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Easter Worship & Dining  
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Thursday, April 17, 2025

PonteVedraRecorder.com

VOLUME 56, NO. 24 \$1.00

## Rare leatherback turtle nest spotted at Mickler Beach

By Holly Tishfield

It's quickly approaching that time of year when beachgoers can expect to see orange-and-yellow caution tape triangles indicating sea turtle nests.

While the season technically begins on May 1 and lasts through Oct. 31, St. John's County residents were surprised to spot the first sea turtle nest of the season at Mickler Beach three whole weeks ahead of schedule. And not just any sea turtle nest — a leatherback sea turtle nest.

"The leatherback nest is significant for several reasons," said Lucas Meers, director of Jacksonville University Sea Turtle Program and volunteer with Mickler's Landing Turtle Patrol. "It's the earliest nest for us (Mickler's Landing Turtle Patrol) in our documented history. This nest was laid earlier than we expected, but our team was ready to take action and mark it immediately."

The leatherback sea turtle is the

TURTLE continues on Page 15



Health Care Heroes

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## linkThrive Women's Retreat inspires women from across the region

By Holly Tishfield

On Saturday, April 12, members of the community gathered at the link in Nocatee for linkThrive Women's Retreat.

The event lasted from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and treated guests to a transformative retreat designed to nourish the mind, body and soul while exploring the latest innovations in wellness and entrepreneurship. About 50 to 60 women were in attendance at the event, there to gain insights and connect with like-minded individuals.

Guests began the day with complimentary coffee and breakfast pickings while they gathered to listen to opening remarks from Gurpreet Misra, co-



Photo by Holly Tishfield

LINKTHRIVE continues on Page 12

Gurpreet Misra, co-founder of the link and Sapna Foundation, welcomes guests.

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# K9s United to host 9K for K9s event honoring K9 Kilo

K9s United has announced its ninth annual 9K for K9s to be held at 8 a.m. Saturday, April 26, at Ring Power, 500 World Commerce Parkway in St. Augustine. This event supports law enforcement canines who tirelessly protect and serve local communities, and honors those who have fallen in the line of duty.

The family-friendly event offers a variety of race options including a one-mile fun run, classic 5K, challenging 9K and virtual “no excuse” race, ensuring there’s something for everyone.

This year’s event will honor K9 Kilo, a German shepherd from the St. Augus-

tine Beach Police Department. Over his eight years of service, K9 Kilo played a crucial role in recovering evidence and detecting narcotics. He also served as a goodwill ambassador for the community and located missing persons. Sadly, K9 Kilo died last year after an unexpected medical emergency.

Finishers will be awarded a medal adorned with K9 Kilo’s silhouette. Both the 5K and 9K will be chip-timed with awards for the top runners in each category. Athletes of all levels are encouraged to sign up now at [runsignup.com/k9sunited](https://runsignup.com/k9sunited) to participate in the 9k for K9s.

Following the races, participants and supporters can enjoy a post-run celebration with children’s activities, a photo booth with K9 heroes, a K9 demonstration, local vendors and more. For the safety of participating law enforcement K9s, only service dogs are permitted to attend.

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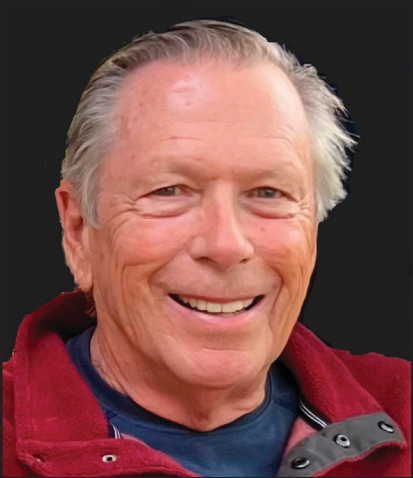
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OBITUARIES



Michael Palmer Diffenderffer

Michael Palmer Diffenderffer, a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and friend, passed away peacefully on April 3, 2025, at the age of 84, in his cherished home of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. Born on March 3, 1941, in Springfield, Missouri, to Edward and Alice (Elliott) Diffenderffer, Mike lived a life rich in love, laughter, and dedication to his family, friends and his career.

Mike’s early education began at Greenwood School in Springfield, culminating in his graduation from Parkview High School in 1958. After graduation, Mike committed to join the Marine Corps Reserve and was

stationed in San Diego. Following his military service, he pursued higher education at Drury College, earning a liberal arts degree, and later attended the University of Missouri School of Journalism, laying the foundation for a successful career in public relations.

In 1966, Mike married the love of his life, Judith K. Orcutt, and together they embarked on a journey of creating a life together. Their move to Dallas in 1968 marked the beginning of a remarkable professional chapter for Mike, as he took on the role of Regional Public Relations Director at Sears & Roebuck Company. He furthered his career at the Club Corporation of America, where he made significant contributions as a key leader. In 1986, he and his family moved to Florida as he accepted the position of National Membership and Marketing Director with the Tournament Players Clubs, until his retirement in 2006.

A devoted fan of the St. Louis Cardinals, Mike cherished the moments spent at Spring Training games in Florida, where he could be found cheering for his team. He also enjoyed the camaraderie of friends on the golf course and treasured afternoons spent at Metro Diner, sharing stories and laughter. Mike found joy in the simple pleasures of life, often relaxing on the

porch with a cold beer and his loyal dog, Carly.

In retirement, Mike and Judy embraced the opportunity to travel, creating lasting memories on numerous cruises and adventures together. Their bond, strengthened over 58 years of marriage, was a testament to their friendship and love.

Mike is survived by his devoted wife, Judy; his sister, Ann Walther of St. Louis, Missouri; his children, Andrew (Erin) Diffenderffer of Marietta, Georgia, and Cathryn Hauptman of Sylvania, Ohio; and his cherished grandchildren, James and Molly Diffenderffer, and Jackson, Anna, and Luke Hauptman. He is also survived by his niece and nephew, Julie (Scott) Schiebel and Chip (Heather) Walther, along with their families.

A celebration of life honoring Mike will be held at a later date, allowing family and friends to come together to share their memories and celebrate the remarkable man he was. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations be made to K9s for Warriors or to St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital.

Mike will be deeply missed, but his humor and love for life will forever remain in the hearts of those who knew him.

Jax Founders launches summer entrepreneurship program for teens

Jax Founders, a new entrepreneurship program, is accepting applications for its Summer 2025 Teen Entrepreneurship Program, designed to inspire and equip high school students (ages 13-19) with practical business skills, leadership development and hands-on experience in launching their own business ideas.

The four-week, in-person program will kick off the week of June 2, offering two weekly sessions (two hours each) plus field trips to local businesses. The program is open to all teens in the Jacksonville area with a passion for entrepreneurship, problem-solving and leadership. There is no cost to participate, thanks to generous community sponsors and partners. Applications are now live and spaces are limited to 20 students.

What students will learn:

- How to identify problems worth solving and turn them into business ideas
- Building a brand, marketing strategies and effective storytelling
- Sales skills, customer engagement and leadership development
- Financial fundamentals, including budgeting and profit generation
- How to pitch ideas confidently to real business

PROGAM continues on Page 5



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GUEST COLUMN

Financially empowered: A woman’s guide to preparing for divorce

Expert insights from  
Heather B. Quick, Esquire

Submitted by Florida Women’s  
Law Group

Divorce can be an emotional and monumental decision, but it’s essential to take action to protect your financial well-being.

While divorce can bring financial obstacles, it’s also an opportunity to redefine your life on your terms. To build a solid foundation for financial independence and a secure, confident future, consider these four tips from Heather Quick, owner, CEO and attorney at Florida Women’s Law Group.

1. Gather Financial Documents:

Collect all financial documents, including bank statements, tax returns, investment accounts, mortgage statements, credit card statements, retirement account statements and any other financial records. Make copies of these documents

and store them in a safe place.

2. Evaluate Your Income and Expenses:

Create a budget that outlines your monthly income and expenses. This will help you determine your financial needs during and after the divorce. Make a comprehensive list of all assets and debts, both shared and individual. This should include real estate, vehicles, investments, personal property and outstanding loans.

3. Consider Your Long-Term Financial Goals:

Think about your financial goals after the divorce, including retirement, homeownership and education for your children. Your attorney and financial adviser can help you make informed decisions that align with your goals.

4. Seek Legal Advice:

Consult with an experienced divorce attorney to understand your rights and responsibilities regarding property

division, alimony, child support and timesharing (formerly custody) arrangements. They can help you navigate the legal aspects of divorce and protect your financial interests.

With summer quickly approaching, we’ll be sharing more divorce and family law insights —starting with why this season might be the ideal time to take the first step toward a fresh start.

Divorce can be financially complex; it’s crucial to have professional guidance from an experienced divorce attorney and potentially a financial adviser. For personalized guidance through your divorce journey, consider reaching out to us at Florida Women’s Law Group, where women are not just a priority but the priority.

The website is: [www.floridawomenslawgroup.com](http://www.floridawomenslawgroup.com).

**Disclaimer: This article is for informational purposes only. The information provided in this article is not intended to be legal advice. If you have a legal issue, please contact a lawyer.**

Program

Continued from 4

leaders and mentors

The program culminates in a Final Pitch Showcase, where students present their business ideas to a panel of community leaders, entrepreneurs and potential investors. Parents, mentors and local supporters are invited to attend this exciting finale.

Jax Founders isn’t a classroom — it’s a launchpad. Students will learn by doing, with real-world challenges, business mentors and industry guest speakers. They’ll also have the opportunity to join an alumni network for ongoing mentorship, competitions and potential seed funding opportunities.

Applications are open now. Go to [jaxfounders.org](http://jaxfounders.org) to learn more and submit an application. Students must complete an interview process as part of the selection.

Jax Founders invites local businesses, entrepreneurs and organizations to get involved as guest speakers, mentors or program sponsors.

Jax Founders is a community-driven entrepreneurship program created by local founders Isaiah Miller, Rob Swymer and Chris Engl. With a mission to equip and inspire young people, Jax Founders is committed to developing the next generation of innovators through experiential learning, mentorship and practical skill development into a one-of-a-kind experience for Jacksonville teens.

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*Chef Barry Honan opened Lotus Noodle Bar as a way to bring his fine-dining experience and deep love for Japanese cuisine to St. Augustine, blending big-city flavor with a personal passion that's been years in the making.*

## Chef Barry Honan

As told to Holly Tishfield

### Tell me about your background. Are you from Florida?

I moved here at a young age, but I was born in North New Jersey. I lived in Pennsylvania for a little bit with my parents, then they moved here. I lived in St. Augustine, went to school, and grew up here, but then I left and went to New York City. I moved back when COVID happened because I had family here.

At the time, I was working at Le Bernardin, which is a three-star Michelin restaurant in New York City. I would moonlight at different ramen restaurants in the city in my downtime. I made it a goal to eat at almost every ramen restaurant in Manhattan.

When I moved back here, there really wasn't much for me in my line of work in St. Augustine, so naturally the next evolution for me was to open my own space, which is how Lotus Noodle Bar got its start.

### How did you get into cooking and the restaurant business?

It's all I've ever done, honestly. I started washing dishes at an early age. I believe I was about 15 or 16, and a gentleman in the kitchen saw that I had a little speed, so they moved me to the kitchen and started teaching me how to cook. I started progressing through different restaurants, learning different cuisines. I worked rolling sushi, and I think that's what first piqued my interest in Japanese cuisine. Cooking has been my passion, and what I do in this life, and I'm always learning, always evolving.

### Was Lotus Noodle Bar your first experience in that realm?

Yes. Now, I've run many kitchens. I've been a sous chef, and I've been an executive chef, so I have expertise in the field, but owning my own restaurant is a whole different ball game.

It's funny when people come here; I don't even feel like the owner. I feel like the chef. There's a lot that goes into it, but the thing is — anything worthwhile is never going to be easy. Otherwise, everyone would do it. I do feel like this industry is in my blood. Some people just were born to do certain things, and I think this is my calling.

### You opened Lotus Noodle Bar almost two years ago now. What made you feel like this was the right time for you to start the restaurant?

I mean, do you ever really have the right time for things like that?



Photo credit: Melissa Marcarelli

Everything just kind of fell into place for me. I was doing pop-ups here, and a lot of the local chefs in St. Augustine were doing these fancy prix fixe dinners. So naturally, I wanted to showcase what I was capable of doing and that's how Lotus came about. We always wanted to do a ramen restaurant, but the pop-ups led me into doing more of an elegant concept than just your

normal noodle bar where you go and get a bowl of ramen and you're out the door.

### Have you felt the community support you?

It's been great. There's always a few people that don't quite understand what we're trying to do here, but a lot of people come here and they're like,

"Man, this place has a big city feel." You step in the door and you feel like you're in the Lower East Side of New York City through the service and the food and the ambiance. And for me, that's great because that's what I want to hear. We want to stand out. We want to be unique. That's our goal. It's just amazing to see the community come together.





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# ROUNDUP OF EASTER EVENTS

For those seeking a way to celebrate this Easter season, here are a few ideas:

## SERVICES:

### LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

276 N. Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services at 7 p.m. Easter Sunday service at 9:45 a.m. All are welcome.

## SELECT BRUNCHES:

### 1912 OCEAN BAR & ROOFTOP

619 Ponte Vedra Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach

1912 Ocean Bar & Rooftop is open to the public and provides stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean. Situated on the second and third floors of a newly designed space within Sawgrass Marriott's Cabana Beach Club, this upscale casual restaurant and rooftop lounge offers a blend of indoor and outdoor seating.

Reservations and menu: [opentable.com](https://opentable.com)  
Website: [1912oceanbarandrooftop.com](https://1912oceanbarandrooftop.com)

### ARGYLE

254 Alta Mar Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach

Easter Brunch Buffet: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 20

Price per person: adults \$80, kids \$25. Reservation for parties of 1 to 30

Go to: [exploretock.com/argyle-ponte-vedra-beach/experience/541209/easter-brunch-buffet?date=2025-04-20&size=2&time=12%3A00](https://exploretock.com/argyle-ponte-vedra-beach/experience/541209/easter-brunch-buffet?date=2025-04-20&size=2&time=12%3A00)

Restaurant website: [argylepvb.com](https://argylepvb.com)

### CASA MONICA RESORT & SPA

95 Cordova St., St. Augustine  
Cordova Restaurant offers a Grand Easter Brunch featuring an exquisite dining experience with live music throughout the day. Three seating times are available at 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. The buffet includes a soup and salad station, a grand seafood station, carving stations, a grand dessert station and more.  
Price: \$95 per adult, \$45 per child ages

6-12.

For parties larger than six guests, including children, contact 904-494-0100 or email [Nathan.Kipervaser@kesslercollection.com](mailto:Nathan.Kipervaser@kesslercollection.com).

Website: [casamonica.com](https://casamonica.com)

### COLUMBIA RESTAURANT

98 St. George St., St. Augustine.

For reservations, go to [columbiarestaurant.com/historic-district-st-augustine](https://columbiarestaurant.com/historic-district-st-augustine)

### EMBASSY SUITES BY HILTON ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH OCEANFRONT RESORT

300 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine  
Tickets: \$30-\$80

Brunch: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Enjoy a stress-free oceanfront Easter Brunch Buffet in St. Augustine Beach. Savor classic Easter dishes and seasonal flavors while sipping mimosas or iced tea and taking in the ocean views. Held in the oceanfront ballroom, the event features live music and an Easter Egg Hunt.

Go to: [eventbrite.com/e/easter-brunch-tickets](https://eventbrite.com/e/easter-brunch-tickets)

### HILTON GARDEN INN ST. AUGUSTINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

1600 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd., St. Augustine

Brunch: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Enjoy a curated menu of classic favorites, seasonal specialties and sweet treats at the Garden Grille Restaurant. Perfect for gathering with family or friends in a warm, welcoming setting.

Reservations required. Go to: [hilton.com/en/hotels/sgjhdgi-hilton-garden-inn-st-augustine-historic-district](https://hilton.com/en/hotels/sgjhdgi-hilton-garden-inn-st-augustine-historic-district)

### NINETEEN

110 Championship Way, Ponte Vedra Beach

Brunch: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays

NINETEEN features a creative array of freshly prepared American and Continental cuisine in a warm, inviting atmosphere. Menus change seasonally to take advantage of the freshest local fare.

Reservations: [opentable.com](https://opentable.com)

Website: [tpc.com/sawgrass-dining](https://tpc.com/sawgrass-dining)

### NONA BLUE MODERN TAVERN

325 Front St. Ponte Vedra Beach

Brunch: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays

Menu at: [nonablue.com/menu/ponte-vedra-beach](https://nonablue.com/menu/ponte-vedra-beach)

Reservations: [opentable.com](https://opentable.com)

### PRATI ITALIA

St. Johns Town Center, 4972 Big Island Drive, Jacksonville

Easter Brunch: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 20. Closed for dinner

Family-friendly brunch featuring the Easter Bunny and Mother Goose. Photo opportunities and crafts for the kids.

Menu at: [pratiitalia.com/events/brunch-with-the-easter-bunny-and-mother-goose](https://pratiitalia.com/events/brunch-with-the-easter-bunny-and-mother-goose)

Price: \$48 for adults, \$24 for children 5-12. Free for children 4 and under. The pricing does not include beverages, tax or gratuity.

Reservations are encouraged. Go to: [opentable.com](https://opentable.com), call 904-998-9744 or go to [pratiitalia.com](https://pratiitalia.com).

### RITZ-CARLTON AMELIA ISLAND

4750 Amelia Island Parkway, Amelia City

Easter Garden Brunch: 11 a.m. April 20

Set within the gorgeous Ritz-Carlton Ballroom, enjoy a lavish Easter Garden Brunch amidst a fairy tale spring garden. Enjoy exquisite cuisine from different culinary stations and decadent desserts surrounded by bright floral and lush green scenery. The afternoon is brought to life with music and younger guests will enjoy a visit from the Easter Bunny and the Springtime Fairy.

Price per person: \$155

Call: 904-277-1100. Go to [ritzcarltonameliaisland.ipoolside.com/?source=link](https://ritzcarltonameliaisland.ipoolside.com/?source=link)

### TOWN HALL

2012 San Marco Blvd., Jacksonville

Easter Brunch: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 20. Closed for dinner

Full a la carte brunch menu with a selection of Easter specials, including Manchego Bread Pudding (\$15 with

pepper jelly and maitake mushrooms) and Herb Crusted Lamb Loin (\$48 with goat cheese polenta, sautéed spinach, roasted red peppers and garlic peppercorn vinaigrette).

Menu at: [townhalljax.com/menu#menu=brunch](https://townhalljax.com/menu#menu=brunch)

Reservations are encouraged. Go to: [opentable.com](https://opentable.com), call 904-398-0726 or go to [townhalljax.com](https://townhalljax.com).

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For additional Easter Brunch ideas, go to [floridashistoriccoast.com/blog/brunching-on-floridas-historic-coast](https://floridashistoriccoast.com/blog/brunching-on-floridas-historic-coast).

## FESTIVITIES and EVENTS:

For further information on the following, go to [floridashistoriccoast.com/events/holidays/easter](https://floridashistoriccoast.com/events/holidays/easter).

### EASTER EGG HUNTS

10 a.m. to noon Thursday and Saturday, April 17 and 19

The Easter Bunny himself will kick off these fun-filled family Easter egg hunts taking place at multiple St. Johns County Parks. On Thursday, the fun takes place at Palencia Park, 405 Palencia Village Drive, St. Augustine, and Veterans Park, 1332 Veterans Pkwy., St. Johns. On Saturday, the fun takes place at Treaty Park, 1595 Wildwood Drive, St. Augustine, and Al Wilke Park, 6150 S. Main St., Hastings.

Admission is free.

### EASTER CELEBRATION

1-3 p.m. Friday, April 18 — Easter Celebration at Ocean Grove Resort, 4225 A1A S., St. Augustine

Fun for the entire family with Eas-

EASTER continues on Page 9

HE IS RISEN  
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# Ecologically friendly egg hunt held in Neptune Beach



Contributed photos  
Children greet the Easter Bunny at the eco egg hunt.

Beaches Go Green, Sandalwood High School Beaches Go Green and Fletcher High School Beaches Go Green held an eco egg hunt with the City Of Neptune Beach at Gebeaux Park on Friday, April 11.

Instead of using plastic Easter eggs and filling them with plastic-wrapped candy, Beaches Go Green club members wrapped 900 eco-friendly prizes in recycled paper and decorated them to look like colored eggs. Some of the prizes included child-sized garden gloves and garden tools, seed packs from Dig Local Network, bamboo toothbrushes, sidewalk chalk, wooden maracas to decorate, colorful cotton-braided bracelets and nicely painted rocks.

The Easter Bunny was a big hit with the kids, as well.



Beaches Go Green members gather for a photo.

# Easter parade planned in West Augustine

St. Johns County, in partnership with the West Augustine Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), will host the 2025 West Augustine CRA Easter Parade from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Sunday, April 20.

The community parade will begin at New St. James Missionary Baptist Church, located at 135 N. Rodriguez St., St. Augustine, and proceed west along West King Street before concluding at Collier-Blocker-Puryear Park. The event will feature marching bands, decorative floats, local organizations, public safety vehicles and community groups. Attendance is expected to reach between 1,000 and 1,500 spectators.

To ensure public safety, road closures and detours will begin at approximately 3 p.m. and will be lifted as the parade progresses. All closures are anticipated to end by 5:30 p.m. Motorists are encouraged to plan accordingly and observe all posted signage.

Following the parade, the public is invited to attend a youth talent show at Collier-Blocker-Puryear Park. St. Johns County Sheriff's Office deputies and event volunteers will remain onsite to assist with security and crowd management.

The St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, St. Johns County Fire Rescue and West Augustine CRA volunteers will provide support for the event, including traffic control, safety coordination and participant assistance.

## Easter

Continued from 8

ter egg hunts, sack racing, relay races, life-size bowling, a spoon and egg race, bubbles, photo ops and a visit from the Easter Bunny.

Admission is free.

### EASTER PARADE

9-10:30 a.m. Saturday, April 19

Known as the "Parada de Caballos y Coches," this St. Augustine tradition features everything from elegant horse-drawn carriages to the Easter Bunny, pirates, and — yes — Stormtroopers. The

procession kicks off at the Old Jail and winds its way along Avenida Menendez, offering prime viewing spots along the bayfront.

### EASTER PROMENADE

1 p.m. Sunday, April 20

The Plaza de la Constitución transforms into a sea of pastels and spring finery as bonnet-clad locals and visitors alike compete for the best Easter ensemble. With awards for the most creative and stylish outfits, this event is a favorite for those who love a little friendly fashion competition.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

## Holy Week Schedule

APRIL 13	APRIL 17	APRIL 18	APRIL 20
<b>PALM SUNDAY</b> 1 service at 10:00 AM	<b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b> 1 service at 7:00 PM Followed by Night Watch (sign up in the Christopher Lobby)	<b>GOOD FRIDAY</b> 1 service at Noon 1 service at 7:00 PM	<b>EASTER SUNDAY</b> Easter Vigil 6:30 a.m. Easter Day Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

We will livestream every liturgy except for Good Friday at noon.

**1219 5th Street N, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250**  
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## Easter at St. Francis

7:30AM - Traditional Easter Worship

9:15AM - Family Easter Worship

10:30AM - Easter Egg Hunt & Fellowship

11:30AM - Traditional Easter Worship

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www.stfrancispvb.org

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- Vegetarian Omelet \$21.99
- King's Breakfast \$20.99
- Queen's Breakfast \$20.99
- Easter Bunny's Breakfast \$16.99

### Dinner Specials

(Served from 9:30am - 1:00pm)

- Easter Bunny Special: Blackened Shrimp & Grit Cakes  
Fresh local shrimp, lightly blackened & served over a fried grit cake, smothered in red eye gravy \$25.99
- Seafood Paella  
Traditional Seafood Paella slow cooked with our fresh fish medley, mussels, shrimp, clams, scallops, & saffron rice \$28.99
- Prime Rib  
Cooked to your liking, served with au jus, tri-color roasted potatoes & vegetables, with horseradish cream sauce \$39.99
- Leg of Lamb  
Slow roasted rosemary leg of lamb served with mint jelly, paired with tri-color roasted potatoes & balsamic brussel sprouts \$30.99



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

KATHY’S GARDENING GUIDE

Climbing Flowers and Plants

“Never underestimate the healing power of a quiet moment in the garden.” - Josephine Albert



**By Kathy Esfahani**

The burst of color from a climbing flower is a stunning addition to any landscape. These plants provide a vertical design element with minimal space requirements. The plants listed below are perennials, but they are tropical; be sure to cover them when temperatures drop below 40 degrees. Visit the nursery to explore these beautiful climbers:

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

soil. Although it is a beautiful vine to have around a patio or pool, Allamanda can be poisonous to animals if ingested.

- Bleeding heart is a tropical vine that thrives with full shade or morning sun. This evergreen plant has dark green leaves and clusters of white flowers with red accents. Bleeding heart prefers consistently moist, but not soggy, soil and can be pruned into the shape of your choice.
- Bougainvillea is a woody, tropical plant that loves the Florida heat! This vine can grow up to 40 feet long and produces beautiful flowers in orange, pink, purple, red, white and yellow. Bougainvillea will climb quickly on a trellis or arbor. Beware of thorns when working with this climber, and look for an area of full sun to encourage blooming throughout the season.
- Carolina jasmine is an evergreen climbing vine with fragrant, yellow blooms. Barring extensive cold temperatures, these plants bloom late winter through spring and thrive in

Northeast Florida. Also known as Carolina jessamine, the Carolina jasmine prefers areas of full sun. Prune when the plant finishes flowering to maintain a controlled shape and encourage fullness in the lower areas of the stem.

- Confederate jasmine is easy to grow in partial to full sun. Also known as star jasmine, these plants produce small white, star shaped blooms. Confederate jasmine can grow to more than 20 feet long if left unpruned! With a bit of attention, however, it can be shaped and pinching off the tips of the vines will encourage fuller growth.
- Mandevilla vines grow quickly and produce pink, red, or white flowers from spring through fall. These fragrant blooms have five petals and sometimes feature a yellow center. Mandevilla loves the Florida sunshine but may need shade during the hottest part of the day. Add these plants to your landscape to encourage hummingbirds to visit!

Use climbing flowers and plants in your landscape to incorporate height

Photo provided by Kathy’s Creative Gardens & Nursery



Bougainvillea

and color. Not only are climbing plants helpful for privacy and shade, but they can also add interest to a fence or wall. Prune your climbing plants and flowers when they are not blooming to maintain your desired shape and keep their growth under control. As always, be sure to note the sunlight requirements for your climber as you select the perfect location for these decorative plants.

Happy planting!

Flower of the Week: Bougainvillea

Please email Kathy at [kathys.creativegardens@gmail.com](mailto:kathys.creativegardens@gmail.com) for any questions or gardening tips you would like to see in the future. For more information & ideas, visit our nursery in Ponte Vedra Beach! Kathy’s Creative Gardens & Nursery 196 N. Roscoe Blvd. 904-655-7373

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ALAN-23878-824-XX



# Landrum honors Students of Month

Landrum Middle School continues its tradition of recognizing exceptional students through the “Students of the Month” program. This initiative celebrates students who demonstrate outstanding character, academic success, effort and resilience.

For February, the honored students were 6th grader Elle Pirris (from January), 6th grader Stella Piper, 7th grader Luke Tsao and 8th grader Rafael DeCarvalho, recognized for their hard work, leadership and dedication.

Chick-fil-A at Marsh Landing provided food to help celebrate these outstanding students.

Each month, remarkable students — selected by their teachers — enjoy a celebratory lunch with Principal Troy Kasting in his office.



Contributed photo  
Principal Troy Kasting shares a special lunch with February’s “Students of the Month,” honoring their hard work and dedication.

# Yom HaShoah service set for April 23

By Holly Tishfield

Members of the community are invited to gather at Beth El — The Beaches Synagogue on Wednesday, April 23, at 7 p.m. for an evening of remembrance and a Yom HaShoah service.

The yearly event is a tradition in the community, rotating among several synagogues in the Jacksonville area, each bringing its own unique spirit to the program while honoring the shared commitment to Holocaust remembrance.

The approximately hour-long service will feature reflections from Holocaust survivors and second- and third-generation family members. There will be a candle lighting ceremony, as well as music and prayers.

Clergy from four local synagogues — including Beth El-The Beaches Synagogue, The Temple, The Jewish Center and Etz Chaim — will be attending and participating in the service. Mariam Feist, CEO of the Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida, will also share remarks.

In addition to the service, attendees can view a curated display of photographs, artifacts and memorabilia related to the Holocaust and Jewish history.

“My hope is that people find this gathering to be a way of commemorating and honoring those who lost the experience of those who survived,” said Rabbi Ben Dyme from Beth El — The Beaches Synagogue. “And also that we keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, so that we don’t repeat our mistakes in the future and keep this from ever happening again.”

A catered dessert buffet will be served following the program.

Community members are encouraged to attend the service by RSVPing at <https://bethelbeaches.org/> or calling 904-273-9100.

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## Personal Injury and Medical Malpractice Specialists





Cordes Lindow leading her session

# linkTHRIVE

Continued from 1

founder of the link and Sapna Foundation, Cordes Lindow and Navenka Gabrielson. From there on out, it was up to the individual how they wanted to fill the day. There were multiple options for activities, seminars and expert-led sessions on a variety of topics. Guests could sign up for movement sessions and pilates lessons or listen to empowering wellness seminars in the main room. Lindow, a business coach and teacher, spoke at a session titled “Design Your Life: Align with Your Values and Live in Your Sweet Spot.” Gabrielson, a

health coach and body harmony specialist, led a session titled “Unlock True Vitality: By Identifying What Feeds Your Body and Soul.” Fellow local business owners set up booths throughout the venue, creating a lively atmosphere of connection, collaboration and creativity through interactive demos and engaging conversations. Guests spent the day at their own pace, with a delicious lunch included to round out the experience. By the end of the afternoon, guests left feeling inspired, reenergized and more connected — to themselves, to each other and to a growing community of women empowering women.



Guests enjoying the morning's interactive sessions



Guests signing up for their preferred sessions

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# City Year Jacksonville plans community celebration

City Year Jacksonville (CYJ), the local branch of the national nonprofit organization, is moving its office to the Jessie Ball duPont Center, 40 E. Adams St., this spring. To celebrate, they’re inviting the public to a housewarming party, 6 to 8:30 p.m. May 1.

The festivities will include fun and friendly competitions with proceeds benefiting CYJ’s Whole School, Whole Child program. Teams will battle it out in trivia, bingo and other exciting games with an unforgettable grand prize.

In addition, the event will feature a photo booth and a live DJ to keep the crowd moving all night. Guests will enjoy signature cocktails and light hors d’oeuvres. Plus, visitors will get a first look at the new office.

The Jessie, as this new home is locally known, is the ideal place for City Year to call home. It operates as a hub for many nonprofits in the community. Moving

there provides CYJ an opportunity to tighten bonds and build opportunities for collaboration.

CYJ has been a presence downtown since 2013. Its previous headquarters were located at 6 E. Bay St. Having just celebrated its 10th year anniversary, the organization’s strategic move to the Jessie Ball duPont Center, which houses 32 nonprofits based in Northeast Florida, will support the expansion of the organization’s presence in the regional nonprofit sector.

Organizations and individuals throughout the community can make a difference by attending the housewarming

party. The festivities serve as a dynamic and community-oriented team-building experience.

Registration for sponsorships and team spaces as well as individual tickets are available at [support.cityyear.org/event/city-year-jacksonville-housewarming-party/e660592](https://support.cityyear.org/event/city-year-jacksonville-housewarming-party/e660592).

## North Florida schools win STEM Classroom Makeover Grants

Thousands of local students will have new opportunities to explore science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) as Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) announces a major expansion of its Classroom Makeover Grant program.

Two schools and a local school district in North Florida will each receive a \$50,000 grant to transform their classrooms into innovative learning spaces, igniting a passion for STEM among its students.

In celebration of FPL’s centennial, the company is expanding the program this year from five STEM Classroom Makeover Grants to 20 grants across the state, quadrupling the program and devoting \$1 million to benefit Florida students.

“We are thrilled that FPL selected R.J. Murray Middle School for this incredible opportunity,” said Cathy Newman, executive director of the St. Johns County Education Foundation, also known as Investing in Kids (INK!). “The \$50,000 STEM Classroom Makeover is not just an investment in



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SATURDAY, APRIL 26<sup>TH</sup>, 10:00AM - 5:00PM



# Trasca celebrates a decade with birthday bash

Trasca & Co. Eatery celebrated its 10th anniversary by hosting a fun-filled birthday bash on April 12 as a way of saying thank you to the community that has meant so much to them over the years. Local vendors lined up outside the restaurant for the event, which also featured live music, face painting and plenty of delicious samples to go around.



Photo by Anthony Richards

Local vendors lined up outside the restaurant for the event.

## Grants

Continued from 13

technology and tools; it's an investment in our students' futures. With the generous support of FPL, STEM educator Justin Matthews will be able to spark innovation, inspire curiosity and create hands-on learning experiences to open doors for lifelong success. We are extremely grateful to FPL for recognizing the potential in our schools and helping us build a stronger, brighter future through STEM education."

The winning schools and school district in North Florida are: R.J. Murray Middle School in St. Augustine, the Nassau County School District and Robert H. Jenkins Elementary School in Interlachen.

Each recipient will have a year to redesign and revitalize their classrooms, infusing them with cutting-edge technological resources, modern equipment and hands-on learning materials. From virtual reality and 3D printers to robotics kits and interactive displays, these schools will purchase the supplies they need to foster a dynamic learning environment that encourages critical thinking, collaboration and problem-solving skills.

"At FPL, we believe in the power of education and the endless possibilities

that STEM learning can unlock for students," said Pam Rauch, FPL vice president of external affairs and economic development. "We are incredibly excited to witness the creativity and growth that will flourish in each of the schools that receive these game-changing grants. We strongly believe that STEM education is the cornerstone of a prosperous future, and these grants will serve as a catalyst for fostering innovation, curiosity and lifelong learning in our communities. We are honored to be able to grow the program to the benefit of even more students."

Now in its fourth year, FPL's STEM Classroom Makeover Grant program, through its charitable arm the NextEra Energy Foundation, provides \$50,000 grants for eligible Florida schools to offer transformational learning for economically disadvantaged students in K-12 Title 1 public, charter or private schools or for schools serving a minimum of 40% economically disadvantaged students.

Funds are available to address technology or resources that will advance STEM curricula, exposure and careers to diverse students in a classroom setting.

For more information on FPL's educational programs, go to [FPL.com/Education](http://FPL.com/Education).

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# Turtle

Continued from 1

largest species of turtle in the world. Including flippers, they can be upwards of seven feet across and just as long. They can also weigh more than 2,000 pounds.

Leatherbacks are relatively rare for Northeast Florida. Our beaches see fewer leatherback nests because the species tend to nest in warmer climates. According to Meers, in 2024 the entire state of Florida only saw 1,799 leatherback nests, compared to more than 110,000 loggerhead nests, which are the state’s most common species.

The last leatherback nest Mickler’s Landing Turtle Patrol documented near Mickler Beach was June of 2023 and before that was June of 2020.

“We’re seeing nests occurring earlier than May 1 and nests hatchling later than Oct. 31,” Meers said. “Because of this, we begin monitoring our beaches on April 15 to document and monitor new nests. For any nest that remains on the beach past Oct. 31, we continue to monitor until they hatch.”

The leatherback nest was discovered by Ponte Vedra Beach resident Nancy Marin, who regularly walks the beach and alerted Meers and his team when she spotted the tracks.

Experts at Mickler’s Landing Turtle Patrol can categorize the sea turtle species that laid the nest thanks to tracks the animals leave behind in the sand. Leatherbacks crawl with a simultaneous gait (moving all flippers at the same time) and also leave a much larger track in the sand.

In the Northeast Florida region, all sea turtle nests are marked and recorded, as required by protocols set forth by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Meers has volunteered with Mickler Landing Turtle Patrol for 15 years, patrolling the beaches every season for the telltale signs that a female turtle has chosen a location for her nest.

The group began as what Meers describes as a “rag-tag group of volunteers” and has since evolved into a bustling organization. The group is excited to announce that they recently signed a partnership with Jacksonville University’s Marine Science Research Institute to provide opportunities for JU students to get involved in patrols and expand additional research on sea turtles and their relationship with our community.

“Building and gaining trust with the community is crucial, and we are building upon that trust with our community here in Ponte Vedra Beach,” Meers said. “We are grateful for our relationships with our community because it truly takes a community to help turtles.”

If you spot a sea turtle laying eggs on the beach, Meers says to “absolutely admire it, take pictures and videos, but do so from afar.” The organization recommends staying about 50 feet from a nesting female, so as not to frighten her or cause her to exert excess energy.

During nesting season, beachgoers are encouraged to keep the beach “clean, dark and flat,” and text (not call) the Mickler Landing Turtle Patrol phone number at 904-370-3704 if they spot a turtle or active nest.



Photo by Nancy Marin

Fresh leatherback turtle tracks at Mickler Beach



Photo by Mickler’s Landing Turtle Patrol

A Mickler’s Landing Turtle Patrol volunteer demonstrating the size of the turtle tracks.

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# Pickleball tournament raises funds for at-risk youth

The second annual Smoothie King Crown Cup Pickleball Tournament, held on April 5, raised \$50,000, bringing together athletes, businesses and community members in support of at-risk youth in Jacksonville’s urban core. Proceeds raised at the tournament will provide essential funds for the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation (MWYF).

The foundation is dedicated to empowering underserved Jacksonville youth

from kindergarten through high school graduation. The funds raised will support MWYF programs, which provide life skills, academic enrichment, tennis instruction and scholarship opportunities. MWYF ensures students have the resources they need to become contributing members of society after high school.

“Seeing so many people come together as players, sponsors or spectators to support our students while having a blast

reminds me of the greater impact we have together,” said MaliVai Washington, founder of MWYF. “Their contributions will make a real and lasting impact on the lives of the young people we serve.”

The tournament featured multiple divisions for players in men’s and women’s doubles and mixed doubles, ranging from 3.0 to 4.5 skill levels. Participants enjoyed a festival-like atmosphere with sponsors/vendors DJ Hollywood,

StretchLab Mandarin and Smoothie King. Smoothie King, the event’s title sponsor, played a crucial role in the event’s success.

“We are honored to support MWYF and the incredible work they do for local youth,” said Jacksonville Smoothie King franchise partner Jason Luther. “This tournament was about coming together as a community to make a difference.”



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Jacksonville Beach Mayor Christine Hoffman, Grace Allen, Susan Schaad and Charlene Shirk attend the Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach's Mineral City Celebration, held April 5 at the Northeast Florida Regional Airport.



The Rock of the Community Award was presented to "Voice of the Jaguars" Brian Sexton, shown here with wife Jennifer, left, and Ponte Vedra Beach Rotary Club President Beverly Flanagan.

# Sexton receives 'Rock of Community Award' at annual celebration

Jacksonville Jaguars broadcaster Brian Sexton received the 2025 "Rock of the Community Award" at the Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach's recent Mineral City Celebration.

Sexton received the annual award in recognition for his work in the community through his role with the Jaguars and as a community leader who has volunteered with numerous local charities.

"Brian has the distinction of being one of only three people who have seen all 618 Jaguars games since the franchise began," Rotary Club President Beverly Flanagan told attendees. "He knows more history about the Jaguars than probably anybody in the organization."

But it's what Sexton has done off the

field, Flanagan said, that is truly impactful.

"I think just about every single nonprofit organization in North Florida has at one time or another asked Brian to volunteer as emcee at their charity event, and he says yes to everybody — helping to raise thousands of dollars for our community," she said. "He is also a great friend to our Ponte Vedra Beach Rotary Club. For the past 32 years, Brian has come to our club on the first Thursday in September to tell us what he thinks is going to happen for the Jaguars in the coming season. I can't think of anyone more deserving to receive the Rock of the Community Award than Brian Sexton."

Held April 5 at the Northeast Florida

Regional Airport, this year's Mineral City Celebration featured the theme Concours d'Rotary, with guests dressing in elegant period travel attire. Proceeds from the annual gala have benefited dozens of

local nonprofit organizations and charities, including the Beaches Dial-a-Ride program, Mission House, BEAM, HEAL, K9s for Warriors, United Way of St. Johns County, the Council on Aging and more.



Rob Franskousky, Mike Johnson and Margie Livingston



School Board Member Kelly Barrera, left, and Shelley Morgan

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# Registration open for Monopoly Tournament

Jacksonville Parks and Recreation will host its third annual Monopoly Tournament on May 31, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Jacksonville Main Library, 303 N. Laura St.

Registration began last month, and about 30 slots are still open to all Monopoly or board-game enthusiasts ages 12 and older. Registration is open through May 24. Entry fee is \$5.

In the past, players have come from as far away as Washington, D.C., and Missouri. This year, some newcomers are visiting from Texas.

Two 75-minute preliminary rounds will be played in the morning. Points will be scored based on the number of players remaining at the end along with the



player's amount of cash and assets. The top 16 players will advance to the semi-finals after lunch, four tables of four. The winners of each of those tables will advance to the championship.

The championship competitors will win VISA gift cards (first: \$150 and a trophy, second: \$75, third: \$50 and fourth: \$25). All participants will walk away with a raffle prize. Those prizes include Monopoly-themed socks, blankets, bookbags and games, including a handful of the recently released "Jacksonville Edition" of Monopoly.

This is an official Hasbro recognized tournament.

For further information, email Jax-Parks@coj.net or call 904-255-7937.



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# Groundbreaking AI tool generates 3D map of the brain

By Michelle Jaffee

It is a detailed view of the brain like never seen before.

In a significant technological leap, University of Florida researchers have created a powerful new computational and artificial intelligence tool that can generate a high-resolution 3D map of the brain in mice, allowing users to zoom in and out — from all angles, like a Google Earth map — and peer into the full set of molecules that produce energy for brain functions.

This new tool, funded by research grants from the National Institutes of Health, brings scientists one step closer to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of metabolism in Alzheimer's disease and other neurodegenerative disorders. It could open a new array of possibilities to discover targeted treatments.

Reporting in the journal *Nature Metabolism*, a research team led by Ramon Sun, Ph.D., detailed how they developed their groundbreaking MetaVision3D tool using UF's HiPerGator supercomputer. As a proof of principle, they generated a 3D-interactive atlas of the brain in both normal mice and mouse models of Alzheimer's and Pompe disease, a rare genetic disorder. Sun's lab has made its database and web server publicly accessible to support the growing field of scientists studying links between metabolism and the mind.

"Using our methodology, we can map thousands of molecules in the brain and precisely where they are located inside each brain region. It is unprecedented," said Sun, director of the Center for Advanced Spatial Biomolecule Research and associate director for innovation of UF's McKnight Brain Institute. "We couldn't have done it without NIH funding. This funding fuels our efforts to uncover metabolic drivers of Alzheimer's and pave the way for new interventions to prevent and treat this devastating disease."

Online users may explore each section of tissue in the 3D reconstruction, which illuminates nuanced complexities not visible in conventional 2D maps, providing new insights into cellular metabolism — influenced by diet, exercise and genetics — as well as into disease mechanisms.

"On Google Earth, I can zoom in on a city and see what a house looks like, what the street looks like, what cars are there. That's the level of resolution we provided

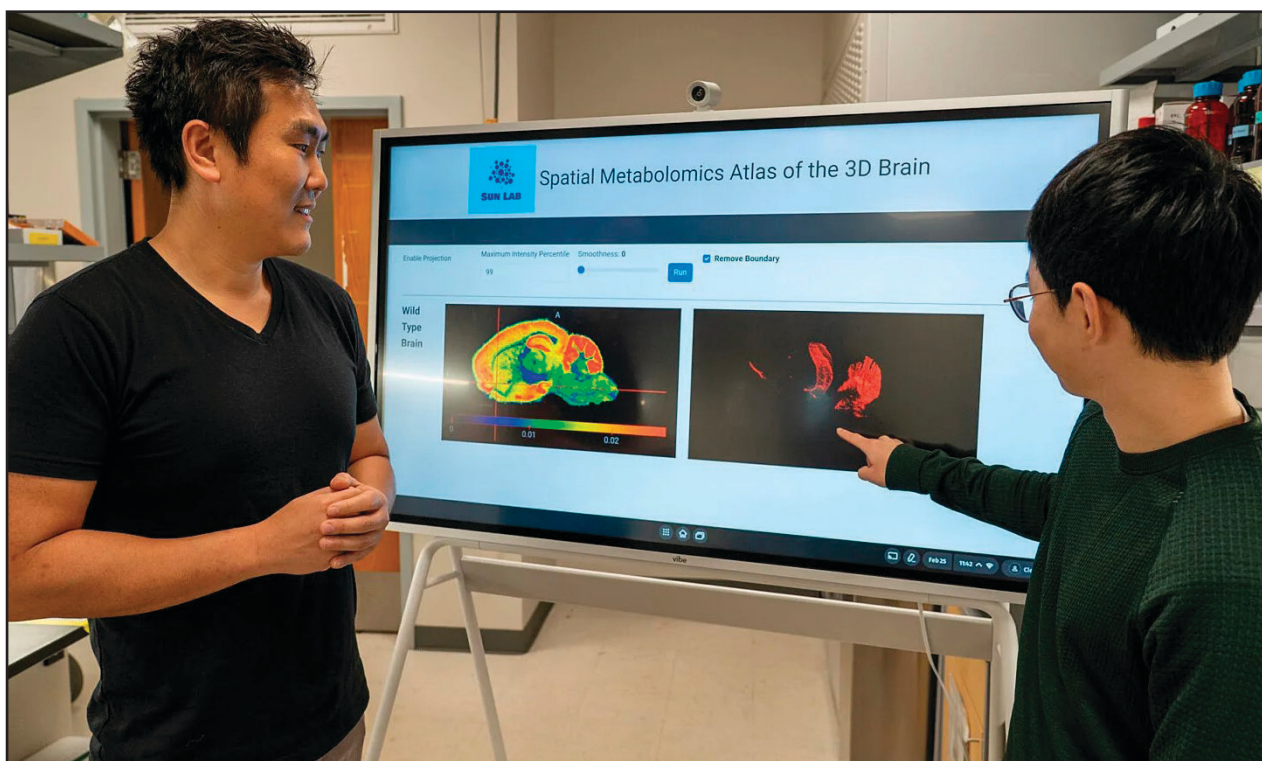


Photo by Jackie Hart

UF neuroscientists led by Ramon Sun, Ph.D., left, and doctoral student Xin Ma have created an AI tool that can generate a high-resolution 3D brain map.

for the mouse brain in this three-dimensional space, and how they change during diseases," said Sun, also an associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in the UF College of Medicine, part of UF Health. "You can explore and examine molecules that influence thinking, memory and brain health, including those involved in neurodegenerative diseases. You can map all the different molecules and how they are organized and distributed in fine brain structures."

To achieve the jump from 2D representations to 3D, which Sun likened to the technological jump from a flip phone to a smartphone, his lab scanned 79 brain sections one thin layer at a time using a high-tech imaging machine that identifies and counts molecules such as fats and carbohydrates, essential nutrients for brain function.

"Then we used AI to align those images and stack them together to reconstruct the whole brain metabolome," said Xin Ma, a first author of the paper and doctoral student in biostatistics who is mentored by Sun

and Li Chen, Ph.D. The metabolome is the collection of thousands of molecules that make energy for the brain to function.

As the next step, with Sara Burke, Ph.D., director of UF's Center for Cognitive Aging and Memory Clinical Translational Research, they mapped the anatomy to correlate with the molecules and used mathematical methods to verify accuracy from 95% to 99%, Sun said.

Going forward, researchers could integrate the map-making tool with established MRI imaging and genetic analyses to work toward developing treatments that target precise areas of the brain, in contrast to current treatments that can also affect nondiseased parts of the brain.

"For disease prevention and treatment, we have opened a new angle for biologists to study," said Chen, a co-corresponding author of the paper and an associate professor in the UF College of Public Health and Health Professions' Department of Biostatistics.

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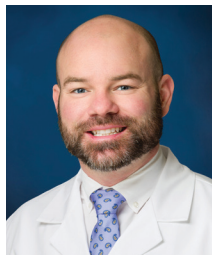
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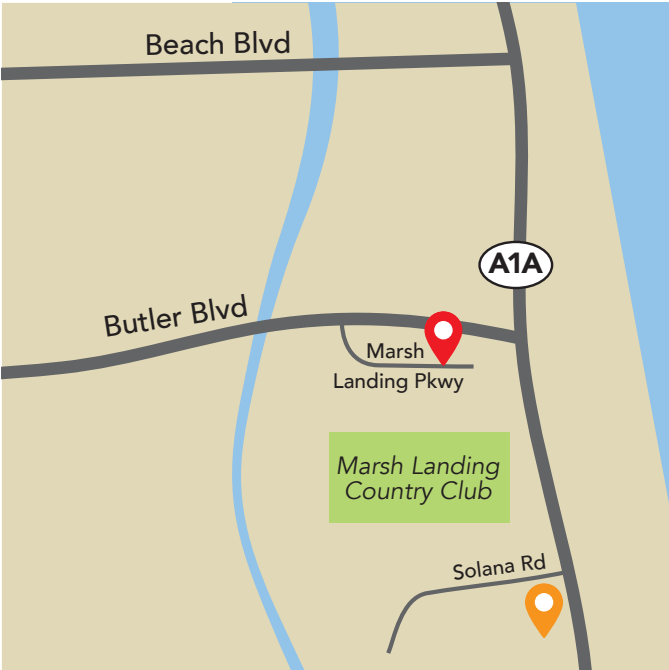
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# Baptist Health first in Florida to participate in new brain fluid clinical trial

Baptist Health's commitment to advancing community health through innovative medical research is underscored by its participation in a new clinical study to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of a novel, minimally invasive investigational system to treat patients with normal pressure hydrocephalus.

The health system is the first in Florida, and second in the nation, to enroll patients in this cutting-edge research that could lead to less invasive procedures and improved outcomes for patients.

Normal pressure hydrocephalus, or NPH, is a buildup of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain. This excess fluid causes pressure on the brain, which can lead to neurological issues such as cognitive impairment (like dementia or memory loss), difficulty walking (gait disturbance) and issues with bladder control (incontinence). Only 20% of the estimated 800,000 adults in the U.S. with NPH are appropriately diagnosed due to the symptomatic similarities with other diseases such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. Since NPH primarily affects individuals aged 60 and older, these symptoms are also often wrongly attributed to normal signs of aging.

Over the last 70 years, the primary surgical treatment for NPH has been the ventriculo-peritoneal (VP) shunt. This procedure requires open-brain surgery in which a tube is inserted to drain excess fluid from the brain to the abdomen.

The STRIDE study compares the safety and effectiveness of the traditional VP shunt with the investigational



Contributed photo

Dr. Ricardo Hanel in the operating room.

eShunt System.

This new, minimally invasive endovascular method involves inserting a much smaller shunt using a catheter from a vein in the patient's leg via a small incision. The eShunt implant drains cerebrospinal fluid into the patient's venous system, allowing fluid in the brain to be absorbed by the body in a way that mimics the body's natural physiological process.

The new system allows for a minimally invasive treatment option, which could lead to quicker recovery times. Patients typically spend just one night in the hospital, with the potential for lower rates of infection and over

drainage, alleviating common problems seen with the traditional VP shunt.

Patients participating in the randomized trial will either be selected to receive the traditional VP shunt or the new shunt.

To participate in the trial, patients must meet the following criteria:

- Aged 60 or older
- Have had problems walking and take shuffling steps (small steps or slide their feet instead of lifting them) for three or more months
- Have at least two of the most common symptoms of NPH

"Normal pressure hydrocephalus is often difficult to diagnose, but having access to timely detection and prompt treatment can significantly enhance a patient's quality of life," said Dr. Ricardo Hanel, neurosurgeon and co-medical director of Baptist Stroke & Cerebrovascular Center, the only Joint Commission Certified Comprehensive Stroke Center in the greater Jacksonville region. "NPH is a reversible cause of dementia, and we are very excited to see improved opportunities for this patient population. By participating in this clinical study and others, we are exploring new treatment possibilities that have the power to transform the lives of our community and beyond."

The study is designed to support the device manufacturer's anticipated premarket approval submission to the FDA of the new shunt.



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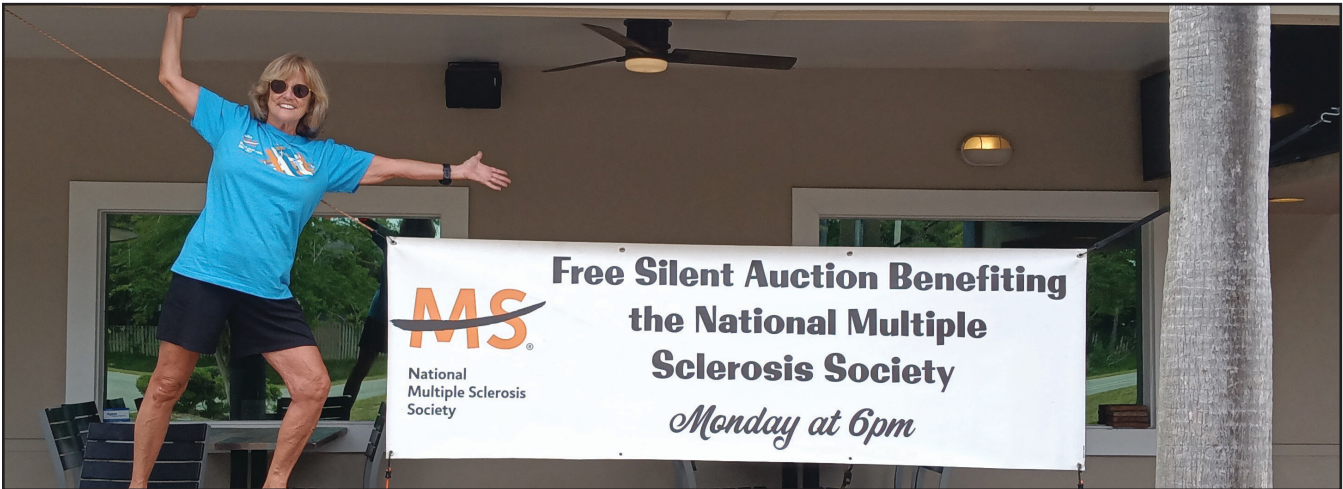
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# Silent auction aims to end MS

What has nearly 300 items valued at more than \$50,000 and is free to the public?

The 13th annual MS Awareness Silent Auction, scheduled for 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. May 5 at Mr. Chubby's Wings in Ponte Vedra Beach. The proceeds — 100% — benefit the more than 18,000 North Floridians impacted by multiple sclerosis.

“The overwhelming generosity and support by beach-area residents goes to show they want to see a world free of MS,” said North Florida NMSS Chapter president Heidi Katz. “The event has set a fundraising record every year since 2013. And that money supports programs and services right here in North Florida.”

Items this year include art, jewelry, more than 80 restaurants, service providers, concerts, retailers, activities, travel, hotels and much more. The event also includes a popular 50-50 drawing.

Local donors include Tropical Smoothie Cafe, North Guana Outpost, Pussers, Flo's Premium Ice Cream, New York Butcher Shop, Sierra Grille, Beach Diner, Aqua Grill, Millie's, Coastal Wine Market, 9 to 5 Pets, Nona Blue, Bronx House Pizza and Pinspiration.

Outside of the annual Oct. 4-5 Bike MS PGA Tour Cycle to the Shore, a two-day bicycle ride from Ponte Vedra Beach to Daytona Beach and back, the silent auction is the chapter's largest do-it-yourself fundraising event. Bike MS will be held for the 39th time this fall. For details and registration information on the ride, go to [events.nationalmssociety.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donordrive.event&eventID=2396](https://events.nationalmssociety.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donordrive.event&eventID=2396).

For the 13th consecutive year, the MS Awareness Silent Auction has been sponsored by local 23-person cycling team Big Bananas, the Southeast Region's top fundraiser.

# UF Health Flagler signs agreement with Aetna

By Greg Harrison

UF Health Flagler Hospital and UF Health St. Johns-employed physicians are again in-network participating providers with Aetna insurance plans, UF Health officials have announced.

“We are pleased to announce that we have come to fair and acceptable terms with Aetna for commercial and Medicare Advantage products for our hospital and physician group,” said Huson Gilberstadt, M.D., chief medical officer for UF Health St. Johns. “We appreciate all the hard work our health care team has devoted to continuing to serve our patients in St. Johns and Flagler counties. This agreement enables us to continue our tradition of excellence in caring for our communities.”

The multiyear agreement provides market-competitive rates, reduces administrative obstacles that delay accessing care for patients and random policy changes that

AETNA continues on Page 24

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## Aetna

Continued from 23

result in high out-of-pocket expenses for patients. The new arrangement also is designed to improve efficiency and care management.

UF Health St. Johns, a regional division of UF Health, is dedicated to building healthier communities throughout Northeast Florida. UF Health St. Johns offers preventive, diagnostic and interventional care, including working with area schools to address youth behavioral health and the latest health and wellness options where community members live, work and play.

The region includes UF Health Flagler Hospital, with a 130-year legacy of caring for the community, and multispecialty practices at UF Health Nocatee and UF Health MuraBella as well as primary care and specialty practices in neighborhoods throughout St. Johns County and beyond.

UF Health Flagler Hospital has earned the Gold Seal of Approval from The Joint Commission for primary stroke care centers, national accreditation for its total hip- and total knee-replacement programs, accreditation from the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer, and Center of Excellence designation for its bariatric surgery program. Learn more at [StJohns.UFHealth.org](http://StJohns.UFHealth.org).

# Millennial lung health study begins recruiting in Jacksonville

The American Lung Association in Florida, Nemours Children's Health, Jacksonville and University of Florida have announced they are now accepting participants for a first-of-its-kind, large-scale study of millennial lung health. Nemours Children's and University of Florida are two of 35 sites across the country conducting this study.

The American Lung Association Lung Health Cohort Research Study will track 4,000 young adults (ages 25-35) at the age of peak lung health. Scientists across the country will follow these millennials for five years after their initial interviews to evaluate how their environment, lifestyle and physical activity habits affect respiratory health.

Millennials interested in participating can locate a site near them at [Lung.org/Lung-Study](http://Lung.org/Lung-Study).

"Historically, lung health has been studied only after the appearance of chronic lung disease," said Dr. Kathryn Blake, principal investigator for the Lung Health Cohort and director, Center for Pharmacogenom-

ics and Translational Research at Nemours Children's Health. "There is a critical need to better understand how a young adult's lung function declines over time. In addition, here in Florida, our residents face lung health threats like air quality impacts from climate change, teen vaping and a higher-than-average rate of new lung cancer cases. By studying the lung health of millennials in Florida, we can determine how these factors impact respiratory function and develop ways to prevent lung disease or catch it earlier."

Here are some details about the study:

- It will follow 4,000 young adults at the age of peak lung health, from 25 to 35 years old, in Jacksonville, as well as 35 other sites across the United States, painting a clear picture of lung health across geography and demography.

- Each participant will be tracked for five years on measures of lung function, respiratory symptoms and information including where they live, where and what they do for

work, as well as health behaviors, fitness, biomarkers and chest imaging.

- This study will use low-dose CT scans, which will show any signs of early or intermediate lung injury or abnormalities. Clinicians can use these to build a library of lung images in various stages of health and disease.

- The Lung Association's Airways Clinical Research Centers (ACRC) Network will conduct the research working closely with researchers at Nemours Children's Health and University of Florida. ACRC is the largest national nonprofit clinical network dedicated to asthma and COPD research.

The longitudinal study is made possible through a \$24.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. As the study continues, the goal is to renew the grant so scientists can continue to follow study participants for the rest of their lives.

Those interested in participating in the study can locate a site near them at [Lung.org/Lung-Study](http://Lung.org/Lung-Study).

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# Book explores daily mission to find life's positivity when battling multiple cancers

By Anthony Richards

Cancer is something that unfortunately most everyone knows at least someone who has been affected by it in some way or another, but for Linda Adams it has been a part of her world for much of her life.

So much so that she decided to write a short story about her journey in hopes of inspiring others to find the positives in life even when facing adversity is a daily experience.

It started with her mom, who had been a strong career-driven woman but found out that she had polycystic kidney disease and had to eventually stop working because the dialysis treatments she was on became too taxing on her.

“My mother was sick for most of my life,” Adams said. “It got to the point where she would sneeze and break ribs.”

Her mom died at 59 years old and shortly after Adams went in for a routine physical and that is when she found out that form of kidney disease was hereditary and had been passed down to her and eventually her brother as well.

“They estimated that at 40 years old my kidneys would fail, and it didn’t mat-



Linda Adams holds a copy of her book with her stepdaughters Bella and Sophia Hayes by her side.

ter what I did,” Adams said.

She was put on a kidney transplant list and in 2009 she underwent surgery

medicine the process became a success once again.

Although she had been somewhat familiar with the disease from her mom’s battle with it all those years, it was still an emotional shock to the system.

But she also remembered witnessing the strength her mom showed amid it all and strived to show that same resolve.

“I quickly realized that PKD was not just a burden to bear but a challenge to overcome,” Adams said.

However, the adversity has not stopped there for Adams as on top of the polycystic kidney disease and kidney dialysis she has been faced with, she has also developed three forms of skin cancer; melanoma, basel cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma since her kidney treatments began, as well as B and T cell lyabout hermphoma and Waldenstrom Syndrome, which is a rare type of blood cancer.

Most recently she started oral chemotherapy to help with the T cell lyabout hermphoma and she lives in a state of fatigue and nauseousness.

BOOK continues on Page 26

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Sisqó



Freedom Williams of C+C Music Factory

# As If! '90s Fest returns May 3 with big names

Contributed photos

Fire up your AOL connection and Ask Jeeves to take you straight to As If! '90s Fest on the World Wide Web because it's getting hella exciting. Sisqó and C+C Music Factory are headlining a totally awesome lineup, and the one and only Hulk Hogan will be hosting.

For its fifth year, the 1990s are moving to Maritime Creative in Elkton, where there's plenty of space to hacky sack and dance the

Dougie. It's all going down on Saturday, May 3, from 2 to 9 p.m. at 1105 County Road 13A South in Elkton.

"This has become such a popular event that we just needed more space," said Jeanetta Cebollero, owner of Ancient City Entertainment. "With the added area, we've got a second stage featuring some killer garage bands, more vendors and food trucks, and plenty of space for kids' activities to entertain the small fries. We'll also have coverage from the weather, which is a huge bonus. It's going to be the raddest iteration of the As If! Fest yet!"

Sisqó is known internationally for hits like "Thong Song" and "Incomplete." C+C Music Factory ruled the Jock Jams discs with their hit "Gonna Make You Sweat (Everybody Dance Now)." They'll be joined by Nerd Kill Overdrive, A/C Power Unit, TAUk, Tori Nance, DeeJay Natural, "Isn't It Iconic?" an Alanis Morissette Tribute by Ramona + The Riot, Classic Blends, "No Ordinary Dub," a reggae tribute to Sade from Sailor Jane, and more to be announced soon.

Tickets are on sale now and are \$60 for general admission, \$20 for kids 10 and younger, and \$150 for VIP access. VIP ticket holders are also entered into a raffle for an epic prize pack featuring meet and greet passes for both headliners, a pair of concert tickets at The St. Augustine Amphitheatre,



Hulk Hogan

a one-night hotel stay at Renaissance St. Augustine Historic Downtown Hotel, a Slingshot rental, "The Saint" Bourbon from the St. Augustine Distillery, and a BrüMate Ultimate Party Cooler.

For additional information and to purchase tickets, go to [asifthe90sfest.com](http://asifthe90sfest.com).

But that's not all! For those craving even more '90s immersion, the festival offers rad special events such as the official As If! '90s Fest Afterparty and exclusive meet and greets.

Chairs and picnic blankets are allowed

and encouraged at the festival, but no backpacks (fanny packs are totally cool), coolers or outside alcohol are permitted. There will be plenty of food options, bars, sodas and water to purchase.

The As If! '90s Fest benefits ACE Alliance, a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to supporting individuals in the tourism, entertainment and hospitality industries along coastal Northeast Florida.

For vendor and sponsorship opportunities, contact Cebollero at [ancientcityentertainmentgroup@gmail.com](mailto:ancientcityentertainmentgroup@gmail.com).



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## Book

Continued from 25

"I take it on Monday and don't feel good at all, and by the end of the week I'm starting to feel a little better by the weekend but then it's time to do it all over again," Adams said.

With all the waves of adversity she has dealt with for some time now she has also developed depression, and it is something that she fights with on a daily basis on top of everything else.

"I'm very honest and open about it in the book," she said. "I used to be a very social person, but now my life is more comfortable at home, and I don't go out except to go to doctors' offices."

She has started making it a point to spend time working out in her home garage because she used to be big into fitness and it allows her to rediscover the things she enjoyed doing prior to cancer forcing its way into her life.

The book is called "Live the dream-Battle the nightmare: My personal journey fighting 3 non-curable cancers,

kidney transplant and depression."

It can be purchased on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and is available in Kindle and paperback editions. Adams hopes to donate all the proceeds she makes from the book sales to nonprofit organizations aimed at helping those with cancer.

A GoFundMe account was created by her husband Thomas Hayes so that anyone in the community can donate to help the cause by going to [www.gofund.me](http://www.gofund.me) and searching "Linda's Health Battles: A Tale of Giving Back."





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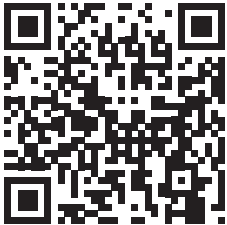
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# Business Weekly

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## GUEST COLUMN

# Invest more confidently in volatile markets

Contributed photo

### Written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors

When financial markets fluctuate, perhaps in reaction to world events, inflation, or a change in interest rates, even the calmest investors can start to question their financial strategies.

But volatile markets can present opportunities to review and reaffirm investment strategies, says Tracie McMillion, head of global asset allocation strategy for Wells Fargo Investment Institute.

“Financial markets are frequently volatile — that’s their nature,” she says. “Even so, during periods of uncertainty, investors may start to question their investment decisions. Having a plan in place can provide the guard rails to help steer through and beyond the volatility.”

In addition to reaffirming and focusing on your plan, here are some strategies you can use to help weather economically turbulent times.



### Match your investments to your time horizon

The simplest way to feel more comfortable about your investments is to align them with your financial calendar, no matter what happens in the financial world this month or year.

For example, do you need some of your money fairly soon or want it close at hand in case of an emergency? If so, McMillion says you should consider investments such

as cash holdings and short-term bonds that shouldn’t lose much, if any, value over the short term.

On the other hand, if you won’t need some of your investment money until you retire multiple years in the future, equities or longer-term bonds are worth a closer look. Those investments carry more risks but also offer potentially better returns.

### Know what to expect from your investments

Some investors lose confidence because they don’t fully understand how their investments work. In that case, McMillion says, some knowledge of typical asset behavior is a good thing.

Consider reading up on different types of investments and asking questions of your financial adviser. Once you know how your investments are more likely to perform in certain financial markets, you can help ensure that your investment

MARKETS continues on Page 31

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# March sees rise in home sales, affordability, inventory

As temperatures start to rise in Northeast Florida, so do closed sales and new listings. Following seasonal trends, the housing market sees an increase in inventory as well as sales, continuing the upturn that began last month after the winter months brought lower numbers. Additionally, home prices showed a rise in affordability, which is a welcome change for buyers.

The median sales price for single-family homes in Northeast Florida’s six-county region decreased by 1.8% since February, dropping to \$379,995. This caused the Home Affordability Index to rise to a score of 69, a 3% increase from February.

“While interest rates remain in line with pre-COVID levels, today’s higher home prices have become the new normal,” said 2025 NEFAR President, Mario Gonzalez. “Recent price dips have sparked renewed buyer interest, with a noticeable jump in showing requests and open house traffic.”

In March, closed sales for single-family homes rose by 35.7% month-over-month, totaling 1,784 transactions, while pending sales were at 1,514. New listings rose noticeably by 10.6% from February to March, recording 3,656 homes.

Since February, the active inventory of single-family homes increased by 10.2% to 8,258 properties. However, this is a drastic increase from the previous year, as the number of properties has grown exponentially by 63.3% since March 2024. This rise in inventory from 2024 is a positive change for buyers, as they have many options to choose from. The median number of days on the market increased to 43 days, a 19.4% increase from February, indicating homes selling slightly slower than they did last month.



“Spring is shaping up to be a strong season for buyers. With more homes hitting the market, there’s greater choice and sellers are more flexible on price, terms, and repairs,” said Gonzalez.

In St. Johns County, the March 2025 median price for single-family homes did not change, sitting at \$549,000. Median days on the market rose 47.2% from February to 53. Closed sales increased by 34.3 to 415, with pending sales now at 339. New listings rose by 6.7% to 889, while active inventory increased by 14.2% to 2,258 homes, representing a 5.4 -month supply. The Home Affordability Index rose slightly to 48, though St. Johns County remains the most expensive county in the region.

In Duval County, March showed a 3.6% decrease since February in the median price of single-family homes, now at \$320,000. Sales of homes decreased in speed in March, with the median days on the market rising 4.5% to 35 days. While closed sales rose 38.7% to 967, pending sales were at 772. Notably, new listings increased 12.3% to 1,945. Meanwhile, there was a

10.8% climb in active inventory, now at 4,019 homes, a 4.2-month supply. The Home Affordability Index increased since February by 5.1% to 82.

The Home Affordability Index measures housing affordability for the region. In other words, it measures whether a typical family earns enough to qualify for a mortgage on a typical home, based on current interest rates, median income and median home prices.

A higher number means greater affordability. This index measures affordability factors for all homebuyers making a 20% downpayment. An index of 100 is defined as the point where a median-income family has the exact amount of income needed to purchase a median-priced existing home. An index value over 100 means that the family has more than enough income, while a value below 100 means that a family doesn’t have enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan.

— Source: Northeast Florida Association of Realtors



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# 2025 Local Heroes Awards Nomination Form



 **To nominate someone, visit [pvbrotary.org](http://pvbrotary.org) and complete the online form.** Or complete this nomination form and mail it to the address below by April 18, 2025. For more information or any questions, contact Ponte Vedra Beach Rotary Club member Steve Crosby at [stevecrosby101@gmail.com](mailto:stevecrosby101@gmail.com).

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**Please provide sufficient details so the nominating committee may give your nominee every consideration! Feel free to attach additional pages as well as a resume, articles or other supporting materials (optional).**

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**Or submit your nomination online at: [pvbrotary.org](http://pvbrotary.org)**

**Thank you  
for your nomination!**



# New roof saves artist's work

When Advanced Roofing learned about a local artist facing losing her life's artwork after home roof destruction from Hurricane Milton, the Jacksonville team took action to protect her decades of paintings.

St. Johns County artist Cynthia Walburn is renowned for calming, contemporary paintings, which provide comfort at hospitals, health care facilities and private collections. The Hillary Whitaker Gallery features her work.

As a result of the pandemic, Walburn moved her work from a studio to her home. Recently, when Hurricane Milton hit, Walburn's roof suffered extensive damage threatening her workspace and livelihood. Her homeowners' policy had a prohibitive deduction and company backlog.

Upon hearing of her dilemma, Advanced Roofing Jacksonville Manager Jason Carruth acted to ensure her inspiring artwork would be saved. He saw that a total roof replacement was necessary and offered to donate the entire job, including materials.

"Our team was inspired to do what we could after seeing this artist was facing difficult circumstances," said Carruth. "Since our company has a 40-year tradition of help-



Contributed photo

**The team at Advanced Roofing acted quickly to ensure that artist Cynthia Walburn's work would be saved from damage following Hurricane Milton.**

ing others impacted by hurricanes, we wanted to make this experience as seamless as possible for Ms. Walburn."

"We have built our company on a foundation of giving back," explained Advanced Roofing CEO Rob Kornahrens. "When you can give back to the communities that are served, it's really a special thing.

In the construction industry, it's not only how you perform jobs, but also developing an engaged workforce where there is a commitment to cities we serve. This was another chance for our employees to share their expertise and passion."

Walburn expressed gratitude that her new roof was installed a month prior to the 2025 hurricane season.

"I really wouldn't know what to do if Advanced Roofing hadn't stepped forward with their help," said Walburn. "It has been a tough couple of years for artists nationally with the economy, and I'm eternally grateful for how the employees of this company came forward after I was at wit's end, literally."

Advanced Roofing is a full-service commercial roofing contractor and may be found at [advancedroofing.com](http://advancedroofing.com).

# Markets

Continued from 28

strategy is in line with your tolerance for risk.

## Tune out the noise

By "noise," McMillion means the constant barrage of financial reports and other news events from the 24/7 news media. "Investors usually don't need to react to the everyday financial news, no matter how topsy-turvy things may seem," she says. Keep your long-term goal in mind.

## Regularly revisit your plan

There's no such thing as a completely set-it-and-forget-it investment strategy, McMillion says. It's always smart to check in regularly with your investment adviser.

"Your life circumstances may change, or your financial goals could shift," she says. "You can feel much more confident that your investments are doing their job if you review them regularly with your adviser."

**All investing involves risk including the possible loss of principal. Investing in stocks involves risk, and their returns and risk levels can vary depending on prevailing market and economic conditions. Investments in fixed-income secu-**

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

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# In the Arts

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www.PonteVedraRecorder.com



Photo by Anthony Richards

Village Arts Framing & Gallery in Ponte Vedra Beach celebrated its 50th anniversary with a special event on April 12.



Photo by Anthony Richards

Attendees view the artwork on display in the gallery during the show.

## A half century of influence on the local art community

By Anthony Richards

Village Arts Framing & Gallery has become a staple in the Ponte Vedra Beach art scene and has been an outlet for promoting local artists over the last 50 years.

The business celebrated its five decades of involvement in the local community with a 50th anniversary celebration on April 12.

Several local artists took part in the event, both as part of the gallery with works on display or just to stop in and show their appreciation for the decades of promoting art to the public.

One of the most memorable guests who made an appearance at the event was Virginia Cantore, who was the original owner of Village Arts Framing & Gallery and her vision to create the space is what kickstarted the continued success years later.

Pamela Keegan is the current owner and is very appreciative of what Cantore established, and is happy to see the advances that it continues to take since she took over in 2007, especially pertaining to the addition of a more extensive gallery to showcase art.

“Village Arts is thriving, and we’ve got

15 beautiful artists who are also all great people,” Keegan said. “Local art has always been important to me because I’m an artist myself.”

Multiple artists even lined the sidewalk in front of the storefront in the Sawgrass Village Shopping Center and worked on paintings as people walked by while shopping and stopped in to see what the event was all about.

Tom Nagata was in attendance as the gallery’s April artist of the month.

“When you look around, these artists are just amazing,” Nagata said. “No two artists in this gallery see the world the

same way. Everybody’s vision is different, and it shows in their art.”



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Virginia Cantore, the previous owner, and current owner Pamela Keegan.



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Tom Nagata is the gallery’s April artist of the month.

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# Scenic plates revisited

*Contemporary artist gives vintage ceramics a modern twist*

“American Scenery and Souvenirs: Transferware by Paul Scott” highlights the work of artist Paul Scott, whose familiar-looking, blue-and-white ceramics subvert traditional tableware motifs with scenes from life in America today. The exhibition will open at the Lightner Museum on April 24 and run through Oct. 27.

In the 19th century, blue-and-white transferware plates depicting American scenery, cities and iconic landmarks were mass-produced by potteries in Staffordshire, England, for export to the United States. By the start of the 20th century, these works became immensely popular collectibles, cherished by the American middle class as souvenirs of travel and experience. The collecting mania generated a new wave of souvenir transferwares imported by companies including Rowland and Marsellus, Jon Roth and Jones, and McDuffee and Stratton.

A British artist with an international reputation, Scott uses traditional designs associated with mass produced domestic tableware and alters them to comment on modern society.

“My work references and updates the original transferware created by British factories

in the 19th and early 20th centuries,” Scott explained. “During my research trips across the U.S., I became acutely aware of the stark contrast between the idealized imagery of early transferware and the contemporary landscape I was experiencing.”

In “American Scenery and Souvenirs,” nuclear power plants, decaying urban centers, abandoned industrial sites, wildfires and border walls intrude amidst the traditionally bucolic landscape. These provocative scenes transform the picturesque aesthetic associated with American transferware, challenging the viewer to reconsider the nation’s environmental and social realities.

The exhibition at the Lightner Museum presents Scott’s plates, platters and jugs alongside vintage ceramics from the Lightner Museum’s collection.

“The exhibition provides a unique opportunity to showcase parts of the Lightner collection in a new context,” said David Bagnall, executive director of the Lightner Museum. “The transferware plates in our collection were originally collected and displayed to memorialize personal travels and experiences. When paired with Paul Scott’s work, they spark a dialogue between the past and present — between the romanticized views of the 19th and early 20th centuries and America today.”

Scott’s works are held in numerous



Contributed photo

**Cumbrian Blue(s), New American Scenery, “Fracked” 01/23, 2022. Transfer print collage with Kintsugi, on partially erased pearlware platter by R.A. Kidson & Co. (Glasgow), c. 1840**

museum collections and have been exhibited widely across Europe and the United States. He is represented in the United States by Ferrin Contemporary.

“American Scenery and Souvenirs: Transferware by Paul Scott” is presented at the Lightner Museum by the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. Additional support comes from the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council and the St. Johns Cultural Council.

To coincide with the opening on April 24, the Lightner Museum will host a free Com-

munity Open House from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. for museum members and St. Johns County residents. In addition to “American Scenery and Souvenirs: Transferware by Paul Scott,” visitors will be able to tour the following exhibitions: “The Gilded Age: Treasures from the Lightner Museum,” “American Stories: Paintings and Sculpture from the Lightner Museum,” “Laura Mongiovi: Empire” and “Riding High: Vintage Bicycles from the Keith Pariani Collection.”

For more information, go to [lightnermuseum.org](http://lightnermuseum.org) or call 904-824-2874.

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# Ritz Chamber Players concert to honor Yom HaShoah

The Ritz Chamber Players (RCP) invite the community to a moving and powerful musical tribute, “The Ties That Bind,” in commemoration of Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). This profound concert will take place at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 26, at Terry Concert Hall, Jacksonville University. Admission is free and open to the public.

Yom HaShoah is a time to honor the memory of those lost in the Holocaust and to reflect on the enduring lessons of history. Through “The Ties That Bind,” the Ritz Chamber Players will explore the deep historical connections between our communities and the unbreakable bonds that unite us

—highlighting the shared struggles and the universal power of resilience, remembrance and solidarity.

At the heart of this program is Olivier Messiaen’s “Quartet for the End of Time,” a masterpiece composed during his captivity in Stalag VIII-A, a World War II prisoner-of-war camp in Görlitz, Germany. This haunting and transcendent composition, written under unimaginable conditions, showcases the indomitable human spirit and the ability of music to bring light to even the darkest moments of history.

“This concert is a testament to the transformative power of music as a force for remembrance and unity,” says Terrance L.

Patterson, founder, executive, and artistic director of the Ritz Chamber Players. “Messiaen’s quartet, created in the face of immense suffering, reminds us of the resilience of the human spirit. Through this performance, we honor those who endured the horrors of the Holocaust and reaffirm our commitment to fostering understanding and solidarity.”

Messiaen, a deeply religious composer, drew inspiration from the New Testament’s Book of Revelation, channeling his faith into piece-evoking themes of eternity, hope and transcendence. He premiered his work in 1941 inside the prison camp alongside three fellow prisoners using damaged and limited instruments. This work serves as

a powerful symbol of hope and artistic triumph over adversity.

Mariam Adam makes her debut performance with the Ritz Chamber Players, playing the clarinet. Returning artists are Terrence Wilson on piano, Ashley Horne on violin and Khari Joyner on cello.

Terry Concert Hall is located at 2800 University Blvd. North, Jacksonville. To reserve free tickets, go to: [eventbrite.com/e/ritz-chamber-players-the-ties-that-bind-registration-1048238859647?aff=oddttdcreator](https://eventbrite.com/e/ritz-chamber-players-the-ties-that-bind-registration-1048238859647?aff=oddttdcreator).

For more information about the Ritz Chamber Players and upcoming events, go to [ritzchamberplayers.org](https://ritzchamberplayers.org).

## Finger Mullet Film Festival set for May 2 at Flagler College

The Crisp-Ellert Art Museum (CEAM) and Flagler College have announced this year’s screening of the Finger Mullet Film Festival will be held at CEAM on Friday, May 2. The opening reception will be from 5 to 6 p.m., after which the student work will be shown starting at 6 p.m., and the artist block will begin at 7 p.m. Featured artists are Sasha Wortzel, Ilana Harris-Babou, Kevin Mahoney, Nicole Antebi and John Kelley.

This event is free and open to the public.

The Finger Mullet Film Festival was founded by Flagler College Distinguished Professors of Art Patrick Moser and Kevin Mahoney in collaboration with former director of the Crisp-Ellert Art Museum, Julie Dickover.

The festival is dedicated to nurturing an experimental art and film culture in St. Augustine by providing an inspired platform for the best national and international short films alongside a burgeoning local and regional culture from young artists, film makers, creators and storytellers.

Finger Mullet aims to discover, cultivate and screen new or local narratives to generate critical discussion and empower community collabora-

tion. This year’s festival brings together film and video shorts by regional, national and international artists and filmmakers, including a screening block dedicated to student work, as well as a special performance by former Flagler professor and Finger Mullet founder, artist and musician Kevin Mahoney.

A complete list of participants will be listed at [flagler.edu/ceam](https://flagler.edu/ceam) and [fingermulletfilmfestival.com](https://fingermulletfilmfestival.com).

The Finger Mullet Film Festival is supported, in part, through funds from Flagler College. CEAM programming is supported through grants from the Dr. JoAnn Crisp-Ellert Fund at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council, the St. Johns Cultural Council and voco, an IGH hotel.

For further information on programming, go to [flagler.edu/ceam](https://flagler.edu/ceam), or contact interim director Helena Rodriguez at 904-826-8530 or [crispellert@flagler.edu](mailto:crispellert@flagler.edu).

The museum’s hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, and noon to 4 p.m. Saturday while classes are in session.

## Speaker’s topic: Becoming a writer after retirement

Retiring after two careers, Lou Pugliese decided to try his hand at writing a novel. After sending the completed manuscript to dozens of agents and publishers, he learned the difficulties of finding a traditional publisher.

He spent the next two years crafting another mystery novel, “Blame It On the Moon,” and decided to self-publish.

Pugliese will offer essential tips to other writers seeking a path to publication at the Ponte Vedra Writers meeting, 11 a.m. Saturday, April 26, at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library.

He believes his career as a senior manager with Toyota Motors and later as a business professor at a small liberal arts college gave him



Lou Pugliese

a good foundation for writing and publishing. In his talk, “One Man’s Journey from Retirement to Becoming an Author to Committing to Self-Publishing,” he will share his experiences working with cover artists and formatters and creating a winning marketing plan.

His mantra is: “It’s never too late to have a happy childhood.”

With that in mind, attendees will enjoy his mix of wit and wisdom.

The Ponte Vedra Writers group is part of the Florida Writers Association, a statewide membership organization supporting aspiring and published writers in any genre. The April 26 meeting is free and open to members and nonmembers alike.

For information on FWA, go to [floridawriters.org](https://floridawriters.org).



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# Sports

THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2025 • PAGE 35

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

## Spring football schedules released, practice begins April 28

By Anthony Richards

Coaches and players will begin to get a feel of the squads they will have as they prepare for the football season next fall with spring practice set to get underway in less than two weeks.

The first practice of the spring will be April 28 for the Nease, Ponte Vedra and Beachside football programs.

However, the plan for spring practice differs from there as each of the three coaching staffs is taking a different approach to the offseason.

The Barracudas will practice after school with a spring game jamboree scheduled on the road against Terry Parker High at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, May 16.

For the Panthers, they will also practice daily after school but will have three weeks of practices prior to the two that the Barracudas have scheduled.



Nease and Beachside will both begin their spring football practices beginning Monday, April 28.

They will have wrap-up week two with the Green vs. Gold Game, which is an intrasquad scrimmage on Friday, May 16, at 6 p.m. in Panther Stadium, and it will be followed up by a spring game against Menendez High at home as well on



The Sharks have a bevy of young receivers primed to return next season, including sophomore Cam Tietze.

Thursday, May 22, at 7 p.m.

Also, choosing to put their own spin on things is the Sharks who will have morning practices before school and will go four weeks like the Panthers before going on the road to take on Riverside High in a

spring game on Thursday, May 22, with a kickoff time still to be announced.

The varying approaches show that there is not one formula that leads to success in high school football, because all three teams made the playoffs a year ago and they will be looking to duplicate that success and even build on it with even deeper postseason runs this time around.

The spring presents coaches to learn more about their players both as they see veterans in possible leadership roles for the first time or how underclassmen or new players adapt to being part of the team as a whole.

So many of the foundational pieces that become instrumental to successful seasons in the fall begin to develop during spring practices and fans get a first glimpse of what next year's group will look like when they take the field to face someone beside themselves during the spring games in late May.



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# LACROSSE DISTRICT TITLES DECIDED



The Ponte Vedra High girls lacrosse team won yet another district championship as they defeated Bartram Trail High, 12-8, in the title game on Tuesday, April 15. It was a battle between two top squads in the state as the Sharks are ranked No. 6 and the Bears No. 13.

In boys lacrosse, the Sharks faced Nease High in their district championship on Wednesday, April 16. The result was not available at press time. Check [pontevedrarecorder.com](http://pontevedrarecorder.com) for the latest results.

Photos by Anthony Richards



Aspen McAdoo earned the save against Orange Park High in a semifinal matchup to secure a spot in the district championship for the Sharks.



Cole Rambler's 18 career doubles are the most in Ponte Vedra High history.

Photos by Anthony Richards

## Comeback win thrusts Sharks into district championship

By Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra Sharks are one win away from a district baseball title after the Sharks stormed back to defeat the Orange Park High Raiders 10-7 in a semifinal matchup and will face tournament host Englewood High in the District 4-5A Championship on Thursday, April 17, at 6 p.m.

The Sharks had high hopes coming into the tournament as the top seed but quickly found themselves down 5-1 after the first inning.

However, the Sharks remained calm and showcased the poise and approach that helped guide them to a 13-9 regular season record by slowly chipping away at the deficit.

They responded to the early onslaught with two runs in the second inning, one more in the third, four in the fourth and a couple in the fifth to shift the momentum in the game and completely turn the contest upside down in their favor.

The comeback bid was made complete during the four-run fourth inning, which was fueled by clutch hits by senior Cole Rambler and sophomore Caleb Stanton.

Rambler doubled in the frame, which set a school record for doubles in a career with 18. He also had a team-high three RBIs.

Rambler was one of four Sharks to double on the night, including Stanton, Jack Brady and Luca Candella.

Aspen McAdoo slammed the door on a potential Raiders' rally of their own as he came in after they cut the Sharks' lead to one but he wound up shutting them out from there to earn the save.

The Sharks wound up outpitching the Raiders 11-9 in the contest which allowed them to overcome a couple of fielding errors.

Sophomore C.J. McKenzie got the win for the Sharks with a solid outing where he struck out eight batters over four-plus innings of work.

Englewood won a pitcher's duel, 2-1, over Beachside in the other semifinal matchup and the No. 2-seeded Rams face off against the Sharks in the district championship for an automatic bid into the postseason.

The Nease Panthers lost in the semifinal of their district tournament 3-0 to top-seeded Fletcher and the Panthers wrapped up the season with a record of 9-17.

## UNF esports arena OK'd

The University of North Florida will open an innovative esports arena next year, after the Jacksonville City Council granted \$3 million in support on April 8. The Flight Deck, UNF's innovation arena where technology and learning converge, will be located on the second floor of the John A. Delaney Student Union above the Bookstore.

The esports facility will allow UNF to attract more students to pursue STEM careers in science, computing and engineering; host national competitions that bring visitors and economic development to Jacksonville; and contribute to the city's efforts to develop a highly skilled workforce prepared for industries of the future.

"We are so appreciative of the support from Mayor Deegan and the City Council as UNF Esports is poised to transform Jacksonville into a premier center for digital innovation and gaming," said UNF President Moez Limayem. "This is a significant milestone for our university and the entire community. We couldn't be more excited about the opportunity to enhance innovative technology in our region."

The esports industry, projected to grow to more than \$6.3 billion by 2030, goes far beyond gaming and will have a direct impact on the future of Jacksonville's workforce. The Flight Deck aligns with UNF's strategy to grow enrollment rapidly to serve the workforce needs of Jacksonville. UNF graduates have a direct impact on the state economy, with 80% of UNF grads staying in Florida and 70% staying in Northeast Florida.

The space will include 42 high-performance PC gaming stations; a built-in competition stage for live tournaments and team play; a broadcast studio space for live streaming, shoutcasting and content production; a flexible console play zone for casual and console-based gaming; and it will include event integration for seamless connection to the adjacent auditorium for spectator seating and large-scale events.



# Ponte Vedra CLASSIFIEDS

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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR ST.  
JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
PROBATE DIVISION  
File No.: 55-2025-CP-000170

Division: 59

IN RE: ESTATE OF  
STEVEN ALAN WILLIS,  
A/K/A STEVEN A. WILLIS,  
A/K/A STEVEN WILLIS,  
Deceased.

The administration of the Estate of Steven Alan Willis a/k/a Steven A. Willis a/k/a Steven Willis, deceased, whose date of death was January 24, 2025, is pending in the Circuit Court for St. Johns County, Florida, Probate Division, the address of which is: 4010 Lewis Speedway, St. Augustine, FL 32084. The names and addresses of the personal representative and the personal representative's attorney are set forth below.

All creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate on whom a copy of this notice is required to be served must file their claims with this court ON OR BEFORE THE LATER OF 3 MONTHS AFTER THE TIME OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE OR 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE OF SERVICE OF A COPY OF THIS NOTICE ON THEM.

The personal representative has no duty to discover whether any property held at the time of the decedent's death by the decedent or the decedent's surviving spouse is property to which the Florida Uniform Disposition of Community Property Rights at Death Act as described in ss. 732.216-732.228, Florida Statutes, applies, or may apply, unless a written demand is made by a creditor as specified under s. 732.2211, Florida Statutes.

All other creditors of the decedent and other persons having claims or demands against decedent's estate must file their claims with this court WITHIN 3 MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE.

ALL CLAIMS NOT FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH IN FLORIDA STATUTES SECTION 733.702 WILL BE FOREVER BARRED.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE TIME PERIODS SET FORTH ABOVE, ANY CLAIM FILED TWO (2) YEARS OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.

The date of first publication of this notice is April 17, 2025.

Attorney for the Personal Representative: Lawrence E. Hayden, Jr., Esq. Florida Bar Number: 0939595

**HAYDEN Law**

1301 Penman Road, Suite F

Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250

Telephone: (904) 247-9033

E-Mail: [LEH@haydenlawFL.com](mailto:LEH@haydenlawFL.com)

Personal Representative:

Cherie Ann Lee

12270 Bucks Harbor Dr. N.

Jacksonville, Florida 32225

**Legal 122534 Published 4/17/2025 and**

**4/24/2025 in Clay County's Clay Today**

**newspaper**

#### DIVORCE SUMMONS BY PUBLICATION

Docket No. NO24D0565DR  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court Probate and Family Court  
Norfolk Probate and Family Court  
35 Shawmut Road  
Canton, MA 02021  
Galen Harris v. Thomas Blackburn  
To the Defendant:

The Plaintiff has filed a Complaint for Divorce requesting that the Court grant a divorce for irretrievable breakdown. The Complaint is on file at the Court. An automatic restraining order has been entered in this matter preventing you from taking any action which would negatively impact the current financial status of either party SEE Supplemental Probate Court Rule 411. You are hereby summonsed and required to serve Patrick K Burke, Esq. Burke Levy, PC, P.O. Box 959, Westborough, MA 01581. Your Answer if any 20 days from the return date of this Notice, May 15, 2025. If you fail to do so, the Court will proceed to the hearing and adjudication of this action. You are required to file a copy of your Answer if any, in the Register of this Court. WITNESS, Hon. Lee Peterson, First Justice of this Court.

Date: April 2, 2025  
Register of Probate  
Colleen Brierly

**Legal 122338 Published 4/17/2025, 4/24/2025, 5/1/2025 and 5/8/2025 in St. Johns County Ponte Vedra Recorder newspaper**

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

By Anthony Richards  
Feeling representative to both Boca Raton and St. Augustine from the same area of a state is very unusual, but it is even more rare to have them both come from the same American Legion post. That was the case when Haley Poulos and Ben Black were chosen to represent Post 129 in Jacksonville Beach during the 2023 program, which included a trip to Washington, D.C.

### Major sculpture created in Mandarin

Harriet Beecher Stowe subject of work  
By Shaun Ryan  
A landmark work of art is taking shape in Mandarin — and the public will have an opportunity this weekend to witness the artist in action. Renowned artist Brenda Conwell will be putting the finishing touches on her clay sculpture, "Harriet Beecher Stowe in Mandarin," before sending it off to a foundry where it will be cast in bronze. "When it will be cast in bronze, the sculpture will be brought back and installed in the same location," Conwell said.

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What if I live a long time?

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### CROSSWORD

	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12	
13								14						15
16			17				18						19	
20		21				22				23		24		
25					26				27		28			
29				30				31		32		33		
		34	35						36		37			
38	39									40				
41					42				43					
44				45		46		47				48	49	50
51			52		53		54				55			
56				57		58				59				
60			61		62				63				64	
65		66						67				68		
	69							70						

**ACROSS**

- Dark blacks
- Construct a wall to confine
- Most inappropriate
- A type of board
- Sacred Hindu syllable
- Flatterer
- The Granite State
- Tears down
- China's Chairman
- Former Houston footballer
- Periods of time
- Expressed pleasure
- World alliance
- A Brit's mother
- Television network
- Brother or sister
- Type of spirit
- \_\_\_ Ladd, actor
- A medium oversees it
- One time province of British India
- Wrong
- The highest parts of something
- Insect
- Baseball stat
- A way to use up
- Where wrestlers compete
- It helps elect politicians
- As fast as can be done
- Genus of legumes
- Samoa's capital
- Monument in Jakarta
- Former French coin
- Exploiters
- College sports official
- Uninterrupted in time
- Stephen King story
- Marked by no sound
- Weathers
- Denouncements
- More beloved

**DOWN**

- Winged nut
- It cools a home

- Kisses (French)
- Oxford political economist
- Keyboard key
- Leaf pores
- Agrees with publicly
- Not around
- Czech city
- Muscle cell protein
- Greek letter
- Movements
- Ned \_\_, composer
- Popular series Game of \_\_
- Exclamation that denotes disgust
- Helper
- Gift
- Up in the air (abbr.)
- Treat without respect
- Trims
- Slang for lovely

- City of Angels hoopster (abbr.)
- Guitarists' tool
- Island nation
- Delivered in installments
- A baglike structure
- Cooking vessel
- Gets in front of
- Wounded by scratching
- More breathable
- Medical dressings
- Indiana hoopster
- Married Marilyn
- An ancient Assyrian city
- Congressmen (abbr.)
- Approves food
- Ventura's first name
- Between northeast and east
- Atomic #71
- Email designation

### SUDOKU

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

Level: Beginner

**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!





\*Based on GM Lux2 SUV EV Segmentation. On a full charge. Actual range may vary based on several factors, including ambient temperature, terrain, battery age and condition, loading, and how you use and maintain your vehicle.

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A black Volvo XC40 SUV is shown from a front three-quarter view. The car is parked on a dark, textured surface. The background is a solid blue color. The car's design features a prominent grille, multi-spoke alloy wheels, and a sleek, modern silhouette.



A white Toyota Camry is shown from a front-three-quarter view, parked on a grey surface against a solid blue background. The car's design features a large, black, honeycomb-patterned grille, a prominent Toyota emblem in the center, and sleek, angular headlights. The front bumper is white with black accents. The car is positioned diagonally, showing its front and left side.

A dark blue 1987 Cadillac Fleetwood sedan is shown from a front three-quarter view. The car features chrome accents on the grille, bumpers, and side trim. It has multi-spoke alloy wheels and a black leather interior. The car is parked on a dark, textured surface against a solid blue background.

A silver Cadillac DTS sedan is shown from a front-three-quarter view. The car is parked on a grey, textured surface. The background is a solid blue wall. The car's design features a prominent grille with the Cadillac crest, large headlights, and multi-spoke alloy wheels. The windows are tinted, and the overall appearance is that of a well-maintained luxury vehicle.



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