers limited registration for an intimate and impactful experience. Entrepreneurs interested in showcasing their work can also secure an Expo table to engage with attendees.

Location: 425 Town Plaza Avenue, Ponte Vedra, 32081
Register now: bit.ly/linkthrive_retreat
View the agenda: bit.ly/linkthrive_agenda

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Circle Of Creation returns in March

Women in the community are being invited to a transformative, seven-session series at the link where they can level-up their lives and businesses.

The link will offer the 2025 Circle of Creation series in March. This year, participants will dive deep into the synergy of emotional intelligence and automation to help them become their own “command center” of growth, creativity and impact.

A look at the main focuses:

• **Emotional Intelligence:** Master the art of understanding and managing your emotions, building stronger connections and enhancing your resilience.

• **Automation:** Harness the power of technology to streamline processes, elevate decision-making and amplify your creative flow.

Tentative schedule:

• Intro Session: Emotional Intelligence + AI. 5:30 to 7:30

p.m. March 26

• Design Thinking & Emotional Intelligence + AI. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. April 30

• Sales/Branding & Emotional Intelligence + AI. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. May 29

• Leadership & Emotional Intelligence + AI. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. June 25

• Small Businesses (Customer Relations) & Emotional Intelligence + AI. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. July 30

• Team Building & Emotional Intelligence + AI. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 27

• Business Expo & Attendee's Presentations. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Oct. 1

This program is free for the link members.

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

Register at: eventbrite.com/e/circle-of-creation-womens-program-tickets-1254682030729?aff=oddtcreator1254682030729?aff=oddtcreator

Sawgrass Pet Resort plans 5-year anniversary party

By Holly Tishfield

Kate Wagner, owner and founder of Sawgrass Pet Resort, opened the doggie daycare and boarding facility to give dogs like hers a safe, active, recreational and healthy space to thrive while providing top-notch service that dog owners could trust.

At the time, she had seven Weimaraners that needed daytime care while she was working. After a handful of bad experiences at a different local facility, Wagner decided that she didn't want to bring her four-legged family members to a place that she no longer had faith in, so she started her own.

“I did it for my dogs,” she said. “My inspiration for it was that we needed a dog daycare, and we needed it to be one that we trusted. You're not going to leave your dogs with someone that you don't trust.”

As a woman-owned and operated business, Wagner is grateful for the support she's received along the way and hopes to serve as an inspiration for women aiming to achieve similar goals.

“I think women in business is so important, because I'm 100% woman-owned, and I think it's important that more women go out and start their own businesses,” she said. “Especially here in St. John's County.”

Coming up on five years of business, Sawgrass Pet Resort is throwing an anniversary party on



Photo contributed by Kate Wagner

Kate Wagner and her daughter, Leeli Wagner

March 9 from 5 to 9 p.m. at the facility in Sawgrass Village. Clients, friends and community members are welcome to attend the celebration with their leashed pups and enjoy live music, food trucks and other fun activities.

This will also serve as an opportunity for prospective clients to set their eyes on the interior and exterior yards of the facility.

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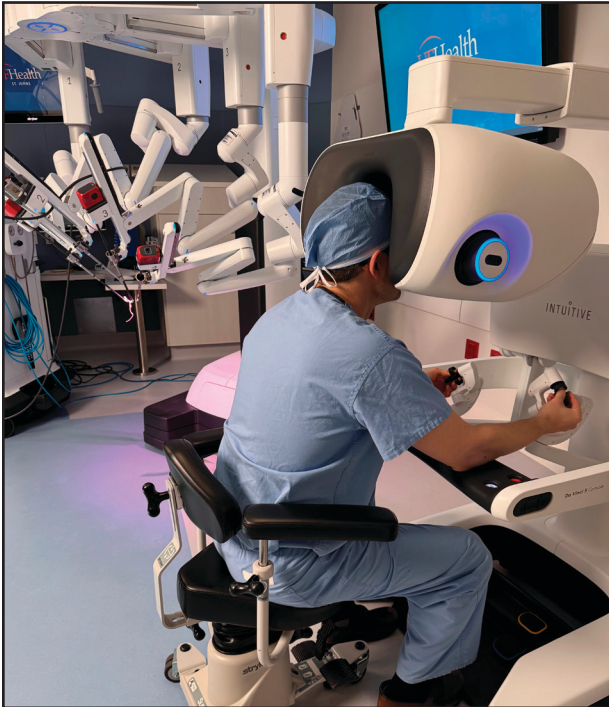
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www.PonteVedraRecorder.com



Contributed photo
A UF Health surgeon is seen at the da Vinci 5 console during a simulation.

UF Health Flagler Hospital adds robotic surgery technology

UF Health Flagler Hospital now offers patients the latest in robotic surgical care, thanks to the installation of the da Vinci 5, the most technologically advanced version of the surgical robot.

“The addition of this kind of advanced technology is a true testament to where UF Health Flagler Hospital is headed directionally, and it underscores our commitment to providing the highest-quality care possible in the community we serve,” said Kerry Watson, interim CEO of UF Health St. Johns. “Patients no longer have to choose between the latest in state-of-the-art technology and getting surgical care in St. Johns County.”

On Feb. 27, Gordon Fifer, M.D., a board-certified urologist with Advanced Urology Institute, performed a pyeloplasty, a surgical procedure to correct a blockage in the urinary tract.

“Performing minimally invasive surgery can provide the best possible outcomes for patients compared with

open surgery, with shorter recovery times, less blood loss, less pain and a faster return to normal activity,” said Byron Stapleton, D.O., a board-certified general surgeon with UF Health Surgical Specialists. “And now we have even more precise movements, an even clearer image and real-time feedback. This just opens up the world of possibilities for patients and for surgeons.”

The da Vinci 5 has three main components: the patient cart, which holds the camera and the surgical arms that assist a physician with surgery; the surgeon console, where the surgeon sits to operate; and the vision cart, which manages communications between the robotic arms and the surgeon and has a screen to view the surgery in real-time.

While minimally invasive surgery isn’t new, the da Vinci 5 offers benefits to both patients and surgeons that

ROBOTIC continues on **Page 20**

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GUEST COLUMN

How a gift of money can help build investing habits

Written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors

As a parent or grandparent, you likely want to teach children sound money habits and help them become financially successful adults.

There are a variety of ways to instill good financial habits. The following two approaches allow you to gift assets to children while providing them with hands-on investment experience that may prove useful in the future.

1. Custodial accounts

Custodial accounts can be opened for your children before they turn 18. They can be a useful vehicle to teach them about the principles of money and investing.

With these accounts, custodians control how investments are managed. Sharing account statements and the way you make decisions on your children's behalf can be an opportunity to teach smart investment principles.

There are a couple of considerations you will want to think about as you determine whether such an approach is right for you and your family. First, when funding these accounts, keep in mind that control of these accounts transfers to the child when the custodianship ends. This generally happens when the child reaches age 18, 19 or 21, depending on state law. You may not want your child to have control of more financial assets than they can handle at that age.

It is also important to know that special tax rules, the "kiddie tax" rules, may apply. The income and capital



Contributed photo

gains generated in these accounts could be taxed at the parents' income-tax rates for children under age 19 (age 24 if a full-time student). This means your young child may be required to file an income-tax return of their own. Your tax adviser can help you determine how these rules would apply to your situation.

2. Gifting money in an IRA (Individual Retirement Account)

Helping fund an IRA can benefit adult children who are starting their career and can't afford to contribute to a retirement account or don't have a workplace retirement plan. Even teens with earned income can fund an IRA.

The earlier your children start investing for retirement, the more their investments may accumulate over time. There are two types of IRA, a Traditional and a Roth.

- **Traditional IRA:** If eligible, your child may receive a tax deduction when they contribute to a Traditional IRA, which will also offer tax-deferred growth potential. Any

earnings from the account may grow tax free until the money is finally distributed.

- **Roth IRA:** This type of account is not eligible for tax relief on the contributions, but any earnings could be distributed tax-free if taken after the Roth has been opened for more than five years and your child is aged 59½ or older. In addition, your child may be able to tap into these funds if they need them due to a disability or for use in purchasing their first home.

If you are thinking of gifting money, be sure to talk to a tax professional. Any time you give money to a child — including to a custodial account or an IRA — IRS gift rules apply.

Wells Fargo Advisors does not provide tax or legal advice.

Please consult your tax and legal advisors to determine how this information may apply to your own situation.

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Continued from 19

dramatically improve the overall experience, equating to shorter time for patients in the operating room and less time under

anesthesia, which can lead to better outcomes.

During any surgery, delicate internal tissue and organs need to be moved or cut.

"The tactile feedback integrated into the system alerts a surgeon if there's too much pressure being used," said Staple-

ton. "This information results in less tissue damage and even more precise treatment for patients. When tissue is preserved, patients heal faster."

Tissue damage is expected to be reduced by up to 40% compared with the previous version of the da Vinci.

The newest da Vinci model has 10,000 times more computing power than the previous model, allowing it to perform tasks it could not perform previously.

Additional enhancements include:

- An improved 3D imaging system gives surgeons a better view and supports future technology.
- New controllers provide smoother, more precise surgical movements.
- Sharper surgical imagery.
- Dynamic feedback to improve surgeon skills during training simulations.

The da Vinci 5 will initially be used in the areas of urology, gynecology and general surgery, with the potential to expand services over time.

UF Health Flagler Hospital's da Vinci 5, made by Intuitive, is only one of three in use in Northeast Florida and the first in St. Johns or Flagler counties.

To learn more about the surgical offerings at UF Health Flagler Hospital, go to StJohns.UFHealth.org/flaglerhospital.

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Benchmarks of Success

A look at major career developments in the area



Bilotta joins real estate business

Andrew Bilotta has joined the team of real estate professionals at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty. With a deep-rooted passion for customer service and a commitment to excellence, Bilotta brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to his role.

He earned his bachelor’s degree in history from North Carolina State University. His love for learning extends beyond academia, as he actively seeks to understand the intricacies of real estate to better serve his clients and Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty. Andrew resides in Ponte Vedra Beach with his wife, exploring new cuisines, traveling and indulging in quality entertainment.

For more information or to contact Andrew Bilotta, go to ABilotta.FloridaNetworkRealty.com or 631-521-4747 and Andrew.Bilotta@FloridaNetworkRealty.com

The Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office, located



Shearer joins real estate firm

Jessica Shearer has joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty. With more than four decades of residency in Northeast Florida and a deep-rooted connection to the community, Shearer brings a wealth of local knowledge and expertise to her role.

She earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education from the University of North Florida, reflecting her commitment to learning and community engagement. Born and raised in Ponte Vedra, she has developed a profound appreciation for the area’s unique charm and natural beauty, which she shares with her clients.

For more information or to contact Shearer, go to JShearer.FloridaNetworkRealty.com or contact her directly at 904-477-9795 and Jessica.Shearer@FloridaNetworkRealty.com.

The Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office is located at 333 Village Main St., Suite 670,



Hawkes joins real estate business

Trisha Hawkes has joined the team of real estate professionals at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty. With a deep-rooted passion for Northeast Florida and a commitment to client satisfaction, Hawkes brings a wealth of expertise and a keen eye for visual design to her new role.

Originally from Ohio, Hawkes made the Sunshine State her home and has never looked back. She is no stranger to the real estate industry, having cultivated her skills and knowledge over the years. Her background in visual design and home staging enhances her ability to present properties in the best light, ensuring maximum appeal in the competitive market.

For more information or to contact Hawkes, go to THawkes.FloridaNetworkRealty.com or 631-521-4747 and Trisha.Hawkes@FloridaNetworkRealty.com.

The Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office is located at 333 Village Main St., Suite 670,



Noto joins local real estate firm

Maria Noto is the newest addition to the team at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty. A Ponte Vedra Beach resident since 2011, Noto brings extensive local knowledge and a passion for exceptional customer service.

Beyond real estate, Noto’s greatest joy is her family. A proud mother of four and an adoring Nonna to three wonderful grandchildren, she considers them her greatest achievement.

For more information or to connect with Noto, call 479-790-5655, email Maria.Noto@FloridaNetworkRealty.com or go to MariaNoto904.com.

The Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office is located at 333 Village Main St., Suite 670, Ponte Vedra Beach. Broker/Manager Erin Spalding can be reached at 904-285-1800, Erin.Spalding@FloridaNetworkRealty.com and floridanetworkrealtycareers.com.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

Get back in the game

Playing basketball with an injury usually makes it worse. It’s the same when you ignore a hernia, but the signs are easy to miss. Here are some hernia symptoms that often go unrecognized:

- Pain in the pelvic area
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fever
- Constipation
- Feeling full and bloated
- Heartburn
- Weakness and muscle fatigue in the upper leg or groin
- Pain when lifting or coughing

If left untreated, your hernia could grow, get more painful, or even become dangerous at some point. And a hernia won’t go away on its own. The good news is today’s minimally invasive hernia treatment options, including robotic-assisted surgery, can offer you fast recovery.



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Ascension St. Vincent's, Jacksonville University establish nursing program

Ascension St. Vincent's and Jacksonville University have announced a new strategic partnership that will provide students in the university's Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program the unique opportunity to complete their education at Jacksonville University and all four St. Vincent's hospitals.

The program will accept up to 40 students and welcomed its inaugural class in January. Students will be educated in a fully immersive simulation center at Jacksonville University, with units designed to replicate a hospital room and best-in-class classroom space. Students will also spend clinical time at each of St. Vincent's four area hospitals.

"We are blessed to be able to nurture the growth of the next generation of nurses in

Northeast Florida," said Scott Kashman, president and CEO of St. Vincent's Riverside. "This partnership with Jacksonville University will ensure these students have access to a premier education with state-of-the-art equipment with a focus on those in our community who need care."

The partnership will include a scholarship program and financial investment to support students' career aspirations. St. Vincent's is investing \$160,000 to fund student scholarships for 16 students, which will be matched by the State of Florida through the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund. St. Vincent's is also contributing \$250,000 to develop simulation space on the university's campus.

"As we expand our highly successful ABSN programs, we are proud to partner



Contributed photo

Chief Nursing Officers, pictured left, are Sean McAfee, St. Johns County; Stormy Dulovich, Riverside; Sadie Durham, Clay County; and Kathy Hester, Southside.

with Ascension St. Vincent's, a health care institution synonymous with serving the Jacksonville community for more than

100 years," said Jacksonville University President Tim Cost. "The need for quality nurses persists, not only in Florida, but nationwide. Together, alongside a health care provider with a mission to help and serve others, we will continue to empower and educate future nurses with the knowledge and skills necessary to make a positive impact."

This initiative will serve as the foundation for a long-term commitment to the communities across Northeast Florida by preparing the next generation of nurses and maintaining a pipeline of local talent ready to care for the community.

For more information, go to Ascension St. Vincent's website and Jacksonville University's Accelerated Bachelor of Nursing page.

Amelia Island wins 5 awards for travel marketing

The Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau (Amelia Island CVB) received five awards for travel marketing excellence by the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI) at the annual Adrian Awards Celebration at the New York Marriott Marquis, Feb. 18.

The Adrian Awards, now in their 68th year, are the largest and most prestigious competition in global travel marketing. The Amelia Island CVB received a Silver

Award, three Bronze Awards, and a Silver-Best of Category Award, indicating its commitment to innovative, award-winning tourism marketing.

"Our marketing strategy supports an unwavering commitment to sustainable tourism growth and effectively positions Amelia Island as one of the world's top travel destinations," said Gil Langley, president and CEO of the Amelia Island CVB. "We're proud to share Amelia Island's story on the

global stage and grateful to have our team's exceptional marketing efforts recognized among the very best in the industry."

The Amelia Island CVB won a Silver Award-Best of Category for its "PadSquad VidStream" entry (Digital – Innovation). The Best of Category designation is given to the one entry receiving the highest score in one of three budget ranges. The CVB also won a Silver Award for "Amelia Island Inspired Weddings" (Advertising – Brand Campaign); and Bronze Awards for the "Amelia Island Dynamic Blog Campaign" (Digital – Publisher Content), "Meeting Planner Quarterly Emails" (Advertising – Group Sales/Travel Trade) and "AmeliaIsland.com" (Digital – Website).

This year's awards theme, "Wish You Were Here," highlights the stories of the memorable and successful travel marketing and public relations campaigns, ads, earned media programs and experiential and digital experiences inspiring the notion that travel is about more than just the destination, cultivating a passion for the journey and memories collected along the way.

"The Adrian Awards honors the creativity and vision that drives our industry forward, shining a spotlight on the marketing and communication leaders whose outstanding



Contributed photo

Paul Beirnes, vice president of Amelia Island CVB, accepting Adrian Awards 2025.

work truly inspires people to embrace travel and create unforgettable memories in the journey," said Brian Hicks, president and CEO of HSMIAI.

The Adrian Awards Celebration is a must-attend industry event that annually attracts leading hospitality, travel, and tourism marketing executives and their agencies. Winning entries are viewable in the winners' gallery on the Adrian Awards website. Go to adrianawards.hsmia.org for more information on the event and competition.

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In the Arts

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www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

Beaches Museum highlights women’s history locally, nationally

By Anthony Richards

With March being women’s history month, the Beaches Museum has its share of upcoming events that will celebrate women in a variety of ways.

To start, the museum’s current exhibit is called “Salt Run and the Sea” which features the works of local artist Jenna Alexander, whose studio is based in St. Augustine. Alexander’s work will be on display as part of the exhibition until June 22.

She specializes in oil painting on canvas and much of her artwork reflects the world around her and often depicts the soothing nature scenes that have become common with living in Northeast Florida, especially along the beaches.

One of the beauties of Alexander’s approach is that she never knows what aspects of her daily life will capture her attention and turn into her next piece of art, usually discovered during her hikes through nature.

The history of the Beaches Museum is rich with influential female figures, none more important than the late Jean H. McCormick, who was instrumental in the founding of the Beaches Area Historical Society.

The Beaches Museum’s endowment fund is named in McCormick’s honor.

Local author Dorothy Fletcher is also highlighted this month by the museum as she will be the guest speaker at a Boardwalk Talk event and book signing on March



20 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Beaches Museum.

Fletcher has written several books over the years diving into the history of Jacksonville and Jacksonville Beach, including a book about the car culture in the area, one on the memorable movie theaters and drive-ins that became popular spots over the years, and one looking back on what it was like to grow up in Jacksonville in the 1950s and 1960s.

Her books are available to purchase in the museum’s gift shop and members of the Beaches Museum will receive 15% off any of her books during the month of March.

Members will also be able to attend Fletcher’s Boardwalk Talk for free, while a \$5 donation is suggested for non-members.

Finally, the League of Women Voters will be holding a special reading of two informative and timely works by local playwright Toby Armour in the Beaches Museum chapel on March 15 beginning at 4 p.m.

The readings will be “Aunt Susan,” which tells the story of Susan B. Anthony’s struggle for a woman’s right to vote, while the other reading will be “Her Tennessee Waltz,” which is a retelling of Carrie Chapman Catt and her fight to ratify the 19th Amendment.

The Beaches Museum is located at 381 Beach Blvd. in Jacksonville Beach.

★ ON ★
STAGE

A roundup of events and musical acts appearing soon at local venues.

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Box office hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Sunday. Tickets sold at the box office are available via credit- and debit-card only. Tickets may also be purchased at TheAmp.com and AXS.com. For further information about each act, go to theamp.com/events.

- The Beach Boys — The Endless Summer Gold Tour: 7:30 p.m. March 8
- ZZ Top: 7:30 p.m. March 14
- Joe Bonamassa: 8 p.m. March 15
- Foreigner (with guest Don Felder): 7 p.m. March 16
- Diana Ross: 7:30 p.m. March 18
- Widespread Panic: 7 p.m. March 21-22; 6:30 p.m. March 23
- Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit: 7:30 p.m. April 9
- Chicago: 7:30 p.m. April 13
- Khruangbin: 7 p.m. April 16
- Warren Zeiders (with guest Tyler Braden): 7:30 p.m. April 19
- Travis Tritt (with guest Brian Kelley): 7 p.m. April 24
- Wilco (with guest Waxahatchee): 7 p.m. April 30

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

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WHAT'S GOING ON

Here’s a look at some events and concerts coming to local venues in March and April.

THE FLORIDA THEATRE
128 E. Forsyth St., Suite 300, Jacksonville

Tickets and information available at: floridatheatre.com. Tickets may also be purchased by phone at 904-355-2787. Also, the box office is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays; on weekends, four hours before evening performances, two hours before matinee performances.

- Brett Young: 8 p.m. March 6. Tickets: \$49.50 to \$89.50
- Lewis Black: 8 p.m. March 7. Tickets: \$35-\$79
- Gladys Knight: 8 p.m. March 8. Tickets: \$49.50 to \$114.50
- Luis Elizondo: 7:30 p.m. March 9. Tickets: \$39-\$55
- MOMIX: 7:30 p.m. March 11. Tickets: \$35-\$59.50
- Get The Led Out: 8 p.m. March 12. Tickets: \$32.50 to \$59
- Matteo Bocelli: 7:30 p.m. March 13. Tickets: \$39.50 to \$74.50
- Newsboys with Amanda Nolan: 7 p.m. March 14. Tickets: \$29-\$79
- Desi Banks: 7 p.m. March 15. Tickets: \$39-\$79
- Girls Gone Bible: 7 p.m. March 16. Tickets: \$43.25 to \$53.25
- Tracy Lawrence (with guest Madison Hughes): 8 p.m. March 20. Tickets: \$49.50 to \$69.50

- The Irish Tenors: 7:30 p.m. March 22. Tickets: \$45-\$69.50
- Countess Luann: 7 p.m. March 23. Tickets: \$49.50 to \$89.50
- Keb’ Mo’ & Shawn Colvin: 7:30 p.m. March 24. Tickets: \$49.50 to \$79.50
- Billy Joel Legends Line! 8 p.m. March 26. Tickets: \$45-\$69.50
- Little River Band (with guest John Waite): 8 p.m. March 27. Tickets: \$59-\$99.50
- The Steeldrivers: 8 p.m. March 28. Tickets: \$45-\$55
- Jimmy Failla: 8 p.m. March 29. Tickets: \$30-\$90
- Big Head Todd and The Monsters: 8 p.m. March 30. Tickets: \$35-\$69
- “Stinky Cheese Man”: (Theatreworks) 10 a.m. and noon March 31. Tickets: \$8.50
- Dave Mason’s Traffic Jam: 8 p.m. March 31. Tickets: \$34.50 to \$124.50
- Angélique Kidjo: 8 p.m. April 1. Tickets: \$42.50 to \$85
- Geoff Tate’s Operation: Mindcrime: 8 p.m. April 3. Tickets: \$45-\$59
- “The Great Gatsby”: 7 p.m. April 4. Tickets: \$45-\$95
- Anjelah Johnson-Reyes: 7 p.m. April 5. Tickets: \$39.75 to \$65
- Marcus King Band: 7:30 p.m. April 6. Tickets: \$43-\$83
- Leonid & Friends: 8 p.m. April 7. Tickets: \$52.50 to \$99.50
- Old Crow Medicine Show: 8 p.m. April 8. Tickets: \$47.50 to \$65
- Jagged Edge: 8 p.m. April 9. Tickets: \$39.50 to \$89.50

- Air Supply: 7 p.m. April 11. Tickets: \$59.50 to \$99.50
- Orchestra Noir: 8 p.m. April 12. Tickets: \$49-\$99
- “Dog Man The Musical”: 5 p.m. April 13. Tickets: \$29.50 to \$49.50. (Also: Theatreworks, 10:30 a.m. April 14; Tickets: \$8.50)
- The McCartney Years: 8 p.m. April 16. Tickets: \$39.50 to \$55
- An Evening With Nephew Tommy & Friends: 8 p.m. April 19. Tickets: \$55-\$125
- Justin Hayward (with guest Mike Dawes): 8 p.m. April 21. Tickets: \$39.50 to \$89.50
- America: 7:30 p.m. April 23. Tickets: \$79.50 to \$129.50
- The Donna Summer Experience: 8 p.m. April 24. Tickets: \$50-\$75
- Amos Lee: 7:30 p.m. April 27. Tickets: \$49.50 to \$99.50
- Gene Simmons Band: 8 p.m. April 29. Tickets: \$69.50 to \$249.50

FSCJ ARTIST SERIES
Broadway in Jacksonville

Venues vary. Tickets available at fscjartistseries.org or at the box office, 904-632-5000. Email: info@fscjartistseries.org.

- Stayin’ Alive One Night of the Bee Gees: 7:30 p.m. March 6. Tickets: \$33-\$76
- IL Volo: 8 p.m. March 7. Tickets: \$62.50 to \$567.95
- “Swan Lake”: 3 p.m. March 9. Tickets: \$18.43 to \$91.45

- DramaWorks presents “Twelfth Night” by William Shakespeare: 7:30 p.m. March 27, 28, 29; 2 p.m. March 30. Tickets: \$13
- “Feelin’ Good” The Ultimate Michael Bublé Experience: 8 p.m. March 28. Tickets: \$39.50 to \$87.50
- “Les Misérables”: 7:30 p.m. April 1-3; 8 p.m. April 4-5; 2 p.m. April 5; 1 and 6:30 p.m. April 6. Tickets: \$47.50 to \$190.50
- Mission Nutrition with Jason Hudy: 10 a.m. and noon April 8. For grades K-6. Tickets: \$8.50
- The Simon & Garfunkel Story: 8 p.m. April 11. Tickets: \$39.50 to \$219.25
- “Menopause The Musical 2: Cruising Through ‘The Change’”: 3 p.m. April 12. Tickets: \$44.50 to \$97.50
- “MJ The Musical”: 7:30 p.m. April 22-24; 8 p.m. April 25-26; 2 p.m. April 26. Tickets: \$61.50 to \$184.50

SUNDAY AT STETSON’S
Beluthahatchee, 1523 S.R. 13, Fruit Cove

No reservations necessary. Suggested donation: \$10.

Katherine Archer: 2 p.m. March 9. Concert at Hart House at the end of the short dirt road. Archer, of St. Augustine, plays guitar, ukulele, mandolin and banjo and has shared the stage with Pete Seeger, Tom Chaplin, and Peter Yarrow.

For more information, contact skf.concerts@gmail.com.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

NOMINATIONS FOR ARTS AND CULTURE BACKERS ACCEPTED

First Coast Cultural Center is seeking nominations for individuals, businesses and organizations within the coastal counties of Nassau, Duval and St. Johns, between Amelia Island and St. Augustine Beach,

that go above and beyond to enhance the arts and culture in the community.

The nomination form with details for each of the six categories can be found at app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/Cul

turalCenterAtPonteVedraBea/beaches-2024-nomination-1-1-1-1.html.

The deadline for nominations is March 15.

“I encourage community members to put

their thinking caps on and start nominating,” said Donna Guzzo, FCCC president and CEO. “We can never have too many nominations. Let’s celebrate those who do so much for the arts, for education, for those committed to philanthropy and for those who make an impact in our community.”

Winners will be chosen by a committee of carefully selected judges who are unaffiliated with FCCC. Those selected will be announced at the sixth annual gala, Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts, which set for 6-8 p.m. April 27 at the TPC Clubhouse in Ponte Vedra Beach.

The Grecian-themed event will feature inspired chef specialties, live music, a silent auction, art and an awards presentation. FCCC is also celebrating its “Year of the Pearl,” marking 30 years of prosperity as a nonprofit organization.

The gala has been a sell-out event in the past, and tickets can be purchased on FCCC’s website at firstcoastculturalcenter.org/beaches-a-celebration-of-the-arts-2025. Those interested in advertising in the program or sponsoring the event can reach out to Kimberly Sheridan at 904-280-0614, Ext. 1205, or email her at ksheridan@firstcoastculturalcenter.org.

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Romero named to Cultural Center top post

First Coast Cultural Center has announced the appointment of Silvia Romero as senior director of operations as of Saturday, March 1. Romero replaces former President and CEO Donna Guzzo, who has been at the helm of the nonprofit organization for the past eight years.

"Silvia brings such a unique blend of knowledge and experience in both the arts and the nonprofit sector," according to Scott St. Amand, chair of the Board of Directors for FCCC. "We feel so fortunate to be able to work alongside her during this transition to continue to seamlessly grow the mission of the center."

Romero, who joined FCCC as director of programs in 2023, has a long list of qualifications for this role. After receiving a BA in art history at the University of North Florida, Romero was a museum educator and then associate director of education for the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens in Jacksonville, where she managed a \$1 million endowment to provide arts integration to underserved students for six years.

Through her career, she led arts fundraising for a Deaf preschool's annual gala, worked as an arts and Montessori educator, and then became arts education manager at Shorelake Arts, a nonprofit organization in Seattle, Washington.



Contributed photo

Silvia Romero has been named senior director of operations for the First Coast Cultural Center.

"The communities between Jacksonville and St. Augustine will continue to have high quality arts programming available for children and adults," according to Romero. "Our goal is to carry out the team's vision of serving the public through classes and presentations, while infusing arts integration during the school day for children with disabilities."

A graduate of the Beaches Emerging Leaders Program and the Jim Moran Institute of Global Entrepreneurship's Nonprofit Executive Program, Romero will work alongside Fundraising Manager Kimberly Sheridan, who has been with FCCC since 2021 in various roles. Sheridan now oversees membership, events and local grants.

In addition, Candice Sirak will continue in her role as senior music therapist and Sound Connections music therapy manager, providing much-needed services to students with disabilities in St. Johns County Schools. KickStART after-school arts enrichment will also continue to serve students. Meanwhile, Charlotte Chastain, formerly Guzzo's administrative assistant, will teach more of her popular art classes at the center.

"I am leaving FCCC in great hands," Guzzo said. She added that FCCC's next step is finding an experienced capital campaign manager to oversee renovations of their "forever home" purchased in July 2023 in Ponte Vedra Beach. "This is an important piece in continuing our mission of bringing the arts to life in the community through education, exhibitions and outreach while honoring a donor-driven philosophy."

First Coast Opera to present 'The Magic Flute'

First Coast Opera celebrates its 25th anniversary with a return to its very first opera, Mozart's timeless "The Magic Flute."

Follow the adventures of Prince Tamino and the bird-catcher Papageno as they seek to free Princess Pamina from the nefarious Queen of the Night.

Full of beautiful melodies and dazzling characters, this mysterious and magical tale will captivate audiences of all ages.

Tickets are available at firstcoastopera.com/magic-flute

Performances are: 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 21, and 4 p.m. Saturday, March 22, at Kirk Memorial Auditorium at Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, 207 San Marco Ave., St. Augustine.

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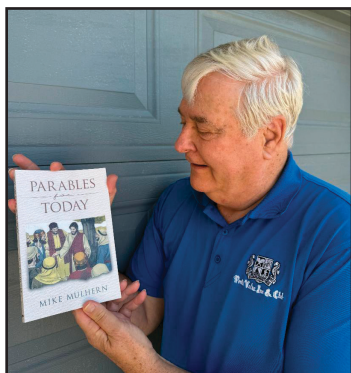
Author tells timely tales in 'Parables for Today'

Do you have aspirations for fame and want to know how some of those who attained it succeeded? Is there a secret formula or road to get there?

The answer may be found in Ponte Vedra author Mike Mulhern's latest literary effort, "Parables for Today."

"The Fame Game" is just one story in a collection of tales the longtime journalist presents to educate, enlighten and entertain his readers and open their minds up to a broader reality that exceeds what they may be encountering in their humdrum, unexciting lives.

"I've had lots of experiences I feel others can profit and grow from," says Mulhern, "and I've gathered a bunch of them together to share. Some are reminiscences; others contain elements of truth I feel the reader can relate to because of similar experiences in his or her own life. There's nothing in the book that's offensive and something there



Contributed photo

Author Mike Mulhern holds up a copy of his new book, "Parables for Today."

everyone should be able to profit from."

Mulhern, incidentally, is a former Ponte Vedra Recorder employee who is still an occasional contributing writer.

"This community is fortunate to have such an outstanding newspaper that's so responsive to its readership," he comments.

Some of the topics covered in the book are death and dying, dealing with adversity, coping with physical and psychological challenges and tips on living a profitable life.

"Life is an adventure, and it doesn't hurt to be prepared for some of the bumps we encounter in the road along the way," he points out. "The information in this book should prove helpful in some way for everybody."

At present, "Parables for Today" is available from amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com and from the website of the book's publisher, Balboa Press.

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Directed by Cindy Alexander

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Sports

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Kemp prepared to be two-sport athlete at college level



Photos by Anthony Richards

Ponte Vedra High senior Ryker Kemp has already committed to the University of Utah next year, but now he will be doing so as a two-sport athlete, as he recently announced that he will be competing in both lacrosse and football for the Utes.

UNF, Jacksonville Sharks team up for football game

The Jacksonville Sharks and the University of North Florida are teaming up for the university's "first football game." On April 19, the Sharks will use the "North Florida Ospreys" moniker for an official Indoor Football League game at VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena.

For the alter-ego night, the Sharks will don custom jerseys featuring the "North Florida Ospreys" emblem in school colors, and the announcer will refer to the team as such throughout the game. UNF cheerleaders, the Pep Band and fans will rally behind the team, creating a spirited game-day experience. The jerseys will be auctioned off at the end of the game, with proceeds benefitting the UNF Foundation and the Jacksonville Sharks Foundation.

Doors open at 6 p.m., an hour before kickoff.

In addition to meeting Ospreys, attendees will have the opportunity to engage with Sharks players, the coaching staff and the Attack Dance Team for pictures and autographs on the field after the game.



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Sharks

Continued from 1

ing to do out there and it just makes it awesome playing with them.”

Dolan stood out for the Sharks with a multi-goal night against the Panthers.

“One of the big things for me this year was to just get faster, and also to remember to have fun out there,” Dolan said. “So far, I feel like I’m playing the best I’ve ever played.”

The Panthers’ deficit grew to as much as seven before they began to find some momentum of their own thanks to senior Nik Perkins who had a trio of goals and helped give life to the Panthers’ attack as they outscored the Sharks in the third quarter and only trailed 9-6 heading into the fourth.

“When our offense is clicking we’re the best in the



Photos by Anthony Richards

state bar none, but we’re also very high and very low, and it’s all about finding that consistency as a team,” Dolan said. “Physically we’re all big and fast, but it comes down to being a mental thing. It’s all between the ears.”

The Sharks made the necessary corrections and cinched up their defense in the final quarter, as both teams only managed one more goal each and the Sharks secured another win in the series over the rival Panthers.

“In any sport, beating Nease is the best, because we know them and they know us,” Dolan said. “That’s what we live for around here.”

The three-point difference against the Panthers was the closest outcome the Sharks had seen in their season to that point until a narrow 8-6 victory over Jupiter High on March 1.

The win over Jupiter saw them improve to a record of 8-0 at that time prior to their first loss of the season, a 10-6 defeat on the road to fellow unbeaten Orlando Bishop Moore High on March 4.

The Panthers answered the loss to the Sharks nicely with home consecutive wins over South Walton High, 7-6, and Palm Coast Matanzas, 17-2, as they have found their groove of late and have a winning record at 4-3.



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Some new names to watch at THE PLAYERS

By Kathy Bissell

Every year, there is a bouquet of relatively new golfers who are blooming all over the fairways at THE PLAYERS. Some are new to the PGA Tour as well. Some may have been in THE PLAYERS once, even twice or three times, but so far, they haven't won it. In fact, most of them haven't won a lot as professionals. That's why it's good to keep an eye on them, just as we did last season with Ludvig Åberg (pronounced Oh-berg, presumably a cousin of Ice-berg) who won in Europe right after college, and then won on the PGA Tour at the last event in the fall of 2023.

You never know when one of these phenoms will jump up and surprise everybody. And Åberg is definitely on this list. Keep your eye on him. Especially now that he lives in Ponte Vedra!

At the top of new guys to watch is Thomas Detry (said Dee-Tree, the Belgian who was recruited for the University of Illinois golf team — think Steve Stricker) and just won his first PGA Tour event at the raucous WM Phoenix Open in Scottsdale. Detry has been on the PGA Tour for two years, having become a member in 2023. Before that, he played the DP World Tour.

Detry followed fellow Belgian Thomas Pieters, who won the individual Big 10 conference title in 2013, played his way to the PGA Tour and then went back to Europe and then moved to LIV golf.

In Scottsdale, Detry showed he could stand up to the crowds, to the pressure of having the lead and keeping it through several days of a tournament. He's definitely a guy to put on your possibles list, although he was 62nd last year. Still, he has to have some confidence after playing that 16th hole at TPC Scottsdale where they yell and scream and sing and what-not. Especially the whatnot.

After winning, Detry said, "I love it here. It's great. The PGA Tour is great."

Yes, Thomas. We agree, but we live here.

Denmark also has two entries in the up-and-coming golfers category, and



Photo by Craig O'Neal

they are the Hojgaard twins, Rasmus and Nicholai. Supposedly everyone was focused on Rasmus, because he has five victories on the DP World Tour, including last year's Irish Open where he beat Rory McIlroy by a stroke. But then Nicholai was so good that he was picked for the 2023 European Ryder Cup team. He also won the DP World Tour Championship in 2023.

Nicolai played 14 events on the PGA Tour in 2022-23 and 18 events as a regular member of the Tour last year. Either one of them is capable of a big victory. Don't bet against them in the Zurich team event, either!

Their last name is pronounced Hoy-Gaar. Silent d, like sometimes happens in French. The French also don't pronounce many r's, a lot of h's and numerous other letters that fell out of favor. Why have the letter if you're not going to use it? Aaaargh!! (Sort of silent h.)

The United States has some newbies, too. Will Chandler, a Georgia native and UGA golf product, showed a lot of promise at the WM Phoenix Open.

Chandler finished T6 there, and he'll have some work to get into THE PLAYERS. However, if he continues to play as well as he did at the WM Open, he could make it.

Another born-in-Georgia guy whose family turned tail and went to Auburn, Alabama, then let him boomerang back to UGA for college is Davis Thompson. He lives at Sea Island with that entire crew that plays out of what is the prettiest practice range in the country. It has a view of the water like nobody can believe. Anyone else would dig that up and turn it into super-expensive housing. (For a couple of years, it was also a good place to watch the cargo ship that sank with a gazillion cars on board.)

Last summer, Thompson won the 2024 John Deere, which means he's not only in THE PLAYERS, but he's also in the Masters and the PGA. He shot 28-under-par at the John Deere, which is the lowest 72-hole score ever in the tournament's history, and it's been going on for quite a while. (One question: Does he get one of those cute tractor tee markers to take home?)

Now, all the top golfers in the FedEx Cup standings from last season will be here. And that includes Maverick McNealy, who won Davis Love III's event at Sea Island, the RBC Classic. McNealy went to Stanford, where he shot a 61 in the last round of the Pac-12 Conference Championship tournament, which tied the college record, which is

also shared with Tiger Woods and Cameron Wilson.

Robert Macintyre, the Scot who won his country's open last summer, the Genesis Scottish Open, has joined the PGA Tour, and he's both fun to watch and fun to listen to, if you like Scottish accents. Plus, he can really play. He's a lefty, so be sure to stand on the left side of the holes, the better to see his swing.

Austin Eckroat, who won twice in 2024, at the Cognizant (formerly Honda) and a fall event, the World Wide Technology Championship at El Cardonal at Diamante Los Cabos, in Baja California, Mexico, has been kind of flying under the radar, as they say. However, he was in the top 50 in 2024, and that gets him into every important event all year. So, he's a bigger deal than some people might think. That's just a sample of players to watch.

Just so you'll know who's in and who's out, the field is 144 players made up from:

1. Winners of PGA Tour events since last PLAYERS
2. Top 125 from previous season's FedEx Cup points list
3. Top 125
4. Major champions from the past five years
5. PLAYERS Championship winners from the past five years
6. The Tour Championship winners from the past three years
7. Memorial Tournament, Arnold Palmer Invitational and Genesis Invitational winners from the past three years
8. Top 50 from the Official World Golf Ranking
9. Senior PLAYERS Championship champion from prior year
10. Korn Ferry Tour money leader from 2024
11. Money leader during the Korn Ferry Tour Finals, if not the regular-season money leader
12. Top 10 current year FedEx Cup points leaders
13. Remaining positions and alternates filled from the current season FedEx Cup standings until they get to 144

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Post 129 sent pair to nationals as part of memorable year

By Anthony Richards
Sending representatives to the 2024 National American Legion Post 129 convention in Las Vegas, NV, was a memorable year for the post. The post's 129th anniversary was celebrated with a variety of events, including a parade, a golf tournament, and a fishing trip. The post's members were proud to represent the community at the national level.

Major sculpture created in Mandarin

Harriet Beecher Stowe subject of work
By Shaun Ryan
A landmark work of art is taking shape in Mandarin, FL, as a major sculpture of Harriet Beecher Stowe is created. The sculpture, which will be made of bronze, will stand as a tribute to the author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The artist, a local resident, has been working on the sculpture for several months and expects it to be completed by the end of the year.

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1. Cut a little bit off

5. State with confidence

11. River in NE Scotland

14. Not narrow

15. Lacking social polish

16. Amount of time

17. Frame

19. Automobile

20. Toadstools

21. High school dances

22. Utilize

23. Challenged

25. One-sided

27. Showing extreme greed

31. Potted plants

34. Everyone has one

35. Lake in Botswana

38. E.T. rode in one

39. Juniors' parents

41. Small amount

42. Mother of Perseus

44. Ornamental box

45. Gov't investigators

46. Uncertain

49. A cotton fabric with a satiny finish

51. The vast grassy plains in S. America

55. Your consciousness of your own identity

56. Noted consumer advocate

60. Spanish sports club

61. Body part

62. Tractability

64. Woman (French)

65. Ready and willing to be taught

66. Muslim ruler title

67. Depressed

68. Gradually gave way

69. Clear-thinking

3. Ones to look up to

4. Monetary units

5. A number everyone has

6. Marine invertebrate

7. One who takes you to court

8. Indicates outer

9. Parallelograms

10. Strains

11. Cross

12. A way to remove

13. Some pages are dog-__

18. Ukraine city

24. A citizen of Denmark

26. Summer month (abbr.)

28. Hindu queens

29. Jewelry brand

30. Fictional rider of Rohan

31. Wet dirt

32. Russian city

33. Observed

36. Furious

37. Drivers' licenses

39. Musical composition

40. Auction

43. They __

45. Women

47. Inspire with love

48. Japanese ankle sock

49. Appears

50. Old World lizard

52. The leading performer

53. Type of protein

54. Pennsylvania town

57. Art __: around 1920

58. __ Blyton, children's author

59. Abnormal breathing

63. A place to sleep

SUDOKU

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

Level: Advanced

Here's How It Works:

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

DOWN

1. Brushed aside

2. Water sprite



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