

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Fort Mose stands again

1738 Fort Reconstruction opens with ribbon-cutting

A dream more than 30 years in the making, and carrying nearly three centuries of Floridian, American and African-American history along with it, is now a reality.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday morning, May 9, at America's "First Site of Freedom" - Fort Mose Historic State Park in St. Augustine — marked the official completion of the park's 1738 Fort Mose reconstruction project.

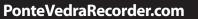
The full-scale, life-sized fort structure welcomed its first visitors Friday afternoon as part of the annual St. Augustine History Festival.

Fort Mose, on the northern end of St. Augustine, was originally established by the Spanish as the first legally sanctioned free Black community in what would become the United States.

Historians estimate that approximately 100 formerly enslaved men, women and children made their homes there after fleeing the British Carolinas. Fort Mose was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994.

"Fort Mose is so much more than the walls, the roof and the landscaping we see here today," said Fort Mose Historical Society President Charles Ellis, who performed the ceremonial ribbon cutting. "These things are all wonderful, and the finished fort has surpassed everything we dreamed it could be when we embarked

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425 Town Plaza Ave, Ponte Vedra, FL, 32081

Angelwood, Underwood Jewelers partner for annual trunk show

By Holly Tishfield

From Thursday, May 8, through Saturday, May 10, community members gathered for a trunk show at Underwood Jewelers in Ponte Vedra, benefiting Angelwood Inc.

Guests could shop from an array of products, making their experience a worthwhile way to give back to an important cause. As guests perused merchandise and took advantage of the opportunity to socialize, they were also furthering the valuable work of Angelwood Inc. A portion of the event proceeds directly benefited Angelwood's programs, allowing the organization to continue offering vital services to the community.

Angelwood Inc. is a nonprofit orga-

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Angelwood CEO Diane Tuttle with Morgan and Melanie Busby.

Photo by Holly Tishfield







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THERECORDER

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Visit our new website at www.pontevedrarecorder.com

Plus, find the Recorder on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ThePVRecorder

BRIEFS

New Lions Club forming

A new Lions Club is forming in Ponte Vedra, and interested members of the community are invited to an informational meeting at 6 p.m. Thursday, May 15, at Foxtail Coffee, 260 Front St., Suite 620, Ponte Vedra Beach.

Those who cannot attend but would like to join or obtain additional information can contact:

• George Niles at gniles@bellsouth.net, or 904-545-1627

• Tony Stefanowicz at govnortony@yahoo. com, or 386-853-0416

Cost of membership is \$7.50 per month (\$90 annually or \$45 semi-annually). Join today for \$55; \$95 per couple.

Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organization with 1.4 million members in more than 48,000 clubs worldwide. Learn more at lionsclubs.org.

Walk-a-thon to benefit Beaches Museum

The inaugural Edgewater Hometeam Walk-A-Thon will benefit the Beaches Museum. The event will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, May 31, at 381 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville Beach. The walk begins promptlv at 11 a.m.

Food and music will be available after the walk, with the first 75 registrants eating for free. Registration is \$10 per person, \$25 for families. After you RSVP, you'll be redirected to the Beaches Museum donation page.

The online registration form can be found at https://EdgewaterHomeTeamEvents.com or contacts.byreferralonly.com/Form3.aspx?Key

RECORDER

=C384643BF8CF79B40EEC553955428ED3. For further information, go to facebook. com/Edgewaterhometeamfl.

Library book sale going on now

Seymour's Bookstore in the Ponte Vedra Beach Library is having a May Days Lobby Book Sale now through Saturday, May 24. Open all library hours, but the book sale will close at 3 p.m. May 24. All books (fiction, non-fiction, children's, cookbooks), CDs, DVDs and vinyls are \$1.

Palm Valley Market every Tuesday

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

Farmers market open every Friday

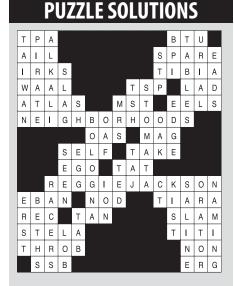
The Ponte Vedra Friday Farmers Market takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Friday at The Peace of Heart Community Farm, offering fresh produce, local farm goods and a welcoming space to connect with neighbors and small businesses.

This farmers market features fresh, organically grown produce; Florida grass-fed beef and pork; real local honey; pasture-raised chicken and eggs; wholegrain breads; glutenfree sourdough bread; natural botanical skincare; creations by local artisans and more

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9	5	6	4	1	2	3	7	8





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in a family-friendly atmosphere

The Peace of Heart Community Farm is located at 14A S. Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach.

Beach exploration planned

Join volunteers at the Guana Tolomato Matanzas (GTM) National Estuarine Research Reserve for a beach exploration from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, May 17.

Collect seashells, search for shark teeth and learn about coastal wildlife.

Meet at the GTM Research Reserve

Visitor Center, 505 Guana River Road, Ponte Vedra Beach.

Wear comfortable closed-toe shoes. Hat, insect repellent, water and sunscreen are recommended. The event is free but online registration is required. Register at: gtmnerr.org/calendar.

Essential Tremor Support Group to meet

Do you suspect you have — or a loved one has — essential tremor, a condition often involving the shaking of head, hands and/or legs? "ET" is not Parkinson's, similar but much more prevalent and not well known. You are invited at the Essential Tremor Support Group meeting, 11 a.m. Tuesday, June 3, at the Baptist HealthPlace in Nocatee (400 Colonnade Road, unit 130, Ponte Vedra) to hear from Stephen Morio, territory manager for Insightec Focused Ultrasound, about an incisionless surgical treatment now offered in Jacksonville. Questions and RSVP: Jan Kary, jkary@verizon.net.

Jax Tours launches new familyfriendly adventure series

Jax Tours is launching its newest family-friendly adventure: the Junior Explorers + Scavenger Hunt summer tour, beginning Wednesday, May 21, and running weekly through Aug. 6. This oneof-a-kind experience invites kids (and adults) of all ages to explore downtown Jacksonville through a fun-filled interactive history tour and scavenger hunt that brings local history to life.

Taking place every Wednesday at 10 a.m., the tour transforms young participants into Junior Explorers on a mission to find historical points of interest and learn fascinating stories about Jacksonville's past. Each child will receive a scavenger hunt activity, a Junior Explorer badge and a surprise prize at the end of the adventure.

Reservations may be made at jaxtours. com.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

<complex-block>

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Contributed photo

The Franqui family has been recognized by the Florida-friendly Landscaping Program at the Natural Level, making their yard the first residential property in Duval County to receive such an honor.



Contributed photo

Royal Palm Village Wine & Tapas won a pair of awards such as the Commercial Landscape of the Year and the People's Choice Award for their edible garden in front of the restaurant.



Photo by Leah Sherman Ford

Many Atlantic Beach residents came out to support the city's inaugural environmental stewardship awards ceremony.

Atlantic Beach environmental awards

Environment, community take center stage at Atlantic Beach award ceremony

By Anthony Richards

The City of Atlantic Beach's Environmental Stewardship Committee selected its inaugural Environmental Stewardship Award winners during an awards event on April 23 where individuals, businesses and organizations were each honored for their outstanding contributions to environmental sustainability and community well-being in the city.

There were several highlights on the night, but one that stood out for its uniqueness was when the residential conservation champ of the year was awarded to Amy and Mike Franqui.

The award was just the latest recognition they have received as the Franquis have been recognized by the Floridafriendly Landscaping Program at the Natural Level, making their yard the first residential property in Duval County to receive such an honor.

Their front yard used to be like many front yards in the area with grass as the primary focus, but they took the initiative to successfully transform their yard into a haven for both native plants and various wildlife.

They did this by reducing their lawn by 90%, eliminating the need for irrigation, fertilizer and pesticides and supporting more than 65 species of birds and 20 species of butterflies.

Royal Palm Village Wine & Tapas won a pair of awards such as the Commercial

Landscape of the Year and the People's Choice Award for their edible garden in front of the restaurant softening all the asphalt and concrete in the surrounding area.

Royal Palm is known for its scratch kitchen from farm to table using ingredients from local producers, and their garden is another example of that approach and belief.

The Giovannucci family's yard on Fifth Street in Atlantic Beach was named

AWARDS continues on Page 5

the link and Sapna Foundation presents **CIRCLE CREATION Sales/Branding & Emotional Intelligence + AI**

May 29th | 5:30 - 7:30 PM

2025 SCHEDULE



WHAT TO EXPECT

- Wine and Refreshments Fun Activities and Games
- Welcoming Atmosphere Social Hour and Networking Opportunities





PLAYERS opens grant program applications

THE PLAYERS Championship is now accepting applications for its annual Red Coats' community grant program, which provides funding to eligible nonprofits in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties.

The program awards local nonprofits with grants up to \$15,000 to support initiatives and projects that benefit the Northeast Florida community. Grants are awarded to organizations supporting youth services, education, character development, health, wellness, sports and military support. Last year, the program awarded grants to 50 local nonprofits, advancing impactful community initiatives across Northeast Florida.

Rusty Pritchett, captain of the Red Coats, expressed excitement about supporting the work of nonprofits across Northeast Florida, stating, "It is our honor to be able to fund so many deserving organizations in Northeast Florida. The Red Coats take great pride in contributing to initiatives that make a lasting impact in our community."

The Red Coats are a group of local civic and corporate leaders who oversee the tournament's volunteer efforts and serve as ambassadors of positive change in the community.

Program Overview:

• Application timeline: From now until 5 p.m. Friday, June 6

• Link to apply: Red Coats' Grants Application. Go to https://www.theplayers.com/community/grants

• Eligibility: For complete guidelines, go to THE PLAYERS website at https:// www.theplayers.com/community/grants

More information about THE PLAY-ERS community initiatives can be found at THEPLAYERS.com/community.

Awards

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the Sustainable and Resilient Yard of the Year, as the "cedar dunes" provide a shady spot for walkers in the neighborhood and are one of 13 tree species and more than 100 shrubs, flowers and succulents that make up the yard.

Other individuals who were honored included 14-year-old Bella Markaj, who was named Volunteer of the Year for becoming the first person to help the committee catalog how many arborist letters the City of Atlantic Beach was receiving each year on average which led them to discover the city was losing about 100 trees a year just through arborist letters alone.

Mark Gabrynowicz earned the community spirit award as a former member of the Environmental Stewardship Committee, serving two terms, and was chairman for three of those years.

Atlantic Beach Urban Farms was named the "Green Business of the Year," for being Jacksonville's first and only aeroponic farm and nonprofit Beaches Go Green was chosen as the Sustainable Initiative of the Year for its contributions to the community and local environment through its cleanup projects over the years.

LIST OF WINNERS

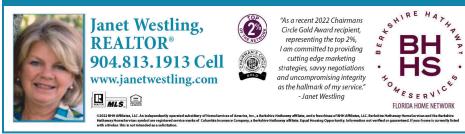
- Commercial Landscape of the Year - Royal Palm Village Wine & Tapas
- Green Business of the Year Atlantic Beach Urban Farms
- Sustainable & Resilient Yard of the Year – Cedar Dunes Giovannucci Yard
- Residential Conservation Champ of the Year -- Franqui Family
- Volunteer of the Year Bella Markaj
- Resilient Initiative of the Year Invasive Plant Clean-Ups at Howell Park
- Sustainable Initiative of the Year Beaches Go Green
- ESC Partner of the Year Atlantic Beach Preservation
- Canopy Award Meredith Chartrand
- Community Spirit Award Mark Gabrynowicz
- People's Choice Award Royal Palm Village Wine & Tapas

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4 Bedrooms | 4 Bathrooms | 4,333 sq. ft. | \$2,986,000 Step inside 3255 Old Barn Road West and experience a completely updated one and a half story home that is perfect for entertaining family and friends. With over 4300 square feet of design this 4-bedroom 4 bath coastal contemporary is light and spacious, with an open floor plan that connects the large kitchen, dining and great room. This energy efficient home has solar energy that converts sunlight into electricity that powers the home.

that converts sunlight into electricity that powers the home. Spectacular water to golf views of the 3rd hole of the Sawgrass South Course awaits you from your private oasis in a country club setting. Sawgrass Country Club, a private member owned club, is uniquely situated in an oceanfront gated community, with private deeded beach access, in the heart of Ponte Vedra Beach. Walk to the beach, watch waves roll in across the shore and enjoy the beauty and mystique of the charming seaside neighborhood of Old Barn Island in Sawgrass!





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Tery Spataro is a creative innovator specializing in generative AI, with a journey that spans traditional art, digital design and groundbreaking AI-driven storytelling. Her work blends technology, art and human connection, inspiring others to explore new creative possibilities.

As told to Holly Tishfield

Tell me about yourself and your background.

I'm originally from Wolcott, a small town in Connecticut, but I've lived and created all over — from New York to Chicago to Boulder to Gilbert, Arizona, and now here in Ponte Vedra, Florida. I moved here because I wanted to be close to my family, nature, surrounded by beauty and peace, but also stay connected to a growing creative and tech-savvy community. It's the perfect place to reflect, dream big and bring those dreams to life.

Tell me about your artistic background. I understand your specialty is working with AI, but was it always?

Yes, my specialty now is generative AI, but not in the beginning! My journey started with traditional art.

My initial studies started at Paier College of Art then I went to Albertus Magnus College to get my BFA in the '80s. I have an uncompleted MFA from Pratt Institute. I built a career in creative communications, design and innovation. I led creative strategy for some of the most recognized names on Madison Avenue and founded a digital agency in 1996. My team and I brought digital to many celebrated brands.

Over the years, I've worn a lot of hats — creative director, content strategist, storyteller, filmmaker, author — and then in 2020, I fell in love with AI. It felt like discovering a new brush or a new camera lens, only this one lets you paint with thought and possibility.

Being one of the early adopters brings me access to new and exciting innovations in generative AI. Now, I'm in several creator programs, including Luma Labs Dream Machine and Higgsfield.

What got you interested in Al artwork?

Honestly, curiosity and a desire to push boundaries. I've always been intrigued by future-forward tools that can transform the way we tell stories. When I saw what generative AI could do, how it could translate abstract emotions and wild ideas into visual experiences, I knew I had to explore it.

My initiation started in 2020 when I was inspired by a demo Anne Spalter gave on using Playform, which was my introduction to GAN (generative adversarial network). I knew I had to try Playform and trained it on hundreds of my photographs and illustrations.

Several of the works from Studies in Color were auctioned at an event for Fostering Connections FL a couple of years ago held at the link. It wasn't just about the tech that intrigued me; it was about the



Tery Spataro as seen in an imaginative Al image.

emotional resonance it could help create.

Interestingly, long before getting involved with generative AI and transforming my digital skills, I met Ben Goertzel, Ph.D., in 2000 who really opened my eyes to AI beyond Issac Asimov's science fiction vision of AI and kept me eager to learn all aspects. This hunger helped me understand where we are today with generative AI.

Tell me about your use of Al and the successes you've had with it.

I use generative AI to create everything from experimental films and music, visual novels, design patterns for physical objects and several commercial projects.

Most notably, I worked on a project through Iron Mountain for their client National Geographic to use AI to imagine what 50 million years in the past looked like. My film "Beyond Darkness" — created with generative AI — was premiered here in Ponte Vedra at the link Nocatee. It was accepted into several film festivals and even received awards for creativity and innovation.

I've published books; my most recent titled "Strange Place" is an epic cosmic science fiction picture book about elder women living at the edge of the universe. My book "Beyond Darkness and Tales from Space," demonstrates how AI brought my surreal worlds to life in ways traditional tools couldn't. I also have a channel on Rad TV called Cosmic Cats & Flying Cupcakes (productions); it's as wild and whimsical as it sounds!

Tell me how you've overcome any challenges with your work.

Every new technology comes with

a learning curve. In the beginning, I struggled with the generative AI tools not always doing what I envisioned, but I treated each hiccup like an invitation to experiment. I've also had to navigate skepticism about AI art; some people still think it's cold or impersonal, but I believe it's just another medium, and like any medium, it's the heart behind the work that matters.

What is your favorite part about the kind of work that you do? What keeps you interested?

My favorite part is the alchemy, that magical moment when an idea takes form in an unexpected way. The collaboration with large language and diffusion models (generative AI's) constantly surprises me. It keeps me curious and my imagination flowing. It also gives me the ability to blend disciplines - art, film, music, cosmic science fiction, storytelling - and that fusion is where I feel most alive. I learned so much from creating "Beyond Darkness," which inspired me to create a series of films exploring consciousness through surrealism as seen in "White Out," which debuted at the Mesa Contemporary Art Museum in March.

You mentioned wanting to connect with the community and educate them on the use of generative AI. How are you working to accomplish this connection?

Absolutely. I'm thrilled to be involved with Circle of Creation, founded by Gurpreet Misra and held at the link. It's a monthly in-person event that hosts talks and workshops where the theme is emotional intelligence and AI. I gave a talk Credit: Tery Spataro

about my creative journey from traditional to digital to generative AI. I am deeply grateful to the link, which has given me many opportunities to share my stories and creativity.

I also gave a six-week course on generative AI art at the Council on Aging, which was very gratifying. It was especially heartwarming to give seniors with dexterity problems a creative outlet. The art they created was amazing!

I was a guest speaker, talking on "The Future in Art," at First Coast Cultural Center. I share a lot online — through social media and videos — offering prompts, behind-the-scenes looks and encouragement for others to explore.

Mondays through Fridays you can find me on "AI Art Today," an X space with an incredible group who share experiences with creating with AI. My goal is to demystify AI and show that anyone with imagination can create with it. I am in talks with the link to create an AI club.

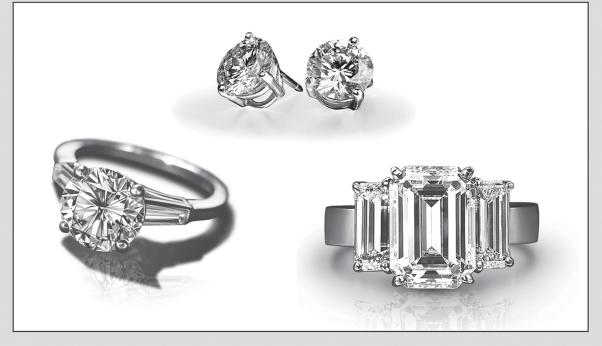
Is there anything you're looking forward to this year in terms of your art?

So much! I'm preparing to speak at NFT.NYC this June and working on the second volume of "Laundrygate" called "Laundrygate: The Verse" and I'm finishing up the third episode of the "Tales from Space" series, the Cosmic Cats and Flying Cupcakes productions on Rad TV.

I'm also working on a couple of commercial pieces and exploring new collaborations in immersive storytelling and planning a few experimental video art pieces using generative AI and live sound design.

The future of creativity is wide open and I can't wait to keep evolving with it!

BIG DIAMOND SALE 2025



Now through May 24th Now is the time to purchase a quality diamond of a carat of more!

Underwood's has available a tremendous selection of diamonds, one carat and larger, on consignment from our primary diamond source. Since we have no cost invested

in these diamonds, we are able to sell them at our lowest prices of the year,

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Send us your nominations for Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra

2025

of Ponte Vedra

THERECORDER

The Recorder has launched its seventh annual Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra contest, covering ZIP codes 32082 and 32081. Starting Friday,

May 16, readers have the chance to nominate their favorite businesses, professional services, organizations and more in multiple

categories online. From best new business to best charity event, best real estate agent to best personal trainer and best seafood to best boutique, the categories run the gamut and are sure to include your favorite things.

Nominations can be made through June 10 on the website at pontevedrarecorder.com/ bestof2025.

Anyone can nominate a business or person, and there is no limit to the number of nominations each person can submit.

Online voting will begin once nominations are complete and will run June 20 to July 17. The nominees who receive the most votes will be named 2025 Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra.

Nominations and voting are completely free and open to the public.

The Best Of platform on The Recorder's website will feature lists of nominees in an easy-to-use format. Nominees can participate in advertising packages that promote their entry by expanding their listing to feature ad-

ditional details on the business. Winners will receive a free certificate and a Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra window cling. Each winner will also be listed in our

cling. Each winner will also be listed in our Best of the Best of Ponte Vedra special section and on the winner's website.

Winners will be notified by Ponte Vedra Recorder staff at the end of July.

For more information or to find out how to get your nominated business or product involved in promotions that will be going on throughout the contest cycle, contact publisher Susan Griffin by emailing susan@ pontevedrarecorder.com.

Giving Day proves its worth to nonprofits

Local residents stepped up to contribute to worthy causes during the recent St. Augustine Giving Day.

The United Way of St. Johns County reported its most successful Giving Day ever, with donations and a matching gift generating \$13,194.

These contributions support programs that strengthen families, empower students, care for seniors and build resilience throughout St. Johns and Putnam counties.

The United Way of St. Johns County expressed its gratitude to donors, but also the sponsors for this year's Giving Day.

Of course, the need for support is ongoing. People can donate anytime to unitedway-sjc.org/ donate.

Meanwhile, Habitat for Humanity of St. Augustine/St. Johns County reports that it raised \$29,635. It also expressed its gratitude to donors and those offering matching funds.

Anyone still wishing to donate to Habitat St. Johns can do so at habitatstjohns.org/donate.

Donations help Habitat St. Johns build homes.

St. Augustine Giving Day 2025 was a 24-hour online giving event designed to empower people to give back to their communities by supporting local nonprofits. This event helps to build awareness and support for these organizations.

This year, an estimated \$700,000 was raised through 2,315 donors with funds benefitting 74 nonprofit organizations.

This year's event was made possible through a partnership hosted by the John 1:16 Foundation and sponsored by Endless Summer Realty and The Focus Group.



Tell hemorrhoids to butt out.

It's a common condition nobody wants to talk about. For some people, hemorrhoids have no symptoms, while others who suffer may be too embarrassed to seek treatment.

You're not alone if you're experiencing annoying hemorrhoid symptoms. About one in 20 Americans will experience symptoms at some point.

When is it time to see a doctor?

If you're experiencing the following symptoms, it may be time to make an appointment with your doctor:

Itching or irritationPain or discomfort

h Bantist Health 2024

- SwellingBleeding
- Blood in stools

The good news is that you don't have to live this way. The Hemorrhoid Clinic at Baptist Beaches has nonsurgical and surgical options, including outpatient solutions, to provide the relief you deserve.





Baptist Medical Center Beaches 1350 13th Avenue South Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250

COMMUNITY NEWS 9

Photos by Susan Griffin

St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival delights attendees

The fifth annual St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival, presented by Publix, was held May 7-11. The event is a showcase of culinary, beverage and culture that highlights celebrity guest chefs, local chefs, wines, beers and spirits from around the globe. Highlights included River Walk Tastings at San Sebastian Winery; Harvest Awards & Tastings at Hyatt Place, Vilano Beach/ St. Augustine; Smoke on the Walk, the Grand Tasting and the Mother's Day Jazz Brunch at Ancient City Farmstead.

Harvest Awards & Tastings winners were:

• Best Seafood: Peruvian Causa Acevichada by MAMA LLAMA Peruvian Catering

• Best Shellfish: First Coast Shrimp Ceviche by This Chick Can Cook/Rosaria Cammarata

• Best Fish: Poke Tuna Tacos by Pesca Rooftop

• Best Meat: Orange Blossom Honey Datil Peppered Bahn Mi Slider by Meehan's Irish Pub &

Seafood House

• Best Dessert: Chocolate Pistachio Tart by 1912 Ocean Bar & Rooftop

• Best Vegetarian: Local Mushroom Tartlet by Chez L'amour

• Overall: Poke Nachos with Tuna by The Reef Restaurant

The official winners of the St. Augustine Food + Wine Fest People's Choice Harvest Awards:

• Best Seafood: @thereef904

• Best Shellfish: @chefjeff2u

• Best Fish: @meehansirishpub • Best Meat: @coastal catch

charleston • Best Dessert: @crepecrazysta

• Best BBQ: @heartandsoulfood-

truck • Best Vegetarian: (tie) @first-

coasttech and @sunshinepanipurituktukcompany

Best Food Truck: @sautekingz

• Overall: @smokinspencersq • Best Wine: @renegadelemon-

adewine • Best Spirit: @rivuletliqueur

Best Beer: @congareeandpenn

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Contributed photo People's Choice Harvest Award winners (not all winners were present for the photo).





Harvest Awards & Tasting winners









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Photos provided by Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nurserv

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

"He that plants trees loves others besides himself." — Thomas Fuller



By Kathy Esfahani

A wonderful perk to living in Northeast Florida is the ability to grow citrus trees in your own backyard! A citrus tree allows you the fun of harvesting

Kathy Esfahani

fresh fruit and also gives off a delightful, sweet scent. Although you will need to protect your citrus trees during freezing temperatures, meyer lemon, Persian lime and various orange trees grow well in our area.

Citrus trees prefer areas of full sun with well-drained soil. Be sure the location you choose for your tree receives a minimum of six hours of sunlight! When planting, dig the hole a little larger than the size of your tree's container and add compost for nutrients. Once the tree is in the ground, the top of the root ball should be even with or slightly above ground level. The new tree needs regular water, particularly as it becomes established, but be sure to allow the soil to dry out between watering! It is also not necessary to add mulch or topsoil around your tree as they can keep the soil too wet.

As your citrus tree grows, it is important to add fertilizer on a regular basis. Look for a fertilizer specifically made for citrus trees and follow the provided instructions. Apply fertilizer approximately a month after planting and then regularly throughout the growing season. Add the fertilizer evenly under the canopy of the tree and be careful that it does not pile up against the trunk.

When fruit is ready to harvest, twist and pull gently to remove it from the tree. Allow the fruit to fully ripen while still on the tree as citrus does not continue to ripen once harvested. With this in mind, remove and taste a fruit to be sure it is ripe before harvesting the whole tree.



Citrus trees with new fruit

You can also leave ripe citrus on the tree until you are ready to eat it; this fruit will continue to get sweeter on the tree and extend the time you get to harvest and enjoy!

Citrus trees are available in full size and dwarf varieties. They grow well in a landscape, but you can also plant smaller trees in containers. If you have limited space but want more than one type of citrus, consider a cocktail citrus tree. These trees are grafted to produce three to five types of fruit on a single tree and can include lemons, limes, oranges



Angelonia

and grapefruits. Some cocktail trees can produce different types of fruit each year. Now that warmer weather is here to stay, visit us at the nursery to select the perfect citrus tree to add to your landscape!

Flower of the Week: Angelonia

Please email Kathy at kathys.creative. gardens@gmail.com for any questions or gardening tips you would like to see in the future. For more information and ideas, visit the nursery in Ponte Vedra Beach! Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery, 196 N. Roscoe Blvd. 904-655-7373

Nominations begin May 16



The Ponte Vedra Recorder, celebrating 56 years of community news excellence, will launch our seventh annual BEST OF THE BEST of Ponte Vedra, 32081 & 32082.

YOU, our valued readers, will have the chance to nominate your favorite businesses in various categories online. Online voting begins Friday, June 20 after nominations are complete.

Don't miss this opportunity... the last day to nominate is Thursday, June 19th!

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GUEST COLUMN

What summer dog training looks like in Northeast Florida

By Kate Godfrey, ABCDT

Summer on the First Coast brings endless outdoor opportunities for you and your dog — but with the sun and scenery come new challenges. At Comprehensive Canine Training, we tailor our programs to match the season, the environment and your dog's unique needs.

Here's what dog training looks like in this area during the summer months and how you can make the most of it with your dog.

1. Training Around the Heat

With summer temperatures often hitting the 90s (plus humidity) locally, we like to get creative about how and when we train or play with our dogs. Shade is your friend, and while it does not reduce the temperature, it can help you and your dog feel 10-15 degrees cooler.

Providing your dog with a baby pool, sprinkler, access to playing in the ocean or river are great ways to provide enrichment while helping to keep them cool. You still don't want to have them in direct sunlight for extended periods of time.

Heat tips: Put the back of your hand on the cement for seven seconds, if it is too hot for your hand it is too hot for your dog. Limit the time you have your dog out in the heat of the day, a five-minute walk can accomplish so much. Avoid hard exercise during the heat of the day; heat stroke can happen in a matter of minutes. Devote time to training indoors, utilize air-conditioned businesses that welcome dogs. Ensure your dog has access to water.

Early morning adventures before 9 a.m. — keep water on hand; watermelon can also help dogs stay hydrated, frozen treats for hot days, mental stimulation through scent work and obedience or trick training.

2. Real-World, Distraction Rich Outdoor Training

The First Coast offers stunning, dogfriendly locations that double as great training grounds. Some personal favorites are as follows, but some dogs may not enjoy every environment and all that comes with it.

For example, a farmer's market may not be your dog's cup of tea if they don't like tight crowds or dogs in their faces. It is an unfortunate reality that some people do not understand dog etiquette and will allow their dog to rush up to your dog ... for this reason you may time visits to the farmer's market first thing before it gets busy.

- Fort Caroline National Monument
- Kingsley Plantation
- Tide Views Preserve
- Dutton Island PreserveGuana State Park
- Cradle Creek
- Beaches Farmer's MarketRiverside Arts Market
- Walks along the beach and rivers
- Hardware stores that welcome dogs

(please do not masquerade your pet dog as a service dog to take them into stores ... enough said)

These spots are ideal for reinforcing leash skills, recall and calm behavior in the presence of distractions like wildlife, other dogs, bicycles, people, joggers and boats.

3. Handling kids and canines during the summer months

School's out and the kids are home, providing the opportunity for bonding and training.

When it comes to kids and canines, safety is at the forefront. Do not leave young children and dogs unattended, accidents can happen in a matter of seconds, and you will not know what really happened.

Please remember that your dog is not

meant to tolerate being constantly bothered by kids. In fact, when I was a kid, we were told, "Leave the dog alone or you're going to get bit." What people expect dogs to tolerate these days was unheard just 20 years ago. Please use common sense, teach your kids how to behave around dogs, and set them both up for success.

Nap time/quiet time is not just for kids. Our dogs need time to decompress, especially when the house is bustling and busy during the summer months. Utilize playpens, crates and baby gates to separate dogs and kids when you cannot supervise.

Reinforce your dog for the behavior you like and teach them how to behave in the house with kids. This may mean you have the dog on a leash and are in training mode, maybe you allocate time to ensure the dog has burned off some energy, and setting up a routine that is enjoyable for both the dog and kids.

4. Socialization opportunities

Summer is full of distractions: kids playing, outdoor grilling, other dogs, wildlife and lots of sounds. Use all this to your advantage as training opportunities. Work with your dog on ignoring distrac-

TRAINING continues on Page 12



Teach the dog. Train the human.

At Comprehensive Canine Training (CTT), we create custom training plans to achieve lasting results. We look at **why** the dog is engaging in a behavior, what motivates the dog, safety, and find realistic solutions.

Dog training is a process that takes time, and CTT brings the patience and consistency necessary to see results. We won't just teach your dog commands – we'll help you understand how to reinforce those behaviors at home, ensuring lasting results that improve both your dog's behavior and your relationship.

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Kate Godfrey, ABCDT

Owner, Comprehensive Canine Training, LLC AKC Canine Good Citizen Evaluator Member: IACP comprehensivecaninetraining@gmail.com

www.comprehensivecaninetraining.com





Barbara Wedow and Sharon Dowe from Angelwood's Board of Directors.



Guests enjoying the trunk show.

Trunk show

Continued from 1

nization dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with developmental differences. The organization provides support to hundreds of people in the community through residential group homes, respite services, summer day camps, holiday kids camps, adult day training programs, supported employment programs and behavior services.

Since 1993, Angelwood's mission of care has been to meet the needs of the community, a sentiment that aligns with Underwood Jeweler's commitment to community involvement.

"We're very fortunate to have the support of organizations like Underwood," said Ann Marie Beaty, develop-



A portion of Underwood Jewelers' sales benefited Angelwood's mission during the trunk show.

ment director at Angelwood. "We value this partnership." Angelwood and Underwood Jewelers have enjoyed an enduring partnership for almost a decade now. This partnership has involved multiple trunk shows, each of which has been an opportunity to support funds and awareness for Angelwood's mission.

Underwood Jewelers also sponsored an exclusive prize drawing to further support Angelwood's mission. Guests could purchase tickets for a chance to win a square pendant necklace from Penny Preville or a Luna Magnetic bracelet from Platinum Born. The proceeds from ticket sales will contribute to Angelwood's efforts to empower families and individuals in need. The drawing winner is currently planned for Aug. 16 at Angelwood's Celebration Event.

"Underwood Jewelers has been helping us for years, and it really helps our programs," said Diane Tuttle, Angelwood CEO. "We care for children and adults living with developmental differences, and we really rely on our community to help us do that."

"Viva Mose," a common refrain among Fort Mose's inhabitants, surrounded the park grounds.

Ellis, who was among the original founders of the Fort Mose Historical Society in 1996, was part of a brief speaking program that also included Hatcher, Florida State Parks Foundation Board President Kathleen Brennan, Dr. Kathleen Deagan and Dr. Jane Landers.

Deagan and Landers were instrumental in the discovery and exploration of the Fort Mose site in the 1980s and are among the world's preeminent Fort Mose experts.

At the conclusion of the speaking program, several members of the Fort Mose Historical Society, in full militia attire, performed a ceremonial muster and cannon firing. Guests then participated in a ribbon-cutting photo opportunity and enjoyed a ranger-led tour of the new fort.

"This is one of the proudest days in the Florida State Parks Foundation's 30-plus-year history," Brennan said. "To have played a part in a project of such historical and cultural significance, and then to celebrate it surrounded by our cherished partners, is truly an honor for us all."

"Our hope is that, in the years to come, Fort Mose will inspire countless visitors from around the world the same way it has inspired us here today."

Fort Mose

Continued from 1

on this project 30 years ago. But what really matters today is the tribute and testament to the people who risked their lives to come here in the 1700s. Having this new fort in place means that their stories will be told forever."

"This is a truly historic moment for our state, our nation and everyone who believes in the power of freedom," added Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation, which spearheaded fundraising efforts. "To be a part of something like this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we are so grateful to all the partners who believed in Fort Mose and helped make this day happen."

The reconstructed fort stands at more than 39 feet tall and is surrounded by a historically accurate moat and landscaping. The final cost for the project was \$3.2 million and was funded from public and private sources.

"Our team and partners have been working on this project for many years, and it's just amazing to see it finally complete," Florida State Parks Director Chuck Hatcher said. "This new fort involves every aspect of our mission, which



The ribbon is cut for the official opening of the completed 1738 Fort Mose reconstruction.

is to provide resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting and restoring natural and cultural resources. Our park staff, design and construction team and interpretive team are all the very best at what they do, and they all had a big hand in bringing this project to life."

During Friday morning's ceremony, visitors were greeted by an array of 1700s-era Spanish flags lining new walkways that lead to the fort structure. Banners and signage reading

Training

tions, teach "leave it" recall, practice loose leash walking and make yourself the most rewarding thing in the environment.

Again, some dogs may not enjoy a barbecue or kid's birthday party. Tailor your dog's outings for things they will enjoy and advocate for your dog. Just because you have your dog in public does not mean you need to allow everyone to pet your dog. Some dogs are social butterflies while others would rather be left alone.

5. Maintaining structure over the summer

Dogs need structure and a leader. Failure to provide dogs with structure and leadership can result in a myriad of issues. Unsupervised time, overstimulation and too much freedom can lead to a variety of undesirable behaviors.

So, how can you provide your dog with structure during the summer months?

Take a little time each day to work on training, decide on three to five things that will be non-negotiable, such as the dog sitting until released to go through a door, ensure your dog gets down time each day and address issues when they arise.

Preventing bad habits before they start

is ideal. One way to do this is to implement training during routine activities such as "place" while you unload the dishwasher or fold laundry, sit before going through the door, and wait until released to food.

Kate Godfrey is owner of Comprehensive Canine Training, LLC, and an AKC Canine Good Citizen Evaluator.

Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach presents scholarship

The Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach recently presented its Service Above Self scholarship to University of North Florida student Michayla Dunn. The scholarship is presented each year to a UNF student who plans to pursue a career in nonprofit administration or public service. Pictured from left: Ponte Vedra Beach Rotary Foundation Chair Billy Wagner, scholarship recipient Michayla Dunn and Club President Beverly Flanagan.



\$125K in scholarships awarded to city youth

The MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation (MWYF) awarded \$125,000 in higher education scholarships to their students in grades five through 12 during their annual Scholarship Award Ceremony. The event honored the students' academic dedication, resilience, sportsmanship and ambition to pursue brighter futures for themselves.

For many of the recipients, the scholarships mark a pivotal step toward becoming the first in their families to attend higher education. MWYF serves youth living in some of Jacksonville's most historically underserved neighborhoods, specifically the 32209 area code, and offers comprehensive afterschool and summer programming that integrates academic support, life skills development, mentoring and tennis development.

"We're helping to break generational cycles of poverty by equipping young people with the tools, encouragement and opportunities they need to succeed," said MaliVai Washington, MWYF founder. "Thanks to our supporters, our youth can pursue their dreams and hopefully give back to the very community that lifted them up." Each scholarship recipient completed a competitive application process that included an essay, submission of references and a panel interview. The scholarships are funded by generous organizations, family foundations and individual donors of MWYF. The scholarships can be used toward any form of higher education, including college, trade schools, certificate programs or professional training post high school graduation.

Past recipients have gone on to graduate from colleges and universities, complete vocational programs or employment training to return to their communities as contributing members of society, proving that with opportunity and support, every child has the power to rise. Over the foundation's 29 years of programming, more than \$2 million has been awarded in scholarships.

The Scholarship Award Ceremony was attended by MWYF staff, families, donors and community partners, all gathering to recognize the promise of Jacksonville's next generation of leaders.



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Pictured from left, Janet Wilson, Pat Winters, Dee Humphries, Judi Branch, Janice Machin, Gayle Banks, Laura Todd Haney, Mary Kirk, Jacquelyn Bates, Donna Hefner, Liz Moore, Corinne Martin, Janet Lithgow, Gretchen Alter, Janice Hayden, Betty Lemons, Judy Flynn and Pam Korchun.

Front row, sitting: Nancy Robbins, president; Bunny O'Neill, speaker; and Henrietta Herzog, hostess.



"Queen" Bunny O'Neill and "King" Al Sherlock

Contributed photos

The legacy of Lady Di's dress

Speaker describes how a garment bought at auction changed her life

By Susan D. Brandenburg

Bunny O'Neill knew she had a small window of opportunity to speak to Lady Diana, Princess of Wales, and she was determined to make the most of it.

"We were at Christie's Auction in June 1997," recalled O'Neill. "Lady Di was selling her dresses for charity, and, despite Henry Kissinger and Barbara Walters hovering over her constantly, the princess made it a point to meet all of us potential buyers."

When O'Neill's moment with Lady Diana occurred, she took a deep breath and said, "Lady Diana, you have never made a mistake." The princess was obviously taken aback. She responded, with her shy smile, and said, "Oh, I've made a few."

O'Neill was inspired to attend the Christie's auction after heading up a charity fashion auction at Winthropt Court Retirement Home in Rome, Georgia, where her mother, Eloise Hart Temple, resided.

"The auction was so much fun and raised so much money for Mom's alma mater, Shorter College, that I decided to look into other charity auctions," said O'Neill.

As guest speaker for The Questers at Vicar's Landing on April 28, O'Neill mesmerized her audience with story after story relating to her \$28,000 purchase of Lady Diana's exquisite white lace coat dress, and how that purchase literally changed her life.

"We're so glad Bunny decided to come out of retirement and give us her talk," said Questers president Nancy Robbins. "We loved every minute of it!"

The Questers, an international nonprofit organization that keeps history alive through preservation, restoration and education, has an active group at Vicar's Landing, and certainly got a delicious taste of history in O'Neill's presentation.

Following the tragic death of Lady Diana in August of 1997, Ponte Vedra



Bunny O'Neill and Princess Diana chat at Christie's Auction in 1997.

resident Bunny O'Neill began to display the dress for charitable events and has subsequently raised thousands of dollars for good causes around the world. At one 1999 local charitable event, "An evening of royal elegance," on behalf of the BEAM (Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry) "Smile Express" dental program, O'Neill recruited several other Lady Diana dress owners and raised more than \$20,000 by showing six dresses.

"With Diana's love for children especially underserved children — I think she would have been just thrilled with how Bunny used her dress," recalled Karen Wolfson, who initiated the dental program and chaired the event in 1999.

Finding that she was suddenly in great demand by charities across the globe, O'Neill traveled the world as a guest lecturer on Cunard Lines QE2, was interviewed by the BBC, Dan Rather and MTV, was invited to attend a benefit in Richmond, Virginia, by movie director Lord Richard Attenborough, and more.

"My 15 minutes of fame has gone on and on," said O'Neill back in 1999, when she was the featured speaker at BEAM's Night of Royal Elegance.

Following her fascinating talk, which was full of surprises that included O'Neill impulsively attending the trials of Bernie Madoff and O.J. Simpson and making a list of her favorite movies for distribution to the Questers, her friends gave the presenter a nice surprise.

Dressed in full royal regalia, "King" Al Sherlock of Vicars Landing crowned O'Neill "Queen" and gave her a beautiful bouquet of red roses. It was, indeed, a morning of royal elegance.

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Program helps families keep healthy after NICU

For families with newborns in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), life is often defined by uncertainty, fear and an all-consuming devotion to survival and healing.

But what happens after the NICU journey ends? For many, returning home presents a whole new set of challenges.

To assist with this transition, I See You NICU and Florence Family Cleaning Service created the program, "Cleaning in Action."

"Cleaning in Action" provides free, professional deep cleaning services to families whose newborns have spent time in the NICU, helping them return home to a clean, safe and health-conscious environment. These services are available to families in preparation for their NICU graduate's homecoming — an emotional milestone that deserves to be met with peace, not pressure.

"At a time when families are already navigating medical trauma, emotional exhaustion and the complexities of post-NICU life, even everyday tasks like cleaning can become overwhelming," said Jennifer Sesniak, founder of I See You NICU and an NICU mom herself. "This program is about showing up for families the way they deserve — to make home a sanctuary, not another source of stress."

Sesniak's son, born prematurely at just 2 pounds 8 ounces, spent 81 days in the NICU. Her own experiences with postpartum anxiety, depression and PTSD shaped her deep understanding of what NICU families endure, during and after their hospital stay. That empathy is at the heart of I See You NICU, a nonprofit organization created to support families through the NICU, graduation and life as parents beyond together.



Contributed photo

There are many reasons why a clean home is important to NICU families and patients. Newborns leaving the NICU often have fragile immune systems. Dust, allergens and environmental bacteria can pose serious health threats. Studies show that premature infants and those with respiratory complications are especially vulnerable to household pathogens. "Cleaning in Action" ensures that families return to a home environment that promotes healing — not risk.

"Families shouldn't have to choose between tending to their newborn's needs and maintaining a safe home," said Daniella Florence, owner of Florence Family Cleaning Services. "We want parents to walk through the front door knowing they can breathe — literally and emotionally. That is the real gift behind this program."

"Cleaning in Action" is made possible through community donations and sponsors. Every dollar raised directly contributes to services that change lives.

Ways to support the program:

• Sponsor a family: Fully or partially fund cleaning services for one or more NICU families.

• Corporate partnerships: Businesses can pledge a set amount to support multiple families or underwrite the program's operational costs.

• Community donations: Individual gifts are pooled to extend the program's reach and ensure that no family is turned away.

Go to iseeyounicu.org/donate to learn more.

FUN FUNDRAISER

"Santa's Summer Luau" benefitting The Playful Family and I See You NICU will be held 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. July 19 at The Playful Family, 616 S.R. 12 North, Unit 12, Fruit Cove.

There will be "summer Santa pics," games, face painting, contests and more.

Tickets are on sale at theplayfulfamily.org/specialevents. They are \$25 per child and \$5 per adult. Luau attire is encouraged!





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Pine Island Academy sees big wins at Odyssey Of The Mind competition

Pine Island Academy, located in St. Augustine, is celebrating a record-breaking showing at the Florida Odyssey of the Mind State Finals, held earlier this month at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. All six of the school's participating teams delivered exceptional performances — and for the first time in Pine Island history, three teams are advancing to the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals, taking place May 21-24 at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

Among the three advancing teams, two earned first place finishes and one placed second, securing invitations to compete alongside top student teams from more than 20 countries in a global celebration of creativity, critical thinking, and student-driven problem-solving.

First Place – Division II, Problem 5: AstronOMical Odyssey!

This team wowed judges with a comedic, spacethemed performance set in a Candyland-inspired galaxy. Their creative set and costumes were made from Sour Patch Kids and M&M's wrappers, Behr paint samples, PVC piping, and materials sourced from Home Depot, Lowes and students' homes. The imaginative storyline, meteor twist and entirely student-built elements earned them first place and a trip to World Finals.

First Place – Division II, Problem 2: Mech-Animal Sidekick

Another team claimed first place for designing and programming a fully functioning dinosaur robot sidekick. Their performance combined engineering ingenuity with engaging storytelling and earned high marks for both creativity and technical execution.

Second Place – Division II, Problem 1: The OM-Mazing Race



The Pine Island Academy Odyssey of the Mind State 2025 Champions

Contributed photo

This team earned second place with their original theme, "Fractured Fairytale Car." They reimagined Cinderella's carriage as a beach-ready ride, crafted from Kroger plastic bags, pool noodles and other repurposed materials. The whimsical, coastal twist on a classic tale impressed the judges and secured their spot at the World Finals.

All six Pine Island Academy teams invested countless hours into preparing for the state competition. Whether designing technical devices, writing original scripts or creating imaginative characters and props, every team showed outstanding creativity, collaboration and commitment to the Odyssey of the Mind process.

"This is the result of months of dedication and imaginative problem-solving from every single student involved," said Shanon Cally, Pine Island Academy's Odyssey of the Mind coordinator. "Whether they're heading to World Finals or just wrapping up an incredible season, every team member should be extremely proud of what they've accomplished."

Odyssey of the Mind is an international program that encourages student-driven, STEAM-based solutions to long-term challenges, blending science, engineering, art and performance.

Learn more at odysseyofthemind.com.





St. Johns Housing Partnership, Patriot Place honored at Green Awards Banquet

The Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC), the state's leading certifier of green residential and commercial construction and local governments, recognized St. Johns Housing Partnership (SJHP) and Patriot Place in St. Augustine as a winner at the 2024 Annual Green Achievement Awards.

Patriot Place comprises six new, lowincome housing units for at-risk and homeless veterans in St. Johns County and was the highest scoring multifamily home. SJHP's Gina Birmingham accepted the award from FGBC President Ralph Locke.

Points are awarded by FGBC for each of the individual green certifying levels — bronze, silver, gold and platinum. Numerical points were given for selecting and integrating individual environmentally friendly green products, best practices and sustainable techniques from a menu of available green options.

"Congratulations to the St. Johns Housing Partnership," noted Locke. "The awards celebrate the most innovative projects and FGBC members. We also celebrate those who are making a signifi-



SJHP's Gina Birmingham accepted the award from FGBC President Ralph Locke.

cant difference to our future: our state's green leaders."

Patriot Place, at 79 Masters Drive in St. Augustine, is a collaboration between MountainStar Partners, a real estate investor and developer; the St. Johns Housing Partnership and St. Johns County to address the county's critical need for housing for at-risk and homeless veterans. Patriot Place was constructed by World Island Builders and designed by Architect Bryan McCloskey. The Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC) certified Patriot Place as a "Florida Green" facility. Bo Strange and Lovely Loo and the Snodgrass Family Foundation donated additional funds, time and materials. Financial partner Ameris Bank financed the construction. Solar was donated by Everybody Solar, JinkoSolar and Synergy Solar.

Winners were honored by FGBC for Builder of the Year — Most Multifamily Homes Certified, Most Single Homes Certified, Builder Highest Multi-Family Scoring Home and Highest Scoring Single-Family Home, Highest Scoring Commercial Project, Highest Scoring High Rise Residential Project, Highest Scoring Local Government, County and City; Highest Scoring Single-Family and Multi-Family Home, Volunteer of the Year, Certifying Agent of the Year and Green Champion.

For more information, go to sjhp.org or contact the St. Johns Housing Partnership at 904-824-0902 or info@sjhp.org.

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Landrum celebrates Students of the Month

Landrum Middle School continues its "Students of the Month" program, honoring students who demonstrate exceptional character, resilience, academic performance and effort. For the month of March, the honorees are sixth grader Cora Kotek, seventh grader Sadie Evans and eighth grader Andrew Delgado. Each student was nominated by their teachers and celebrated with a special lunch in Principal Troy Kasting's office, sponsored by Chick-fil-A at Marsh Landing Parkway.

Here, Kasting and the students enjoy lunch in his office as part of the March "Students of the Month" celebration.

Contributed photos



Bass tournament this weekend

The 36th Annual Wolfson Children's Hospital Bass Tournament will include an opportunity to enter a drawing for a 2025 Bullet bass boat.

The event, presented by Miller Electric and W.W. Gay Mechanical Contractors, Inc., benefits Wolfson Children's Terry Heart Institute.

Featured events (all at Palatka, Florida, City Docks):

• Thursday, May 15: Lads & Lasses Tournament (one male, one female boater).

• Friday, May 16: VIP & Friends Tournament (sponsor boats pre-fish).

• Saturday, May 17: 36th Annual Wolfson Children's Hospital Bass Tournament.

In-person registrations will take place at the Palatka City Docks from 4 a.m. to safe light the mornings of Thursday, May 15, and Friday, May 16, and from 3 a.m. to safe light on Saturday, May 17. Boats launch at safe light. The Palatka City Docks are located at 319 River St., Palatka. Additional tournament support provided by Facility Automation Solutions.

Tournament schedule:

• Thursday, May 15: Weigh-in begins at 3 p.m. Lads & Lasses winners announced.

• Friday, May 16: Weigh-in begins at 3 p.m. VIP & Friends winners announced.

• Saturday, May 17: Weigh-in begins at 3 p.m. Tournament winners announced.

Weigh-ins continue in 10-minute increments, staggered by boat number. After weigh-in, winners are brought to the stage for awards and cash prizes.

The highlights:

• More than \$40,000 in cash prizes will be awarded to competitors from across the Southeast.

• For a suggested donation of \$20, anyone may enter a drawing for a new Bullet Boat model 21SDC with a trailer, courtesy of Bullet Boats and Mercury.

• All proceeds from the drawing will help fund new technology for the C. Herman and Mary Virginia Terry Heart Institute at Wolfson Children's Hospital.

• To enter the bass boat drawing or for information, go to WolfsonBassTournament.com.

• Now in its 36th year, the Wolfson Children's Bass Tournament is one of the largest and longest-running bass fishing tournaments in Florida.

• Since the first tournament in 1989, the event has raised more than \$7 million for Wolfson Children's.







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www.PonteVedraRecorder.com



Carri McGregor, left, and Philip John Kenny IV

Pictured from left: Amelia King, Carri McGregor and Ryan King Sweet Art Gallery celebrates first year



Pictured from left: Andre and Jennifer Williams, Carri McGregor, and Leeann and Joe Annotti.

Sweet Art Gallery welcomed members of the public Saturday, May 10, to a special event celebrating its first-year anniversary. The gallery, which is known for contemporary fine art, is located at 310 Front St., Ste. 875, Ponte Vedra Beach. Guests had an opportunity to see many high-end works of art while enjoying wine and hors d'oeuvres. Owner Dede Sweet and Gallery Director Carri Mc-Gregor opened the gallery in 2024. They have a sister gallery in Naples, Florida. Learn more about the gallery at thesweetartgallery.com. The phone number is 904-686-2787.



Photo by Shaun Ryar From left, Chandler Simonds, Carri McGregor and Barbara Simonds.

Benchmarks of Success

A look at major career developments in the area



Chris Ware joins NAI Hallmark

NAI Hallmark, the largest locally owned full-service commercial real estate brokerage and property management firm in Jack-

sonville, announces the firm's continued growth by expanding its team with the appointment of Chris Ware as senior associate.

A Jacksonville native. Ware attended

University. He began his career at Johnstone Supply, where he managed programs and pricing for 36 branches, spearheading operational initiatives and working closely with high-value clients. His experience in managing commercial assets and facilitating lease negotiations has provided him with an in-depth understanding of property operations and

> investment strategies. In his new role at NAI Hallmark, Ware will focus on property management, asset management and investment sales while also leveraging his background in industrial real estate.

The Bolles School before earning his

marketing degree from Florida State



MarineMax Jacksonville names general manager

MarineMax has announced the promotion of Jody Mitchell to general manager of the MarineMax Jacksonville store.

Mitchell brings more than 25 years of management experience in the automotive industry, where he developed a strong foundation in leadership, operations and customer service. In 2022, he joined MarineMax Jacksonville as the business manager, blending his professional expertise with a personal passion for boating and marine recreation.



Real estate business adds Susan Adams to team

Contributed photo

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty has announced the addition of Susan Adams to their team

Susan Adams

of dedicated real estate professionals. A seasoned marketing specialist with a deep expertise in social media and advertising, Adams joins the company with more than two decades of experience in Northeast Florida.

Adams earned her bachelor's degree in

GUEST COLUMN Paying down debt vs. investing

Written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors

Paying down debt is often difficult, and even more so in a challenging economic environment. You may be wondering which to tackle first - pay down your debt or invest for the future?

Balance is best

A balanced approach to wealth management serves both today's needs and tomorrow's goals. For some, that may mean paying off some debt today while simultaneously investing for the future.

Your own needs and circumstances will be unique. The following guidelines can help you evaluate alternatives and find an approach that fits your situation and goals.

Don't forget your emergency fund

In addition to paying down debt and settling on an investment strategy, make it a priority to set up an emergency reserve. Traditional "rules of thumb" suggest setting aside three to six months or more of living expenses in traditional savings or very short-term, highly liquid, low-volatility investments.

Your future first

When making decisions about debt and investing, be a long-term thinker. Consider "what position do I want to be in 10 or 20 years from now?" Then evaluate what actions today will be most effective in helping you achieve your long-term financial goals.



For example, if you have high-interest debt that is compounding, this could eventually become a serious impediment to reaching your long-term goals. In contrast, you might not be in a hurry to retire low-interest debt, if the potential return on long-term investing would be greater.

When making decisions about debt reduction vs. investing, keep in mind that the need to eventually pay off principal is certain, but investment returns are not. Investment performance will vary over time, and it's possible to experience losses as well as gains. At the same time, it is well known that investors who start earlier benefit from compounding and "time in the market."

If you have the opportunity to participate in a retirement plan at work, and your employer makes matching contributions, that could be a compelling reason to prioritize investing up to the amount that the employer will match.

Prioritize your debts

With your emergency fund and investment strategy in

place, you can begin deciding on a strategy for reducing your debts. But how do you decide which debts to pay down first?

Mathematically, it makes sense to focus on paying off high-interest debts like private student loans and credit card debt first. Federal student loans and mortgages might be lower priorities because their rates are often lower and their terms longer. Vehicle loans might fall somewhere in the middle. Tax considerations may also come into play.

An alternative approach is to start with the smallest debt first. It might be motivating to get a "quick win" by paying off a smaller debt before beginning to chip away at a larger one.

Once you pay off one debt, add that payment amount to a different debt payment amount to accelerate its pay off.

This article was written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors and provided courtesy of Ponte Vedra Wealth Management Group in Ponte Vedra Beach at 904-273-7918.

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Hospital team gets special emergency training

Advanced training at all four of Ascension St. Vincent's hospitals is better preparing its care teams for the next time local families have an emergency.

SEAL (Simulating Emergency Action for Life) Team Medical Director Dr. Jeffery Beard and Richard Vigil, BSN, RN, have led 700 health care professionals across 12 health care locations through training designed to familiarize them with emergency situations they may not see frequently.

"We get to practice, if you will, the emergency settings that we don't get to practice on a routine basis," said Beard. "So those practices become more muscle memory and helps them perform them successfully when the time comes and a true emergency arises."

The fully immersive training program utilizes incredibly lifelike pediatric mannequins, with a curriculum designed to keep providers' skills sharp while increasing their comfort with emergencies they may not encounter regularly.

The curriculum, which can be tailored to the skill level of the audience and their needs, covers advanced scenarios with a focus on early recognition of children in distressed states to avoid a full-code situation. These mannequins can simulate various physiological conditions, such as crying, eyes that open and close, pupils that dilate, variations in heart rate and respiratory function, and even seizures.

"When a child is critically ill, that's a scarv moment for every team member." said Dr. Kelvin Harold, an emergency department physician at Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside. "To have that extra training where you work with a team in a high-stress environment to take care of a high-stakes situation; that is an incredible opportunity to sharpen our sword to fight off illness."

As Ascension Florida expands its health care footprint across the region, SEAL training will ensure children and their families will continue to receive the safest, highest level of care and specialized expertise available.

The SEAL team plans to acquire two more high-fidelity mannequins that will expand their impact. Plans are underway to establish a dedicated simulation center within Studer Family Children's Hospital in Pensacola, an Ascension hospital where the team is based.



Baptist Health recognized as a top place to work in health care

Baptist Health has a long tradition of fostering a supportive, inclusive and empowering work environment for its 15,000-plus team members. In recognition of the health system's dedication to helping its workforce thrive, Becker's Hospital Review recently included Baptist Health on its list of "150 top places to work in health care" for 2025. It is one of only two health systems in Northeast Florida, and just seven in the state, to feature on the prestigious list.

The organizations named on the list were commended for fostering "outstanding workplace cultures" and for providing "opportunities for both personal and professional growth, inclusive and empowering work environments and resources that promote a healthy worklife balance." Becker's Hospital Review also recognized the positive impact these companies have on their communities through social responsibility initiatives.

"Companies are at their best when people are seen, supported and given opportunities to grow both personally and professionally," said Kate McCann, executive vice president and chief human resources officer of Baptist Health. "Creating a work environment where everyone has the chance to grow builds more than careers — it builds community and purpose."

As one of the largest private employers in the Jacksonville area, Baptist Health continues to expand its support for initiatives that promote team member wellbeing, focusing on career development, maintaining a healthy work-life balance and enhancing mental and physical health.

In recognition of this, in 2024, the health system was named a Blue Zones "approved worksite" by the global organization focused on wellness and longevity. Baptist Health was the first health system and largest employer in Northeast Florida to receive the designation.

At Baptist Health, team members have access to many health, wellness and ca-

reer development programs, including: • Wellness Resources: Through the Healthy For Life program, team members gain access to wellness coaches, health-

gain access to werness coaches, healthfocused incentives and tools that encourage healthy lifestyle choices.
Employee Resource Groups: To build community and strengthen bonds across the organization, team members

across the organization, team members lead 10 interest-based groups that encourage collaboration, engagement and a sense of belonging.

• Tuition Support Program: The Learning Education and Assistance Program (LEAP) provides financial support for team members pursuing higher education or professional certifications, helping them advance in their careers and expand their capabilities.

• Career Growth Programs: Baptist Health offers a range of educational and development opportunities designed to create an adaptable workforce for the region. These educational pathways are tailored to meet current demands and prepare for the future. Initiatives include: the ExCEL Clinical Ladder program, which empowers direct care team members to pursue opportunities for advancement while enhancing the quality of patient care and outcomes; the Baptist Health Clinical School, which is licensed by the state and offers a Nurse Assistant Training Program; degree and accreditation programs through relationships with Jacksonville University, the University of North Florida and others; and many more.

• Volunteering Opportunities: Team members who are passionate about giving back to the community are matched with meaningful volunteer opportunities across the region. Programs like the Tipping the Scale high school mentoring program and the Pie in the Sky Community Alliance, which fights senior hunger, allow team members to make a difference while sharing their time, expertise and

Ponte Vedra Beach. Broker/Manager Erin

Spalding can be reached at 904-285-1800,

com and floridanetworkrealtycareers.com.

Erin.Spalding@FloridaNetworkRealty.

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— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

Benchmarks

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communication from The University of North Florida and has spent years honing her skills in marketing, always with a keen focus on connecting businesses to their communities. With her background, she is eager to bring a fresh, dynamic perspective to the real estate industry, helping clients navigate the buying and selling process with the same creativity and precision she used in her marketing career.

Susan can be reached at Susan. Adams@FloridaNetworkRealty.com, 904-923-0005, or through her website at SAdams.FloridaNetworkRealty.com.

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IQ Fiber launches business internet services

IQ Fiber, a rapidly expanding Jacksonville-based 100% fiberoptic internet service provider announces the launch of business internet service throughout its markets, delivering a smarter internet choice to tens of thousands of small businesses that lack access to modern, 100% fiber-optic internet service.

"Small business owners know that ultra-fast, consistently reliable internet is a critical ingredient to their success," said Ted Schremp, CEO of IQ Fiber. "We have proven that IQ Fiber is a company that simply takes care of our customers, and we are excited to bring our exceptional internet experience to businesses across our network footprint."

Business customers can select from two plans, a 1-gigabit plan for \$150 per month and a 5-gigabit plan for \$250 per month. Both plans include, at one flat monthly price with no additional cost, fees, or contracts: fiber-optic symmetrical speeds, professional installation by IQ Fiber technicians, wall to wall Wi-Fi and associated equipment, network security and 24/7 live expert support.

The 5-gigabit plan also includes up to four dedicated networks, en-

hanced security, advanced content management and restriction options, along with a cellular backup feature.

"Jacksonville is an ideal place to establish and grow a business, and it is critical to have reliable, affordable internet choices," said Ed Randolph, executive director of economic development for the City of Jacksonville. "In fact, IQ Fiber itself is a Jacksonville success story, having built over 2,300 miles of network and growing to more than 200 employees over the last three years."

An IQ Fiber pre-release business customer in Fernandina Beach, Kimberly Milligan-Perez, owner of Amelia's Best Comfort Solutions, said, "Working with IQ Fiber has been fantastic — smooth scheduling, quick installation and top-notch service. Our systems are now running fast and flawlessly, keeping our HVAC business fired up for success."

IQ Fiber's network recently proved to have the fastest and most reliable internet speeds in Gainesville and Jacksonville, according to consumer-initiated tests with Speedtest from Ookla, a leader in connectivity intelligence.

Baptist

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care.

"Great work starts with great people, and I am proud to say we have some of the very best here at Baptist Health," said Michael A. Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health. "Their commitment to our community and bettering its health is apparent in every interaction and connection made. By investing in our team members' health and growth, we strengthen not just individuals but the health and well-being of the communities we serve."

For information about career opportunities at Baptist Health, go to baptistjax.com/about-us/careers.



Chef Donald Don Green

Photo provided by Castillo Craft Bar + Kitchen:

Castillo Craft Bar + Kitchen welcomes new chef

Executive Chef Donald Green is taking the helm at Castillo Craft Bar + Kitchen, bringing with him a wealth of experience. Green has already made his mark, bringing home the People's Choice Award at the April 27 Taste of St. Augustine, an annual event featuring the best local bites. His winning dish, a citrusbraised short rib, served with saffron potato purée, black garlic emulsion, San Sebastian Winery port reduction and sorrels, is just a taste of what to expect from Castillo Craft Bar + Kitchen.

"I was blessed to be raised with grandmothers who took the time to introduce me to the art of food," said Green. "My Southern grandmother showed me the beauty of seasonal and scratch cooking, while my Italian nonna showed me how to make pasta and curse. They taught me generational techniques, creativity and a genuine love of cooking. I've carried those lessons with me on my culinary journey."

Green first learned the inner workings of a restaurant at the age of 8 at his granddad's barbecue joint in Macclenny called Liman Greens BBQ.

At the age of 14, he took on a paying gig at a local restaurant called River Place, now known as The Greenbriar Grill, washing dishes, bus-

FAMILY - COSMETICS - IMPLANTS

PONTE VEDRA ing tables or whatever else was needed. He quickly noticed that dedication and reliability paid off, traits that earned him the chance to move up the food chain.

Green earned executive culinary positions at high-end mountain resorts in West Virginia, Washington and Virginia, overseeing huge kitchen staffs and managing multimilliondollar banquet programs. And while Castillo Craft Bar + Kitchen offers culinary services to the neighboring Renaissance St. Augustine Historic Downtown, Green recognizes that this new position is a chance for him to create and enjoy.

"I like melding traditional French techniques with Appalachian flavors," explained Green. "I love working with underutilized proteins like bison short ribs and venison and pairing them with berry or black garlic emulsions. Gels are a fun way to present pops of bold flavor, like mango. I'm experimenting with Northeast Florida's staples, like datil pepper, local wines and seafood. And my dogs and I are, of course, loving the beach and the weather."

Castillo Craft Bar + Kitchen will release a new menu in June. The presentation will balance the restaurant's tried-and-true staples with fresh new creations by Green and his team.





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Jacksonville Symphony announces 2025-26 season

The Jacksonville Symphony has announced its 2025-26 season, themed "Above and Beyond." Building on the momentum of its milestone 75th anniversary, the symphony's new season, led by Music Director Courtney Lewis, is filled with electrifying collaborations, bold guest artists and a vibrant tribute to American music in honor of America's 250th anniversary.

The Florida Blue Classical Series

The Florida Blue Classical Series offers a mix of timeless masterpieces and thrilling discoveries.

Highlights include programs with Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring" in its original 13-piece instrumentation and his "Lincoln Portrait" (Nov. 7 and 8), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos in E-flat major featuring Alessio Bax and Lucille Chung (March 6 and 7) and Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 paired with a jazz-infused commission by Duke Ellington and a world premiere by composer Anna Clyne (April 24 and 25).

Guest artists include contralto Avery Amereau (Dec. 19 and 20), the dynamic Junction Trio: Conrad Tao, Stefan Jackiw and Jay Campbell (May 15 and 16) and pianist Joyce Yang (June 5 and 6).

Other classical standouts: Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp featuring retiring Principal Flute Les Roettges (Oct. 17 and 18), Leonard Bernstein's "West Side Story" Symphonic Dances (Feb. 13 and 14) and recent compositions from Carlos Simon, Tarik O'Regan and Joel Thompson throughout the season.

The Terry Family Foundation Pops Series

The symphony brings the music of Broadway, pop, country and rock legends to symphonic life.

From "The Billy Joel Songbook" (Oct. 3 and 4) and "The Music of Elton John" (May 29 and 30) to "Rodgers, Hart & Hammerstein" (Feb. 20 and 21) and Chicken-Fried Rock (May 8 and 9), audiences will hear chart-toppers reimagined with full orchestral power and award-winning vocalists - such as N'Kenge for "Motown Meets Rock" (March 13 and 14).

Additional highlights include: "Bewitched Broadway:



Wicked, Phantom, Little Shop & More" (Oct. 24 and 25); "John Williams' America," a moving tribute to the legendary film composer's most patriotic works (Jan. 9 and 10); a Valentine-ready "Silly Love Songs" (Jan. 30 and 31) and "Twist & Shout: The Music of The Beatles" (April 17 and 18).

Symphonic Night at the Movies Series

Film lovers can experience their favorite blockbusters like never before in the Symphonic Night at the Movies Series, which returns with Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas in Concert Live-to-Film" (Nov. 21 and 22), "Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back in Concert" (Jan. 23 and 24) and "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone in Concert" (May 1 and 2).

Holidays and Specials

The symphony continues its annual holiday programming with "Holiday Pops" (Dec. 4-7), "First Coast Nutcracker" presented by VyStar Credit Union (Dec. 12-14) and Handel's "Messiah" (Dec. 13 and 14).

Returning from last year will be the popular "Holiday Brass, Organ & Percussion" (Nov. 15) and "Holiday Big Band" (Dec. 21). The season also welcomes the return of opera to Jacoby Symphony Hall with a visually immersive production of Puccini's "Tosca," directed by Gregory Keller (April 10 and 12).

Additional specials include "Video Games Live" (Sept. 19), "Dolly Parton's Threads: My Songs in Symphony" (Oct. 11) and the patriotic spectacular "America in Concert: 250 Years of Music & Majesty" (Nov. 16).

Coffee & Symphony in 60 Series

Morning concerts in the Coffee Series provide relaxed, shortened versions of seasonal favorites and symphonic gems, while the casual, one-hour Symphony in 60 Series supported by PNC offers music lovers a weeknight musical escape. A few of the programs include "Haunted Film Scores" (Oct. 30 and 31), "Percussion Panorama" (March 19 and 20) and "At the Ballet" (May 21 and 22).

The JP Morgan Chase Jazz Series

This series continues to grow, with concerts curated by the Jacksonville Symphony's Principal Tuba James Jenkins. The series features tributes to jazz legends and local greats alike, including a Jazz Guitar Quartet (Sept. 20) and "Miles Davis at 100" (April 19).

Concert Organ Series

The Concert Organ Series, sponsored by JF Bryan, brings the majestic Bryan Concert Organ to the forefront in three performances with Jacksonville favorite Greg Zelek with "Holiday Brass, Organ & Percussion" (Nov. 15), Organ Chamber Music (Jan. 3) and "Greg Zelek in Concert" (May 7).

Greta Challen Berg Artist Series

Ten of the season's concerts fall into the Greta Challen Berg Artist Series, a series in honor of one of the original incorporators of the Jacksonville Symphony Association charter, Greta Challen Berg.

As a lifelong arts enthusiast, she spent decades fostering a community in Jacksonville where music could flourish and her legacy continues today through this curated series. Each concert chosen displays world-class talent and celebrates her unwavering dedication to the cultural vitality of the region.

Season subscriptions and Create Your Own packages are now on sale, offering up to 20% savings and first access to premium seats. Single tickets will be available on July 10.

To explore the full season and ticket options, go to JaxSymphony.org or call the symphony box office at 904-354-5547.



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Zoika's Dance to present 'Peter Pan'

"Peter Pan," to be presented by Zoika's Dance, tells the classic J.M. Barrie story through the language of dance, featuring ballet, tap, hip hop, contemporary, jazz and acro dance. Professional dancers will join young, local dancers on stage for performances at 7 p.m. Saturday, May 24, and 1 p.m. Sunday, May 25, at Lewis Auditorium, 14 Granada St., St. Augustine.

The cast of 85 dancers will recreate the magic of Neverland to an eclectic musical score ranging from classical to rock to world music.

Tickets may be purchased online at zoikasdance. com. Tickets are available at prices ranging from \$20 to \$37.90.

"Peter Pan is enchanting for children and adults alike," said director Zoika Garcia. "With pirates, fairies, mermaids, Indians and lost boys, the story is full of magic, adventure and otherworldly beauty."

St. Augustine's Emmett Kelly will dance the role of Peter Pan, joined by dancers Jose Fuentes as Captain Hook, Alex Rubio as Mr. Smee, Jake Karger as Chief, Aleryn Ward as Tinkerbell, Kelsey Young as Wendy, Victoria Alvarez Sanchez as Tiger Lily, Jaden Harris as Peter Pan's Shadow and Annabelle Hucke as the Crocodile.

The swashbuckling cast of pirates will also feature professional tap dancers Jenne Vermes, Kam Eubanks, Shelby Howell, Sean Mansfield and Alex Rubio.

Garcia and the show's sponsors are making sure that local children who might not otherwise be able to attend will get to see "Peter Pan." They are providing free tickets to the show for local children through nonprofit partners St. Augustine Youth Services, the Betty Griffin House and Fostering Connections.

To become a sponsor and share this experience with local children, go to zoikasdance.com/sponsors or call 904-342-5920. Sponsorships of \$250 and up will provide free tickets to local children through the production's nonprofit partners.

Zoika's Dance is a comprehensive dance school in St. Augustine, offering beginning to advanced classes



Contributed photo



in all major dance genres for ages 3 and up, as well as performance opportunities in downtown St. Augustine. To learn more, go to zoikasdance.com.

Writers to learn fingerprint facts



Fingerprints may sound like yesterday's news in the day of DNA, but in real-world investigations, they remain a cornerstone of forensic science. New York Times bestselling author and Certified Latent Print Examiner Lisa Black knows exactly how fingerprint science works and is often misrepresented

Lisa Black

in fiction. She will share her expert insight at the June meeting of Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime.

Black understands the importance of getting details right. She has written 18 suspense novels, including the "Gardiner & Renner" series and the "Locard Institute" series. She is also a full-time Certified Latent Print Examiner and a Certified Crime Scene Analyst. Her forensics career began at the coroner's office in Cleveland, Ohio, and later took her to the Cape Coral, Florida, police department. She's a popular speaker at national conferences, including Killer Nashville, where she was the 2021 Guest of Honor.

On Saturday, June 7, Black will present "How Fingerprints Solve Cases: The Facts for Your Fiction" at the local monthly meeting of Sisters in Crime. Join by Zoom only at 10:15 a.m. to learn how fingerprints are collected, analyzed and used to solve real cases — and just how accurate (or not) TV shows really are.

This event is free and open to all writers and readers interested in crime fiction. Go to nefloridasistersincrime. org to register.

For more information, contact floridasistersincrime@ gmail.com.

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Sing Out Loud Festival accepting Local Artist Showcase applications

Attention local and regional singers, songwriters, musicians and entertainers: Sing Out Loud Festival, the annual celebration of music and community across St. Johns County, is now accepting applications for its Local Artist Showcases presented by PNC Bank.

Applications will be accepted through Friday, June 13, online at singoutloudfestival.com/apply/local-showcases.

A cornerstone of Sing Out Loud Festival, the Local Artist Showcases offer emerging and established artists a platform to reach new audiences, connect with fellow artists and share the festival lineup with national headlining acts.

These free showcases feature more than 100 performers spanning indie rock, bluegrass, hip hop, country, comedy and spoken word, providing music enthusiasts with the opportunity to explore the depth and diversity of the region's music scene. Hosted at multiple venues across St.

Johns County, the showcases will unfold over the first three weekends in September. This year's Local Artist Showcases are

once again presented by PNC Bank. "PNC Bank's support of the Local

Artist Showcases is a meaningful investment in the music community here in St. Johns County," said Cari Baker, chief programming officer for the Sing Out Loud Festival. "We're proud to continue this partnership with a true community partner and excited to shine a spotlight on the incredible talent of our local artists."

"As PNC expands alongside our growing region, we're committed to investing in what makes it unique, including its creativity, culture and people," said Chris Kalin, PNC regional president for North Florida. "We know the arts play an important role in creating a strong, vibrant community, and we're thrilled to continue our support of this much-anticipated annual event."

Sing Out Loud has long been a celebration of live music in North Florida. Now in its ninth year, Sing Out Loud has grown into an expansive and truly epic festival spanning four weekends in September.

In addition to free Local Artist Showcases, the festival's marquee weekend will feature national headlining acts Hozier, Beabadoobee, Vance Joy, The Teskey Brothers, Rilo Kiley, Father John Misty and six more during the Live Wildly Showcase on Sept. 20 and 21 on Francis Field in downtown St. Augustine.

Sing Out Loud Festival is curated and produced by SJC Cultural Events Inc.,

which operates the award-winning St. Augustine Amphitheatre, Ponte Vedra Concert Hall and the nationally recognized Fort Mose Jazz & Blues Series.

Sing Out Loud Festival 2025 organizers say they are proud to partner with the Live Wildly Foundation and additional community partners St. Johns County Tourist Development Council, City of St. Augustine, St. Johns County, PNC Bank, St. Augustine Distillery, Sunbelt Rentals, Bozard Ford, Champion Brands, Intuition Ale Works, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors & Convention Bureau, St. Augustine Songwriters Festival, Flying Saucer Presents, AVL Productions, Jalaram Hotels and Embassy Suites by Hilton St. Augustine Beach.

Stay up to date at singoutloudfestival. com.

Apex Theatre launches inaugural new works festival

Apex Theatre Studio announces the launch of its inaugural new works festival. The Red Moon New Works Theatre Festival will present workshop productions and readings by professional playwrights, teaching artists and student writers, May 16-18 at the Black Box theatre, located in the World Golf Village area.

"After celebrating 10 years as North Florida's training facility for young theatre artists, turning our focus on original work was a logical progression," said Ian Mairs, playwright and managing director of Apex. "We started with a group of young writers in the fall and introduced them to the basics of dramatic structure in a series of workshops held at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts as well as online."

Students were selected from a submission process for the playwrights unit led by New York playwright and television writer Jacquelyn Reingold.

This biannual event will feature a mixture of readings from students and teachers.

Workshop productions with staging and a minimum of tech will be presented featuring works by Reingold ("Fear-Less") and Mairs ("Family, Friends and Neighbors: a year in life of an urban church food pantry"). Student writers will present readings of 10-minute plays developed in the playwrights unit.

All performances and readings are free and open to the public. There is limited seating so reservations through Eventbrite are encouraged.

For further information and tickets, go to apextheatrejax.com/events.

Speaker topic: Selling books to Hollywood

Most writers dream of seeing their books on the big screen, but how to make that happen is often a mystery.

Screenwriter Sharon Y. Cobb will help unravel the mystery in her presentation, "Selling Your Books to Hollywood," at the Ponte Vedra Writers meeting at 11 a.m. Saturday, May 24, at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library.

Here are some of the questions she will answer: How do authors sell film rights to Hollywood producers? How can authors track books that are being sold for film adaptations? What's the newest way to get your books noticed by film producers?

Cobb is a member of Writers Guild of America. Her feature thriller, "The Man in the White Van," co-written with director Warren Skeels, enjoyed



Sharon Y. Cobb

a 500-venue theatrical release last December and is now streaming. Other features she's written, like "June" and "Lighthouse Hill," have been released, and her TBS movie, "On Hostile Ground," premiered to high ratings. She is also the author of the books "False Confessions of a True Hollywood Screenwriter" and "Secrets to Writing a Killer 48-Hour Film Project Screenplay."

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 May 24 meeting is free and open to members and nonmembers alike.

For information on FWA, go to floridawriters.org.

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Photos by Anthony Richards

Sharks feel at home in boys lacrosse state final

By Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra Sharks boys lacrosse program was back where the program expected to be, in the final four competing for a state title among the best teams in Class 2A.

After rolling past Gainesville Buchholz and Fletcher by a combined score of 32-9 in the first two rounds, it was a familiar foe faced in the regional final as they took on the rival Nease Panthers, who went on the road and defeated

Gulf Breeze 14-13 in an instant classic.

Throughout the season the Sharks appeared to have the Panthers' number and that remained the case once again in the regional final as the Sharks won 13-6 to sweep all three matchups between the two teams on the season.

Both Ponte Vedra and Nease reaching it to the elite eight shows the growing status that St. Johns County has when it comes to lacrosse both on the boys and girls side of things. The Sharks took the momentum from the victory over

the Panthers and followed it up by beating Lake Mary 10-9 in a hard-fought battle at Paradise Coast Sports Complex in Naples on May 8.

The win was redemption for the Sharks after they were defeated in the regional final by Lake Mary and denied a trip to the final four a year ago.

However, the Sharks finished runner-up in Class 2A after falling to St. Thomas Aquinas 13-4 in the state championship on May 10.

PRIME FLAG FOOTBALL TEAM HEADS TO NATIONALS

Led by a ferocious defense, Ponte Vedra's "Prime GP" 12u girls flag football team won The Atlanta Falcons NFL flag super regional tournament on May 3.

In the championship game, Prime beat a nationally ranked team from Orlando - the BNA Herricanes — 6-0. Olivia Bishop hit Liv Neary in the back of the end zone for the game's only score and Finley Tucker's interception helped seal the deal late in the game.

Bishop threw 14 TDs during the five-game tournament - four to Neary and six to tournament MVP Riley Gebauer.

However, it was the team's defense, led by

Gebauer and Leighton McGarvey, that dominated the day as Prime outscored opponents 105-6 during the tournament.

Key contributions by Regan Baker, Claire Lang, Vivian Leblanc, Ava Estrella and Kendall Anderson helped the girls defeat the fabled "Texas Fury" team of Austin, Texas, 28-0 in pool play and Atlanta's "Lady Flight Squad" 21-6 in the semifinals.

Next up for the girls will be the Nationals, July 17-21, in Canton, Ohio. Head coach Tim Gebauer and Defensive Coordinator Chad Tucker will have the girls ready to compete.



The team members celebrate their super regional tournament victory.

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Photo by Anthony Richards Ryker Kemp and Penny Zarczynski with Ponte Vedra High athletic director Michael Harrison after being named County Athletes of the Year by the St. Johns County Sports Club.





Photo by Anthony Richard: Ryker Kemp will play lacrosse and football at the University of Utah.

g named County Penny Zarczynski is the most decorated athlete in Ponte Ryker Kemp will play lac Sports Club. Vedra High history with 19 state medals and 14 state titles. of Utah.

County athletes honored for accolades, leadership qualities

By Anthony Richards

Students from schools across the county were honored by the St. Johns County Sports Club's Student Athletes of the Year and Ponte Vedra High's representatives were Ryker Kemp and Penny Zarczynski.

Kemp was a two-sport athlete starring in football and lacrosse and finding a proper balance between practices and classroom work in order to maintain a 3.8 GPA.

He was named all-state first team defense in Class 5A in football and broke the school record for career sacks.

"I'd like to thank my parents first and coach (Eric) Henkel for making me do updowns since I was four," Kemp chuckled. Giving back has also been a major part of his high school career as he volunteers at a lacrosse summer camp and has been a camp counselor, as well as volunteering at the Sulzbacher Center helping the homeless in Jacksonville.

He will be attending the University of Utah where he will play both lacrosse and football at the next level and major in business.

Of the seven athletes on hand receiving recognition during the ceremony at Amici's Italian Restaurant in St. Augustine Beach, Zarczynski's accolades took the longest to read, which is a testament to her relentless accomplishments during her time in high school. Zarczynski is regarded as one of the top

swimmers in the Southeast United States and will be going to Yale University to swim and major in economics.

The simplest way to sum up her high school career is that she is known as the most decorated athlete in Ponte Vedra High history with 19 state medals, 14 state titles, including three as an individual in the 100 freestyle, 50 freestyle and 100 butterfly.

She helped the Sharks win a team state title in all four years and holds five of the 11 school records, while also being a three-time USA Swimming Scholastic AllAmerican with a 4.6 GPA.

Her versatility goes far beyond swimming as she is also president of a knitting club, a member of the National Honor Society and volunteers at the Sulzbacher Center.

"I'd love to thank my parents for always being there and doing everything they can to always support me in everything," Zarczynski said.

The St. Johns County Sports Club held a couple of ceremonies and other honored local athletes included Kendall Wampler and Brandon Stout from Nease High and Haylee Hite and Riley Hofrichter from Beachside High.

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Sharks stack success at track and field states

Ponte Vedra High senior Katherine Kelly won the Class 3A state championship in the girls pole vault as she cleared 3.45 meters, which is the equivalent to nearly 11.5 feet. The success for Sharks continued with senior Adrienne Edwards finishing third on the podium in the girls long jump with a distance of 19.3 feet and senior James O'Donnell came home third in the boys javelin throw launching his longest throw more than 186 feet, while on the track, fellow senior Daisy Ross represented the Sharks and finished fourth in the girls 3200-meter event and sixth in the 1600 meters.





Katherine Kelly won a state title in girls pole vault.

Photo by Randy Lefko

Daisy Ross of Ponte Vedra High finished fourth in the 3200-meter final.

Photo by Randy Lefko

Landrum Sawgrass JV Tennis Team Wins **Championship Title**

The Landrum Sawgrass JV Tennis Team captured the JV Tennis Championship, winning in dominant fashion with a final score of 4-1.

The outstanding studentathletes who contributed to this incredible season and championship victory are Elise Bond, Ethan Bond, Mackenzie Blunk, Wyatt Darling, Harper Knarr, James Makey, Madeline Makey, Emerv Masotti, Harper McClure, Brian

Ostfeld, Poppy Smith and Juliette Werha

Their dedication, teamwork, and sportsmanship were on full display throughout the season.

Coach Ken and Coach Paul were credited for their unwavering support, leadership and commitment to the team's success.

This championship marks a proud moment for Landrum and showcases the hard work and talent of its student-athletes.



The Landrum Sawgrass JV Team celebrates their victory



The recent Bolles College Athletic Commitment Ceremony

Contributed photos

Bolles student-athletes commit to colleges

Ponte Vedra resident Kira Merrell was among 11 Bolles student-athletes representing nine sports who were honored on April 16 for committing to a particular college or university to continue their athletic and academic careers.

Family, friends, classmates, coaches and faculty gathered in Davis Gym on the San Jose Campus to celebrate this welldeserved achievement. Athletic Director Rock Pillsbury welcomed everyone and coaches introduced their respective athletes.

The following Bolles studentathletes were honored:

Baseball

Jackson Geist, Daytona State College

Men's Basketball

Kaden Ferguson, Sewanee: The University of the South

Football

Jordan Alexander, Rhodes College

Men's Golf

Enzo Martinez Bou, Colorado School of Mines

Men's Lacrosse

Henry Hobby, Sewanee: The University of the South

Women's Rowing

Kira Merrell, Tufts University

Men's Swimming and Diving

Fausto Angelone López, Colorado School of Mines

João Da Cruz Guedes, New York University Eldad Zamir, George Washington University

Women's Swimming and Diving

Savannah Branon, Boston College

Men's Track and Field

Collin Norton, Flagler College

This was the third and final college commitment ceremony at Bolles this school year to recognize student-athletes as they commit to colleges. Twenty Bolles student-athletes were honored in November and 18 were honored in February.











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1. Island

50. Negative

52. Unit of work

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 Mr. October

39. Abba __, Israeli politician41. Head movement42. Jeweled headdress43. VCR button

44. A way to change color45. Basketball move46. Upright stone slab

48. Forest-dwelling monkey49. Pulsate steadily

51. Sino-Soviet bloc (abbr.)

- 2. Pittsburgh ballplayer
- 3. Chemical compound
- 4. Indicates density of data (abbr.)

Level: Beginne

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



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